

## Where Do They Come From?

Congress put 15 newcomers on the House committee that oversees billboard issues.

Where do members of Congress form views about land use, signage, job creation, or property rights?

Many members of Congress – not all – come from state and local government.

Today's mayor could be tomorrow's chairman of a key congressional committee. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), the outgoing chairman of the US Senate committee with primary jurisdiction over billboards, was mayor of Tulsa.

Congress' collective outlook about billboards depends in large part on previous experiences, including previous government jobs.

Take a look at the 15 newcomers assigned to the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee:

- For 80 percent of this group, previous elective-government service was a springboard to Congress. Exceptions include:
  - Jason Lewis, R-MN (radio talk show host)
  - Brian Mast, R-FL (military bomb-disposal expert)
  - Paul Mitchell, R-MI (for-profit education company)
- Every Democrat recently assigned to the House transportation committee has prior government experience:
  - Hank Johnson, D-GA (judge and county commissioner; Johnson is married to a county commissioner)
  - Frederica Wilson, D-FL (Miami-Dade School Board and both houses of the Florida Legislature)
  - Donald Payne Jr., D-NJ (city council in Newark)
  - Alan Lowenthal, D-CA, (Long Beach City Council and the California Assembly and Senate)
  - Brenda Lawrence, D-MI (mayor of Southfield; she worked 30 years at the US Postal Service)
  - Mark DeSaulnier, D-CA (California Senate and a variety of local positions)
- Republicans tend to have more private-sector business experience, such as:
  - Drew Ferguson, R-GA, (dentist and former mayor of West Point, GA)
  - Lloyd Smucker, R-PA, (family-owned construction company, also served on a township planning commission and the Pennsylvania Senate)
  - Doug LaMalfa, R-CA (rice farmer, elected to the California Assembly and Senate)
  - Randy Weber, R-TX (started an air conditioning company, he served in the Texas House four years)



Doug LaMalfa, rice farmer



Drew Ferguson, dentist



Lloyd Smucker, construction company