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House Republicans Elect McCarthy and Scalise to Leadership Posts

Earlier today, Republicans elected Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) over Rep. Raul Labrador (R-ID)— via secret ballot—to serve as their next majority leader. McCarthy, the current majority whip, is serving his fourth term in Congress thereby making him the fastest-rising majority leader in history. McCarthy can be expected to assume the leader's traditional duties and responsibilities, including coordinating the legislative and oversight work of the House committees and, in consultation with the Speaker, the floor schedule.

House Republicans also elected Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA) as majority whip. Scalise, the current chairman of the House Republican Study Committee, received a majority of the House Republican Conference's vote on the first ballot. He defeated Reps. Peter Roskam (R-IL), current chief deputy whip, and Marlin Stutzman (R-IN). Speculation now turns to Scalise's pick for chief deputy whip—a position which often serves as a non-elected jump into leadership, as evidenced by both Roy Blunt (R-MO) and Cantor. As majority whip, Scalise—who will continue to serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee—will rally support amongst his Republican colleagues for key votes.

Given Roskam's defeat, the powerful Ways and Means Committee—which has jurisdiction over several important issues, including tax, health, and trade—will no longer have a representative in the House GOP leadership. As Congress considers tax extenders, issues related to healthcare, and trade promotion and free trade agreements, the leadership can be expected to lean more heavily on Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI). Camp, who has announced his retirement this Congress, is widely expected to be succeeded by Ryan.

While Reps. McCarthy and Scalise will assume their new roles effective July 31, House Republicans are already focusing on the upcoming leadership elections in November for the next Congress. Retiring and defeated members are not eligible to vote, but incoming freshman will participate. Between now and then, the House must address numerous key issues, some of which may result in controversial votes. As such, speculation will continue as to whether House conservatives will post challenges to the Speaker, majority leader, majority whip, or perhaps all three. That said, both McCarthy and Scalise will have until July 31 to staff up and prepare the transition to their new posts.

This document is intended to provide you with general information regarding changes in House GOP leadership. The contents of this document are not intended to provide specific legal advice. If you have any questions about the contents of this document or if you need legal advice as to an issue, please contact the attorneys listed or your regular Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP attorney. This communication may be considered advertising in some jurisdictions.

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