

Two more House taxwriters announce exit plans

The list of House Ways and Means Committee members eyeing the exit door got a bit longer this week as Democrat Brian Higgins of New York announced that he will give up his House seat and leave Congress in February of 2024, and Democrat Dan Kildee of Michigan revealed he will not run for elected office next year.

Higgins's resignation

Higgins was first elected to the House in 2004 and joined the Ways and Means Committee in 2009. He currently sits on the Health Subcommittee and the Trade Subcommittee. In announcing his imminent exit, he did not reveal specific post-congressional career plans, commenting in a written statement on November 13 that he intends to “explore other ways [to] build up and serve Buffalo and Western New York.”

Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., the House's top Democratic taxwriter, lauded Higgins's tenure on Ways and Means.

“From expanding economic security to strengthening Western New York through redevelopment and greater health care access, Brian has been an accomplished member of the Ways and Means Committee. His service has been defined by his focus, ingenuity, and ability to infuse the latest data into every comment,” Neal said in a news release.

Voters in Higgins's Buffalo-area district will choose someone to serve out the remainder of his term in a special election that is expected to be held early next year.

The House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee is expected to nominate Higgins's replacement on the Ways and Means Committee early next year, subject to approval by the full Democratic Caucus. That process could result in the return of one of the three former Democratic taxwriters—Jimmy Gomez of California, Steven Horsford of Nevada, or Stacey Plaskett of the Virgin Islands—who lost their seats on Ways and Means this past January after party ratios on all House committees were readjusted to reflect the GOP's majority status in the chamber in the 118th Congress. Of those three former Ways and Means members, Gomez has the most seniority in Congress and likely would be the first to be offered the committee slot when it becomes available.

Kildee's retirement

Kildee was first elected to the House in 2012. He joined Ways and Means in 2019 and currently holds seats on the Social Security Subcommittee and the Trade Subcommittee. In a November 16 news release, Kildee said he would continue “to serve Flint and mid-Michigan” after he leaves Capitol Hill at the end of his current term, but would do so “outside of elected office.”

Ways and Means ranking member Neal praised Kildee in a written statement as “a legislator’s legislator,” noting that “[f]or the last decade, he has led on trade issues, focusing on keeping jobs in his district, and ardently defended labor.”

And then there were four

This week’s announcements by Higgins and Kildee bring to four the number of Ways and Means Committee members who have recently signaled their intention to wrap up their Capitol Hill careers. Democratic taxwriter Earl Blumenauer of Oregon and Republican Brad Wenstrup of Ohio both have indicated that they will not seek re-election next year and will retire from government after the 118th Congress formally adjourns in early January of 2025.

Across the Capitol, three Senate Finance Committee Democrats whose seats are up in the 2024 election cycle—Tom Carper of Delaware, Ben Cardin of Maryland, and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan—announced over the last few months that they have ruled out another run for office.

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