



Insight

Who's Fred Upton?

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | DECEMBER 2, 2010

The White House summit between the incoming congressional leadership and President Obama has focused public attention on Speaker-to-be John Boehner, but legislative success requires strong leadership not only at the top — majority leader, whip, policy committee — but on the ground where legislation is created. At some point, voters will find themselves asking, “Who’s Fred Upton?” They will like the answer.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act — Obamacare — was at the heart of the voters’ rejection of the great shift leftward under Democratic rule. That makes the chairmanship of the Energy and Commerce Committee a crucial part of the leadership. E&C is particularly important for Medicaid, a broken program and such a burden that states are contemplating leaving dropping it altogether! The Obamacare promise? Force 16 million more middle-class Americans into this disaster area.

Fred Upton is the chairman apparent at Energy and Commerce. He has pledged to “reveal, repeal, and replace” Obamacare. Unlike so-called progressives, Fred understands that Obamacare is not just health policy. It is economic policy, and economic policy of exactly the wrong type: heavy on mandates and regulation, heavy on spending, heavy on taxes, and disproportionately aimed at small businesses. The oversight powers of the E&C committee will be crucial to shedding light on the implementation of Obamacare, identifying its true economic costs, and generating a roadmap for repeal and replace.

A similar dedication to economic rationality will also prevail in energy, Internet, and budget issues. Congressman Upton has pledged to oppose innovation-killing network neutrality regulations for the Internet. The FCC cannot be permitted to hijack this source of economic vitality and productivity. Similarly, the plans of the White House and the Environmental Protection Agency to launch a bureaucratic takeover of the energy sector in the guise of regulatory rulemaking must be exposed and stopped. Upton has pledged to meet this challenge.

The most important issue facing the new Congress is jobs. The climate for growth improved the moment that voters put Republicans like Fred Upton in a position to stop the excesses and overreach of progressive Democrats. It will improve even further as the regulatory state is rolled back piece by piece.

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