

KUCINICH OR CUMMINGS FOR OVERSIGHT

I said most of what I'm going to say about the Waxman-Dingell fight in this post (though I will reiterate my concern that Waxman—who will now be in charge of shepherding healthcare through the House—has said almost nothing about it thus far).

Except that, now that Waxman has won, I think it crucially important that we find someone very effective to replace Waxman at Oversight. Waxman leaves some important unfinished business at oversight, including his investigation into the White House emails, the Bush Administration's lackadaisical policy towards leakers (including Scooter Libby), and recent oversight into the financial crash. Furthermore, Darrell Issa is by most accounts set to take over as Ranking Member on Oversight. Oversight is one committee where the Ranking Member has the means to be a real pain in the arse, and Issa is a bigger pain in the arse—and more effective—than most Republicans. Finally, I don't want to make the mistake the Republicans made; I want someone to exercise real oversight over the Obama Administration. For all these reasons, we need a real leader replacing Waxman at Oversight.

I recommend either Dennis Kucinich or Elijah Cummings.

The senior member on Oversight, after Waxman, is Edolphus Towns. I don't know all that much about Towns—though I find it telling that, as someone who watches a great deal of Oversight's hearings, I've almost never seen him contribute substantively (for that matter, I rarely see him, at all, at full committee hearings). That, plus he's the recipient of some big love from the Pharma/Health Care and Finance industries—two industries that must remain targets of oversight.

Kucinich and Cummings are both relatively senior

members of the Committee. And both have proven to be the kinds of effective

Kucinich currently serves (opposite Issa) as Chair of the Domestic Policy Subcommittee (and many of the most critical oversight issues in the next Congress will be domestic ones). And his work on impeachment shows that his staffers have the ability to do great work and Kucinich has the ability to deliver them. Plus, he's the perfect kind of gadfly to keep our new President honest. I suspect that Kucinich would have a tough time getting the votes in a straight fight, but if there are multiple candidates, he'd have a shot.

Cummings would probably fare better than Kucinich in a head to head fight (and having one African American take this seat from another African American would limit the sensitivity on the CBC, which worries that the Dingell loss represents a challenge to seniority and therefore to the chairmanships of other CBC members). And he is relentless in hearings at insisting on Congressional oversight—as his attack on chumps above makes clear.

I'm trying to suss out who is bidding for this position. But in the meantime, I think that both Kucinich and Cummings would make excellent choices for the job.