

WIRED IN WASHINGTON

Idol Chatter

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by David Hatch

No offense to Senate Commerce Chairman John (Jay) Rockefeller, House Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman and House Energy and Commerce Communications Subcommittee Chairman Rick Boucher, D-Va., but when it comes to shaping telecommunications and media policy in the 111th Congress, these power brokers aren't the only rock stars in town.

More than two dozen other lawmakers and administration officials shine, and while they don't command as much attention as this power trio, they are well-positioned to leave their imprimatur on public policy.

They are senators and House members, White House staffers and agency officials, grizzled veterans and neophytes, subject experts and generalists. They are the 2009 Class of Rainmakers on Technology Policy Whose Surnames Are Not Rockefeller, Waxman or Boucher, and if you have communications-related business in Washington, they are your newest friends. Let's meet them:

Obama's Oracle

Tech Team: A "shadow FCC" is emerging at the White House, where President Obama has assembled a large cadre of technology experts who are buttressing the real commission and other agencies. Susan Crawford, special assistant to the president for science, technology and innovation policy, is as ubiquitous on the rubber-chicken/veggie-wrap circuit as Acting FCC Chairman Michael Copps. The Senate Commerce Committee votes today on the nomination of Virginia Secretary of Technology Aneesh Chopra as the nation's first chief technology officer, while Vivek Kundra is serving as the country's first chief information officer.

Agency Point Men: The president has close ties to two of his communications-related picks. Julius Genachowski, nominated to run the FCC, went to Harvard Law School with Obama and crafted tech policy for his campaign. Senate Commerce is fast-tracking the nomination of Larry Strickling, a former FCC official and Obama campaign adviser, to run a telecom-related division of the Commerce Department, so he can assist with the June 12 digital television switchover.

Other Key Players: Newly anointed FTC Chairman Jon Leibowitz already has waded into the controversial "network neutrality" debate, while FCC regulator Jonathan Adelstein, the prospective head of the USDA's Rural Utilities Service, will team with Strickling in doling out \$7.2 billion in broadband stimulus funding.

Senate Shakers

Reid My Lips: Senate Majority Leader Reid is playing a role in efforts to confirm a new slate of FCC members and will decide which media or telecom bills receive floor time.

Kerry On: Rockefeller may run the influential Commerce panel, but it is Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., who recently made headlines -- or at least tried to generate coverage in what some call the dead-tree media. The onetime presidential contender held a high-profile hearing on the future of journalism, part of his ambitious agenda as chairman of the Commerce Communications Subcommittee.

Nominee Derby: For Republicans to get on, or stay on, the FCC these days, they have to pass

muster with Senate Minority Leader McConnell and Commerce ranking member Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

**Plenty of Net:** Aiming to preserve the Internet's openness, Sens. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, plan to reintroduce an updated version of their network neutrality legislation.

**Tech Chairmen:** Former Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch, a leader on patent reform and intellectual property rights enforcement, is the new chairman of the Senate Republican High Tech Task Force, while Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., a Commerce member, is co-chairing the Congressional Internet Caucus.

**House Heavyweights**

**Prominent Pelosi:** The fairness doctrine and net neutrality are among the tech issues that have garnered the attention of Speaker Pelosi.

**GOP Tag Team:** Energy and Commerce ranking member Joe Barton and Energy and Commerce Communications Subcommittee ranking member Cliff Stearns, R-Fla., enjoy head-butting and pile-driving the majority side over its tech-related agenda -- figuratively speaking, of course -- at public hearings.

**Looking for Mr. Goodlatte:** The co-chairman of the Congressional Internet Caucus is Rep. Bob Goodlatte, R-Va. He's a House Judiciary member and chairman of the House Republican High Technology Working Group. Goodlatte is among the chamber's most recognized tech experts, along with Judiciary members Reps. Howard Berman, a Democrat, and Darrell Issa, a Republican, both representing California.

**Not One to Tarry:** Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., joined with Boucher in co-sponsoring legislation to revamp the Universal Service Fund when Terry was in the majority. He's now returning the favor with Boucher in charge of the Communications subcommittee.

**Trust Busters:**

**Monopoly is No Game:** Keeping watch over antitrust and intellectual property are Justice Department Antitrust Division chief Christine Varney, Senate Judiciary Chairman Patrick Leahy, House Judiciary Chairman John Conyers and Senate Antitrust Subcommittee Chairman Herb Kohl, D-Wis.

