

ENERGY

Henry Waxman, Longtime Green Advocate, Will Retire From Congress



Rep. Henry Waxman (Alex Wong/Getty Images)



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January 30, 2014

Rep. Henry Waxman, who has played a major role in crafting environmental statutes and pushed for action against climate change, announced Thursday that he will not seek reelection this fall after four decades in the House.

"I am grateful for the support of my constituents, who have entrusted me to represent them and encouraged me to become a leader on national and international issues. I am grateful for my supporters and allies, who have worked side-by-side with me to fight for issues we care about: health, environmental protection, women's and gay rights, and strengthening the ties between the United States and our most important ally, the State of Israel," the California Democrat said in a statement.

Waxman's tenure included coauthoring major 1990 revisions to the Clean Air Act, as well as laws to strengthen drinking water and food-safety protections.

He cosponsored the sweeping climate-change and energy bill that passed the House in 2009 but didn't advance in the Senate.

More recently he has been a leader in Capitol Hill efforts to raise the visibility of climate change and help create political space for the Obama administration's executive actions.

Waxman is the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

He chaired that panel in 2009-2010 before Democrats lost the House, and before that was chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee for two years, among other senior congressional roles through the decades.

Waxman, in his statement announcing his retirement, looked back on his environmental work.

"In perhaps no area have the special interests held more sway than environmental policy, and I have battled them to protect clean air and safe drinking water throughout my career. It took a decade of effort to pass the landmark Clean Air Act of 1990, but the controls on urban smog, toxic air pollution, acid rain, and ozone-depleting chemicals have saved lives and vastly improved our air quality," he said.

The progressive Waxman is a savvy inside political operator who plays hardball at times.

In 2008 he staged a successful coup against then-Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell to become head of the panel, a move that came ahead of Democrats' big 2009 push on climate legislation.

He then held together enough regional and political interests to win a narrow victory on the House floor in June of 2009, when cap-and-trade legislation passed 219-212.

Waxman, 74, drew praise from allies and even some adversaries after his announcement Thursday.

"He will be remembered as one of the most important congressmen of the generation," Sen. Ed Markey, who co-sponsored the climate bill while serving in the House, told reporters on Capitol Hill Thursday.

"When we partnered on the Waxman-Markey climate change bill that passed the House in 2009, I saw what the world saw – a master legislator who is driven by his deep passion for the issues and the people he represents," said Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat who served with Waxman for decades in the House, in a separate statement.

Scott Segal, an attorney and lobbyist with Bracewell & Giuliani who represents power companies, has been on the other side of Waxman in many battles but said he will miss the longtime congressman.

"It is hard to imagine a Washington environmental community without the wisdom and perspective of Henry Waxman. While we frequently had policy disagreements with him, there was always a feeling that Mr. Waxman desired to reach a deal that advanced his objectives, even if he had to give on some points," Segal said.

National Journal has more on Waxman's decision [here](#).

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