

Majors

**OPENING STATEMENT DURING COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION
REP. HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON (R-CA),
SENIOR REPUBLICAN MEMBER
EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE
JANUARY 24, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, though I must admit that I enjoy the view of this room better from your seat than I do from mine, I'm pleased to be serving beside you once again on this Committee that we both love so much. We've done some good work together in recent years – much of it in a bipartisan way.

We crafted the No Child Left Behind law to begin closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more fortunate peers. We improved our special education laws to reduce red tape for teachers and modernized our career and technical education laws to bring them into the 21st Century. We reformed our pension security and mine safety laws for the first time in a generation. And we retooled programs in the Older Americans Act to better serve the needs of this rapidly-expanding segment of our population.

We've had our disagreements, to be sure. But regardless of which side we're sitting on up here, our goal is exactly the same: crafting fiscally responsible reforms for students, workers, and retirees. Over the next two years, we may occasionally propose different routes to reach this goal. And often, we'll choose the same route as one another too.

But this goal is not a Republican or Democrat goal. It's a shared goal, focused on serving the men and women who sent us here in the first place. And I look forward to being a partner with you in that effort.

Last year, when I became Chairman of this Committee, I assumed the gavel in a most unusual way. My predecessor headed across the street to join the House leadership, and I had the privilege of serving out the remainder of the Congress from the chair. Now, as you guide this panel for the next two years, it's my pleasure to symbolically pass the gavel on to you this morning in a much more traditional way – albeit a way that we haven't seen in twelve years.

You have long been a passionate voice on this Committee and an effective leader of your caucus. And I expect nothing less than exactly that as you assume the Chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman, my Republican colleagues and I stand ready to work with you – and yes, sometimes against you too – in the years ahead to make this Committee, this Congress, and this country a better place. As we both have noted, this Committee has developed a reputation of being a place where colleagues can and will disagree...but rarely are we disagreeable. I have no doubt that under your leadership and working together, this reputation won't change one bit.

So, it's my pleasure to present this gavel to you, Chairman Miller, and congratulate you on assuming the post. I look forward to strengthening our working relationship and, indeed, our friendship over the next two years. And I'm eager to get to work on our very ambitious agenda ahead.

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