

Congress Has a New Conservative Champion in the House

Rep. Mark Walker (R-N.C.) was voted Thursday to be the next chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a caucus of 178 Republican lawmakers in the House of Representatives.

Walker said one of the main goals he hopes to achieve while serving as RSC chairman is to repeal and replace Obamacare.

"We want to make sure that this happens hopefully within the first quarter," Walker told The Daily Signal in a phone interview after his election.

He noted that even liberal politicians see Obamacare as a failure.

"Think about this. This is something that former President Bill Clinton has questioned. Recently, a few weeks ago, we saw the Minnesota governor come out against it," Walker said. "We have concrete data showing this has hurt small businesses. ... This is our moment to really fulfill the promise to the American people and I believe that we must seize on it."

Part of seizing the opportunity, Walker said, is recognizing Americans' strong message in electing a political outsider, businessman Donald Trump, as the next president.

"I believe it says that the American people want government to be efficient, want it to be fair, and maybe it is a time where this political correctness has so overshoot the runway," Walker said.

Walker said this week's GOP debate over reinstating earmarks, a practice that allows lawmakers to direct money to special interests, is not one Republicans should be having now. Walker

said he believes that bringing back earmarks would be disunifying for the party:

Even if you were able to make the case that the members of Congress serving control the purse and have the power to re-institute earmarks, I would say that, even so, it does not always mean it is the right thing to do. ... I think from a unity standpoint, this is not something that we need to be taking on at this particular point.

In addition to repealing Obamacare and restoring government efficiency, Walker said another one of his main goals is to protect the religious freedom rights of all Americans.

“Part of our job is to make sure, whether it is the church itself or other faith-based groups, that they are protected in how they have always operated,” Walker said.

Founded in 1973, the Republican Study Committee seeks to unify conservative lawmakers in order to “promote a strong, principled legislative agenda that will limit government, strengthen our national defense, boost America’s economy, preserve traditional values and balance our budget,” according to its website.

Walker said he believes that the purpose of the RSC is to build strong public policy that respects conservative values.

“I want to see the RSC stay certainly strong and policy driven, but I also want us to take on a challenge to take this new message into communities that we all get a chance to represent and hopefully see some success,” Walker said.

In keeping with his stated goal to strengthen the RSC’s conservative message, Walker said he also wants to reach out to those who might not consider themselves part of the Republican Party but have shared values.

“We have got to make a concerted effort to go into places

where 'Republican' has not been a great word," Walker said. "And it's easy to preach to the choir ... but we have to make sure that we're doing everything [we can]."

Before running for office, Walker served as a minister for 16 years, receiving his bachelor's degree in biblical studies from Piedmont Baptist College, now known as Piedmont International University.

During his years in ministry, Walker led mission trips to inner city communities, served as a college lecturer, and in 2013 began his campaign to run for Congress.

Walker was elected in 2014 to serve in North Carolina's 6th District.

In a September letter, Walker said his ministerial experience has made him well-suited for the position of RSC chairman.

"Serving almost two decades in vocational ministry is surprisingly applicable training for Congress," Walker wrote. "As a minister, one must learn to navigate waters in a constantly changing environment and stay focused on higher objectives, knowing you may not always please every individual."

Walker said he is excited for his new role as RSC chairman and sees this position as an opportunity to make good on promises made to his constituents.

"Winning is only an opportunity," Walker said. "What we do with it is how we'll be judged." {eoa}

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