

DARRELL ISSA NEEDS A NEW BABY-SITTER

✘ If the Democratic Party wants to survive the next two years, it needs to find a new baby-sitter for Darrell Issa.

After all, no one was more gleefully prepared after the shellacking last Tuesday to take over and cause trouble for Democrats than Issa. He's been planning a series of witch hunts for months. And since Tuesday, Issa has made it clear just how expansive he intends those witch hunts to be.

California Rep. Darrell Issa is already eyeing a massive expansion of oversight for next year, including hundreds of hearings; creating new subcommittees; and launching fresh investigations into the bank bailout, the stimulus and, potentially, health care reform.

Issa told POLITICO in an interview that he wants each of his seven subcommittees to hold "one or two hearings each week."

"I want seven hearings a week, times 40 weeks," Issa said.

Issa is also targeting some ambitious up-and-comers like Reps. Jason Chaffetz of Utah, Patrick McHenry of North Carolina and Jim Jordan of Ohio – all aggressive partisans – to chair some of his subcommittees.

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To give an idea of how expansive Issa's oversight plans are, look at the record of Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) when he chaired the oversight committee during in the 110th Congress during George W. Bush's presidency. Waxman held 203 oversight hearings in two years; Issa has signaled he's prepared to hold about 280 in just one year.

The current Chair of Oversight, Ed Towns, is not up to the task of keeping Issa in check.

As I noted two years ago, Towns was never all that interested in Oversight; to him it was a gavel and nothing more. Plus, he's funded by some of the industries—like Pharma—that need some oversight.

More importantly, the last two years have proven him unequal to the task of keeping Issa in line. Indeed, Issa has pushed Towns around to do things like focus on the Countrywide VIP program, even while Towns failed to do much positive with his gavel. Keeping Towns on as Ranking Member of Oversight will deprive us of any way of limiting the damage of Issa's witch hunts.

We need someone with both the intestinal fortitude and the progressive stripes to encourage Issa where we could use more Oversight—such as on the Wall Street bailout, which Issa promises to investigate—while obstructing Issa's efforts to shut down government or sniff through Obama's panty drawer, as Issa's predecessor, Dan Burton, did to Clinton.

We need someone like Elijah Cummings, who considered a run for Oversight Chair two years ago, and who has been one of the few people on Oversight demanding the Committee do what it is supposed to do. Cummings has been very good at using his spot on the Committee to expose the cronyism of government (particularly on the Wall Street bailout). And of critical importance, he speaks well enough to match a showboater like Issa. He has the ability to expose Issa's more partisan stunts as such. Finally, replacing Towns with Cummings will limit the complaints of the CBC (particularly in case Clyburn loses to Steny in the Whip fight).

The focus since Tuesday has been on the leadership fight between Steny and others. But just as important as picking the right leader to keep the caucus as effective as possible in the

minority, we need to pick a better baby-sitter
for Issa—someone like Elijah Cummings.