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Discouraging words aimed at Lewis

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Though he won re-election, November has not been kind to Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands.

First, his party lost control of the House of Representatives. That meant Lewis will lose his chairmanship of the House Appropriations Committee, which made him one of the most powerful lawmakers in the nation.

And now, already facing a federal investigation into his ties with a lobbying firm, Lewis' political future looks more unsettled.

The Hill, a newspaper that focuses on Congress, recently reported that some unnamed Republican lawmakers want to deny Lewis the ranking minority position on the Appropriations Committee because of the investigation.

And this week, the president of the conservative California Club for Growth wrote a letter to Lewis requesting that he resign from Congress.

In the letter, Shawn Steel, a former chairman of the California Republican Party, blamed Lewis in part for the poor showing by Republican candidates in last week's election. The letter was posted on FlashReport, a Republican-friendly blog.

"Essentially, your efforts to promote congressional free-spending ways led to the demoralization of conservatives and betrayed the GOP spirit of 1994," the letter stated.

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"Worse than that, under your leadership you personally obstructed a modified line-item veto, refused to support 'sun-setting' useless government agencies, enhanced shameful 'earmarking' or pork barreling to historic atmospheric levels, as well as larded more spending into 'supplemental spending bills.'"

Lewis spokesman Jim Specht responded by saying that Lewis has received support from the GOP's California delegation, "as well as a strong endorsement from the Republican members of the Appropriations Committee to remain as ranking member in the upcoming Congress."

Specht added that as chairman, Lewis rejected nearly \$45 billion in additional spending sought by Democrats.

"While he has been chairman, the committee has reduced non-defense, non-homeland security spending by \$1.4 billion below Fiscal Year 2005,"

Specht said by e-mail. "He has vowed as ranking member to continue that fight against Democratic efforts to spend more taxpayer dollars."

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