



## Brothers Levin wield gavels

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WASHINGTON -- Two Levins, two chairmanships. Simple as that.

House Democrats made U.S. Rep. Sander Levin of Royal Oak acting chairman of the revenue-raising Ways and Means Committee on Thursday, putting him in the thick of future battles over everything from tax policy and trade rules to unemployment benefits.

The 78-year-old, pro-union Levin said he plans to press forward "vigorously" with the Democratic agenda. Meanwhile, his ascension, taken with his younger brother Carl's chairmanship of the Senate Armed Services Committee, creates what the Christian Science Monitor called "one of the most powerful brother acts in Washington since the Kennedys."

The Office of the House Historian said there have been four instances of brothers serving as chairs of congressional committees at the same time but none since 1881. And there is no precedent for brothers chairing committees as powerful and prestigious as those headed by the Levins.

Sander Levin, first elected to Congress in 1982, came to the chairmanship after several days of confusion over who would take the committee reins.

New York's Charles Rangel, who Sander Levin calls a friend, had been the chairman. He stepped down Wednesday morning with ethical questions about his personal finances and travel yet to be resolved. House rules held that the next Democrat in line -- Pete Stark of California -- took the job, but news media reports indicated his liberal positions and controversial past statements didn't sit well with some on the committee.

On Thursday, Stark stepped aside to remain chairman of Ways and Means' Health subcommittee.

No one was prouder of Sander Levin's appointment than younger brother Carl, 75, a former Detroit city councilman who was first elected to the Senate in 1978. He said Congress couldn't find "a harder worker or nicer guy anywhere and that counts around here."

He added, "I've been proud of him all my life. He's been my lifelong best buddy."

Brother Sander said he's well prepared for the new position. "Most important is to help to

create jobs for people," he said.

What's unclear is whether Levin would hold onto the chair should Rangel resolve the questions dogging him.

On the other hand, even if the House were to change political hands next year, there's a good chance a Michigander would be chairman of Ways and Means: The ranking Republican member is Dave Camp of Midland.