

Large number of Jesuit college alumni serving in 111th Congress

WASHINGTON - With a new president and members of the House and Senate sworn into office, officials of U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities have something to crow about, with a whopping 52 members of the 111th Congress who are alumni of their institutions.

That's close to 10 percent of the 535 members of the current Congress, with 11 Jesuit alumni in the Senate and 41 in the House of Representatives, according to a newly released report by the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in Washington.

Some of the Jesuit alumni are new to Congress and a few are high-ranking members, including House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., House Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, Senate Assistant Majority Leader Richard Durbin, D-Ill., and the chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and special assistant to the speaker of the House, Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., the report said.

Of the 52 alumni, 34 received graduate or professional degrees from Jesuit universities, the report said.

There are 15 Jesuit institutions represented by alumni in the 111th Congress, with Georgetown University in Washington having the most with 18, followed by Boston College with seven, and the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., and Fordham University in New York with four each, the report said.

"With the many challenges facing our nation, we are happy that our Jesuit college and university alumni are leading the congressional response to them," said Jesuit Father Charles Currie, president of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.

"Our graduates, who have dedicated their lives to the highest levels of public service, have been educated at institutions that place great value on academic excellence, competent leadership and compassionate service," Father Currie said.

“We are proud of our Jesuit alumni who continue to represent us with distinction and inspire us with their commitment to lead and serve.”

Jesuit Father John P. Schlegel, president of Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., said his institution has a long tradition of its graduates seeking elected office, on the local, state and national level.

“Among the educational objectives of Jesuit education is to instill in our graduates a sense of justice, a disposition for civic engagement and a commitment to service,” Father Schlegel told Catholic News Service. “Jesuit-educated members of Congress bring these values to the public forum and relate them to issues affecting the common good.”

Elected office is reflective of the time-honored Jesuit mission of developing one’s God-given talents and using them in the service of others, said Jack Dunn, a spokesman for Boston College.

“The Jesuits have always believed that their graduates can affect the social order by being leavens of good for wider society,” Mr. Dunn said. “Serving in Congress is one way to accomplish that goal.”

Though having 52 Jesuit alumni in Congress now is a significant accomplishment, the 110th Congress holds the record for having the most Jesuit graduates at one time, with a total of 54, said Melissa Collins Di Leonardo, a spokeswoman for the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.

“We are proud of the many achievements of our Georgetown alumni, including those who have devoted themselves to public service in our nation’s Congress,” said Andy Pino, a spokesman for Georgetown. “Through their service, they are real examples of those who are living the Jesuit value of educating leaders to be women and men for others.”