

## Boehner, Cole to release election plan

By: [Patrick O'Connor](#)

May 21, 2008 06:04 AM EST

After a week of tension and recriminations following a special election loss in Mississippi, House Minority Leader John A. Boehner and NRCC Chairman Tom Cole will unveil a series of changes Wednesday aimed at quelling criticism and positioning their party for November's elections.

Cole is expected to add veteran Republican political operative Ed Brookover to his staff as a consultant and liaison with lawmakers, GOP insiders said. Brookover, who served as the National Republican Congressional Committee's executive director from 1995 to 1999, has close ties to Boehner, Republican Whip Roy Blunt of Missouri and Republican Conference Chairman Adam Putnam of Florida, according to one GOP aide.

A source with knowledge of the discussions between Boehner and Cole said the minority leader has insisted that Cole also give more power to an advisory committee formed after the GOP lost a special election in Louisiana earlier this month. Under the plan Boehner and Cole will announce Wednesday, that advisory committee will meet weekly with NRCC staffers to monitor operations and help coordinate fundraising and other campaign activities. It is possible that former NRCC Chairman Tom Davis of Virginia will play an expanded role in guiding the advisory committee and, through it, the NRCC.

The moves represent a modest détente between Cole and Boehner, but they might not be enough to mollify a restive party rife with fears that November 2008 will be a replay of November 2006.

Rank-and-file Republicans met to clear the air Tuesday in a crowded, members-only session on the fifth floor of the Longworth House Office Building. Members who attended said the summit was typical of previous meetings, with lawmakers offering their individual visions for the party but failing to come to a consensus about a way forward.

Texas Rep. Jeb Hensarling, who called for the special session in his capacity as chairman of the Republican Study Committee, encouraged his colleagues to embrace eight conservative principles, including a constitutional amendment to reform the tax code and a unilateral earmark moratorium. A majority of the caucus rejected the moratorium proposal on two previous occasions.

Illinois Rep. Mark Kirk, a vocal moderate, reintroduced a "suburban agenda" that builds on one he and his colleagues first unveiled when Republicans controlled the chamber. The new version includes many of the same policy prescriptions as the original — college savings accounts and legislation to target online predators — plus new items, such as a food safety measure offered by Illinois Rep. Peter J. Roskam.

And individual members, such as South Carolina Rep. Bob Inglis, rolled out policy plans they believe will help Republicans retake the majority. These proposals dealt less with the hot-button social issues that have been the party's staple for more than a decade and

more with legislation aimed at consumers and families.

Boehner and his colleagues in the leadership began laying out principles for their own policy platform last week. But that rebranding push, and its accompanying policy component, has been marred by infighting among House Republicans as members argue over its specifics, and some lawmakers Tuesday expressed impatience with the pace.

Nevada Rep. Jon C. Porter, who was facing the prospect of a difficult reelection until his top challenger dropped out of the race, told leaders they should wrap up work on their plan by June and focus more on action than on planning.

Arizona Rep. John B. Shadegg echoed that sentiment, telling his Republican colleagues that “leadership” requires “acting, not talking.”

Members were also eager to get beyond the difference — in policy and tactics — that have divided moderate and conservative Republicans for years.

Kirk and others focused their remarks on the policies all members can support. Republican Policy Committee Chairman Thaddeus G. McCotter of Michigan said he was sympathetic to the positions Hensarling articulated, because they were similar to ones his committee put out earlier in the year.

“I felt a little like Dylan listening to Donovan cover his stuff,” McCotter said.