

LEG REG REVIEW 2007, Fourth Issue

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HOUSE READY FOR FINAL REORGANIZATION

The PA House of Representatives is finally ready to complete its re-organization. After the tumultuous proceedings re selection of Republican Dennis O'Brien (R-Phila.) by Democrats and Republican crossovers and the creation of a task force of reformers to examine House rules, some of the more mundane machinery needed to start the legislative machinery remained incomplete. Among them were appointments to committees since the party ratio for committees must be approved first and it cannot until the rules are approved. In addition, there will be a rush of bills introduced once committees are finalized since right now there are technically no committees to refer them to because of the incomplete reorganization.

In addition, there was a reprise of a contest between Appropriations Committee minority chairman Mario Civera (R-Delaware) and challenger Rep. John Maher (R-Allegheny) after Maher asserted that the November vote was invalid because one member voting was thought to be the new Chester County Representative but who ultimately lost to a Democrat after a recount.

Nonetheless there are committee chairs, some of the more relevant appearing below. As a reminder, Democrats are in the majority and are the chairmen with Republicans serving as minority chairmen. One surprise was the appointment of Democrat Tom Caltigirone (D-Berks) as chairman of the Judiciary Committee. He was the Democrat who publicly announced that he would vote for former speaker John Perzel (R-Phila.) over Democrat Bill DeWeese.

Some key committees of interest are:

APPROPRIATIONS (State Budget) Chair: Dwight Evans (D-Phila.); Min. Chair: Mario Civera (R-Del.)

AGING & OLDER ADULT SERVICES (health care, long-term care) Chair: Phyllis Mundy (D-Luzerne); Min. Chair: Tim Hennessey (R-Phila.)

COMMERCE Chair: Peter Daley (D-Wash.); Min. Chair: Carole Rubley (R-Chester)

FINANCE (tax bills) Chair: David Levdansky (D-Allegheny); Min. Chair: Steve Nickol (R-York)

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES (health insurance, health issues, health utilization) Chair: Frank Oliver (D-Phila.); Min. Chair: George Kenney (R-Phila.)

INSURANCE Chair: Tony DeLuca (D-Allegheny); Min. Chair: Nick Micozzie (R-Del.)

LABOR RELATIONS (Workers' Compensation) Chair: Robert Belfanti (D-Columbia); Min. Chair: Gene DiGirolamo (R-Bucks)

TRANSPORTATION Chair: Joe Markosek (D-Westmoreland); Min. Chair: Rick Geist (R-Blair)

MORE REORGANIZATION ITEMS

- Lancaster Democrat Mike Sturla was named Deputy Whip.
- Luzerne County's Phyllis Mundy is no longer in Democratic leadership because of O'Brien's election. With DeWeese not moving up, the earlier caucus lineup all moved down a peg, squeezing her out. She does hold a committee chairmanship however.
- Revenue Secretary Greg Fajt moved from that post to serving as a senior advisor to Governor Rendell. His successor (pending Senate approval) will be York businessman Tom Wolf.
- Meeting is the House Commission on Legislative Reform chaired by Democrat Josh Shapiro (D-Montgomery) who also has the title of Deputy Speaker and Republican Dave Steil (R-Bucks).
- Interestingly, minority chair of the new Gaming Committee is long-time gambling foe Paul Clymer (R-Bucks). Chairman will be Harold Jones (D-Phila.)
- Former Speaker John Perzel has assumed a new position, that of Speaker Emeritus.

SENATE COMMITTEES FINALIZED

Senate committees are finalized. Following are relevant committee chairs and minority chairs:

APPROPRIATIONS Chair: Gib Armstrong (R-Lancaster); Min. Chair Vincent Fumo (D-Phila.)
AGING & YOUTH Chair: Pat Vance (R-Cumberland); Min. Chair: Leanna Washington (D-Phila.)
BANKING & INSURANCE Chair: Don White (R-Indiana); Min. Chair: Mike Stack (D-Phila.)
COMMUNITY & ECON. DEV. Chair: Jane Earll (R-Erie); Min. Chair Gerald LaValle (D-Beaver)
FINANCE Chair: Pat Browne (R-Lehigh); Min. Chair: John Wozniak (D-Cambria)
LABOR & INDUSTRY Chair: John Gordner (R-Columbia); Min. Chair: Christine Tartaglione (D-Phila.)
PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE Chair: Ted Erikson (R-Chester); Min. Chair: Vincent Hughes (D-Phila.)
TRANSPORTATION Chair: Roger Madigan (R-Lycoming); Min. Chair: Barry stout (D-Wash.)

RENDELL STARTS TOUR TO PUSH HEALTH PLAN

Governor Rendell has begun his tour of Pennsylvania designed to promote support for his ambitious health plan released January 17. This week he concentrates on the northwest part of the state.

PAHU ACTIVE IN TWO HEALTH VENUES

The Pennsylvania Association of Health Underwriters (PAHU) sends a contingent to Washington this week to NAHU's Capitol Conference in Washington, DC. There, they will meet with members of the PA congressional delegation and staff on what the new Congress holds in store for health insurance as well as assessing the chances for passage of President Bush's State of the Union proposals (tax exemption for individual health premiums, taxation of health benefits for employees as income over a certain amount, association health plans, etc.) In Pennsylvania, PAHU is holding staff briefings at the Capitol. This year, the topic will be on universal health care so as to compare MA, CA, and PA plans.