

Legislative News



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Ohio's 70th governor seated; 132nd General Assembly convenes

In January, Ohio Republican Mike DeWine became the state's 70th governor following his defeat of Democrat challenger Richard Cordray in the November 2018 general elections. Gov. DeWine, who had been the state attorney general for the prior eight years, has held numerous elected positions in his 40 plus years in public service, including Greene County prosecutor, lieutenant governor under George Voinovich and U.S. senator. In popular press reports at the time of the governor's inauguration, he commented that the office of governor was the one to which he aspired most. The governor's family was on hand as he took over the post from outgoing Gov. John Kasich, also a Republican.

In addition to a new governor, Ohio has a new General Assembly as a result of the 2018 elections. Some familiar faces return to the Statehouse, but there are also a fair number of new members of the Legislature, particularly in the Ohio House of Representatives. Leading the returning and new members of the House during the 132nd General Assembly is Glenford Republican Larry Householder. Speaker Householder, who held the position once previously, returned to the House following the 2016 elections. The remainder of the Republican House leadership team includes: Speaker Pro Tempore Jim Butler of Dayton, Floor Leader Bill Seitz of Cincinnati, Majority Whip Jay Edwards of Nelsonville and Assistant Majority Whip Laura Lanese of Grove City. The Democratic caucus elected Representative Emilia Sykes of Akron to serve as its minority leader, Kristin Boggs of Columbus to serve as assistant minority leader, Kent Smith of Euclid as minority whip and Paula Hicks-Hudson of Toledo as assistant minority whip.

In the Senate, the Republican caucus decided before the end of 2018 to maintain Sens. Larry Obhof of Montville Township and Bob Peterson of Washington Courthouse as Senate president and president pro tempore, respectively. As such, all that remained in a recent caucus leadership vote was selecting the majority floor leader and the majority whip. Sen. Matt Huffman of Lima was chosen to replace Randy Gardner, who had been previously elected majority floor leader, but resigned from the Senate following his appointment as chancellor of the Department of Higher Education by Gov. DeWine. Sen. Jay Hottinger of Newark was elected as majority whip, replacing Huffman. The Senate Democratic caucus chose Kenny Yuko of Richmond Heights as its minority leader, Cecil Thomas of Cincinnati as the assistant minority leader, Sean O'Brien of Bazetta as the minority whip and Sandra Williams of Cleveland as the assistant minority whip.

Ohio Retirement Study Council: Members not yet appointed; No February meeting

At the beginning of each new General Assembly (GA), the Senate president and the speaker of the House appoint members to the standing committees of their respective chambers and to various other committees on which legislators serve, such as the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC). Among other things, the ORSC is tasked with vetting pension-related legislation. There are nine voting members of ORSC: three members of the

(continued on Page 2)

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Director
Phone: 614-227-4012
Fax: 614-744-3341
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House, three members of the Senate and three gubernatorial appointees. Legislators serving on the Council serve, generally speaking, for the duration of the two-year GA. As a new GA is getting underway, new appointments to the Council will likely be made in the relative near future. Looking to the Council that served during the previous GA, the senator representing the Democratic caucus is no longer in the Legislature due to term limits so that seat is open. Of the members from the House, one, Kirk Schuring (R-Canton) has moved from the House to the Senate and another, Dan Ramos (D-Lorain) was also subject to term limits and is no longer serving in the Legislature. As such, there are three seats for certain open on the Council — one from the Senate and two from the House — and it's not out of the realm of possibility that Sen. Jay Hottinger, a council member in the previous GA may not be reappointed due to assuming a leadership position, leaving two Senate seats to be filled instead of just one. The remaining legislators who served on the Council are Sen. Steve Wilson (R-Maineville) and Rep. Rick Carfagna (R-Genoa Township). In a number of instances, returning legislators have continued serving on the Council, but it remains to be seen who President Obhof and Speaker Householder will appoint. Staff is monitoring and will report. However, without the legislators being appointed, the Council meeting tentatively scheduled for February was cancelled.