

MIRS Capitol Capsule, Tuesday, January 9, 2007

'New Economy,' Quality Of Life Highlight New Committees

House Democrats are prepared to roll out a list of 23 standing committees as part of the House rules, up one committee from the 22 the Republican majority featured last year. The most interesting change is the creation of a new 11-member committee known as the "New Economy and Quality of Life" committee.

Democrats hope to name the chairs and members of the news committee by Jan. 23, when the Legislature returns for its first week of real action, Wednesday's opening session day being more reserved for speeches and the assignment of seats.

However, this new committee set-up will be put into the rules and because of the slight expansion, more House members may be asked to serve on five committees, something the Republicans saw to a small extent last year. While the lack of committee assignments is notable, it's not unusual, some observers say given the unexpected change in power from the 93rd to 94th Legislature.

Also, one of the other more interesting moves is the breaking apart of the former Oversight, Elections and Ethics Committee into the Ethics and Elections Committee (eight members) and the new Oversight and Investigations Committee (five members), presumably a move to watch dog-type committee.

The former Local Government and Urban Policy Committee is getting a face lift, turning into the Intergovernmental, Urban and Regional Affairs Committee. It will stay at 11 members.

The former Employment Relations, Training and Safety Committee will become the Labor Committee. The membership will change from seven to 11 members.

The former Conservation, Forestry & Outdoor Recreation Committee and the former Natural Resources, Great Lakes, Land Use and the Environmental Committee are getting shuffled into two newly spun committees — the Great Lakes and Environment Committee (15 members) and the Tourism, Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources Committee (11 members).

The former Higher Education and Career Preparation Committee is disappearing, getting folded into the Education Committee. As of now, Education has 19 members, but it could grow to 22 with the addition of the Higher Education piece.

The former Veterans Affairs & Homeland Security Committee is changing its name to the Military, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Committee. It will keep nine members.

The 14 committees staying the same include: Agriculture (11 members); Appropriations (29); Banking & Financial Services (9); Commerce (19); Energy & Technology (19); Family & Children Services (9); Government Operations (9, change from 8); Health Policy (17); Insurance (17); Judiciary (15); Regulatory Reform (9); Senior Health, Security & Retirement (9); Tax Policy (17); and Transportation (17).