

November 29, 2010

LAME DUCK

Anyone who has been around the Legislature for any length of time knows better than to make definite statements on what will or will not occur in the lame duck legislative session.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) has stated the Senate will not be in session past Dec. 2 and Speaker Andy Dillon (D-Redford Twp.) has told some reporters the incoming Snyder administration has not asked for anything and only cats and dog bills will be dealt with in the House. If that is the case, it would appear not much of importance will be done in the three days of session that is scheduled.

Bishop has pronounced the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) legislation dead; supposedly the Blue Cross reform bills are not quacking; and no action is expected on legislation that would provide for increased transportation revenues.

Rumblings that teacher tenure reform might see some action, is doubtful. But the so-called Aerotropolis legislation that would allow the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) to designate up to five Next Michigan Development Corporations charged with overseeing special tax-free zones not limited to just around Detroit Metropolitan Airport could take flight during lame duck.

SUNDAY DRINKING LAW

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has signed into law legislation (HB 6224 ó P.A. 213) that will allow for the purchase of alcohol on Sunday mornings and Christmas as well as limited free samples of beer and wine at grocery stores, bars and restaurants beginning December 1.

Specifically, the legislation allows alcohol sales beginning at 7 a.m. on Sundays with a \$160 license fee as well as off-site sampling rooms for small spirit distillers.

The new legislation does not allow bars and restaurants to serve alcohol at offsite catered events nor does it provide for liquor licenses for some public colleges.

The measure is a modified version of legislation vetoed earlier this year by Granholm, which according to her, was too broad and exceeded the FY 2011 budget agreement.

NEW LEGISLATURE, NEW LEADERSHIP

When the new Legislature convenes in January there will be new leadership in both the House and Senate as a result current leaders are term-limited out of office.

In the Senate, Sen. Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) becomes Senate Majority Leader. Sen. Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing) will lead the Democratic Caucus as Senate Minority Leader.

Other leadership positions in the Senate are: Sen.-elect Arlan Meekhof (R-West Olive) as Majority Floor Leader; Sen.-elect Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton) as President Pro Tem; Sen.-elect Dave Hildenbrand (R-Lowell) as Assistant Majority Leader; Sen.-elect Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair) as Assistant Majority Floor Leader; Sen.-elect Rick Jones (R-Grand Ledge) as Majority Caucus Chair; Sen.-elect Patrick Colbeck (R-Canton Twp.) as Assistant Majority Caucus Chair; Sen.-elect Jack Brandenburg (R-Harrison Twp.) as Majority Caucus Whip; Sen.-elect Darwin Booher (R-Evart) as Assistant Majority Caucus Whip; and Sen.-elect Goeff Hansen (R-Hart) as Assistant President Pro Tem.

In the House, Rep. James ōJaseö Bolger (R-Marshall) has been elected Speaker of the House. Rep. Rich Hammel (D-Mt. Morris) has been elected to lead the 47-member Democratic Caucus as House Minority Leader.

Other leadership positions in the House are: Majority Floor Leader; Rep. John Walsh (R-Livonia) as Speaker Pro Tem; Rep. Pete Lund (R-Shelby Twp.) as Majority Caucus Whip; Rep. David Agema (R-Grandville) as Majority Caucus Chair; Rep. Paul Opsommer (R-DeWitt) and Rep.-elect Margaret OŕBrien (R-Portage) as Majority Associate Speakers Pro Tem; Rep.-elect Lisa Posthumus Lyons (R-Alto) and Rep.-elect Jeff Farrington (R-Utica) as Majority Assistant Floor Leaders; and Rep.-elect Amanda Price (R-Park Twp.) as Majority Assistant Caucus Chair.

In addition to Hammel, House Democrats elected Rep. Kate Segal (D-Battle Creek) as Minority Floor Leader.

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRS NAMED

Sen. Roger Kahn (R-Saginaw Twp.) has been tapped by Senate Majority Leader-elect Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) to chair the powerful Appropriations Committee. In the House, Speaker-elect James ōJaseö Bolger (R-Marshall) has selected Rep. Chuck Moss (R-Birmingham) the ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee this term to chair the committee next term.

BOLGER/RICHARDVILLE PICK CHIEFS OF STAFF

Incoming House Speaker James ōJaseö Bolger (R-Marshall) has tapped Suzanne Miller Allen as his chief of staff. Allen, a long-time Republican political operative, is currently chief of staff for House Minority Leader Kevin Elsenheimer (R-Kewadin). New Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) is expected to take on Matt Hanley, assistant chief of staff for current Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop (R-Rochester) as his chief of staff.

SNYDER PUTTING TEAM TOGETHER

Gov.-elect Rick Snyder is moving forward to put in place his administration before he takes the oath of office on Jan. 1.

Snyder has crossed the political aisle to name out-going House Speaker Andy Dillon (D-Redford Twp.) as his treasurer; Bill Rustem, current owner of Public Sector Consultants as director of strategy; and former Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus (R-Lowell) as senior advisor on legislative affairs.

Reporting to Posthumus as Snyder legislative lobbyists will be Sally Durfee, current chief of staff for Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck) and Darin Ackerman, current chief of staff for Sen. Wayne Kuipers (R-Holland).

Dennis Muchmore, former Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) executive director and founder of Muchmore Harrington Smalley and Associates lobbying firm, will be chief of staff; Geralyn Lasher, former Gov. John Engler's deputy press secretary and former spokeswoman for Department of Community Health will be Communications Director and Michigan Supreme Court legal counsel Michael Gadola will become legal affairs director.

UNIONS SUE

Three state employee unions have filed suit in Ingham County Circuit Court in an effort to block the state's measure forcing workers to pay 3 percent of their salaries toward retirement health care.

Members of United Auto Workers Local 6000, the Michigan State Employees Association and AFSCME Council 25 all filed separate lawsuits against the state of Michigan contending the wage provision which is part of the recent retirement incentive package violates the state constitution because it nullifies provisions of collective bargaining agreements.