

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF JANUARY 21, 2019

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS/CHAIRS IDENTIFIED

House Speaker Lee Chatfield announced committee assignments last week with key leadership positions including:

Appropriations— Chair Rep. Shane Hernandez (R-Port Huron), Vice Chair Rep. Aaron Miller (R-Sturgis)

Ways and Means—Rep. Brandt Iden (R-Oshtemo Township)

Judiciary—Rep. Graham Filler (R-Dewitt)

Government Operations—Rep. Jason Sheppard (R-Temperance)

Additional committee assignments include:

Agriculture—Chair Rep. Julie Alexander (R-Hanover)

Commerce and Tourism—Chair Rep. Steve Marino (R-Harrison Township)

Communications and Technology—Chair Rep. Michele Hoitenga (R-Manton)

Education—Chair Rep. Pamela Hornberger (R-Chesterfield Township)

Elections and Ethics—Chair Rep. Julie Calley (R-Portland)

Energy—Chair Rep. Joe Bellino (R-Monroe)

Families, Children and Seniors—Chair Rep. Kathy Crawford (R-Novl)

Financial Services—Chair Rep. Diana Farrington (R-Utica)

Health Policy—Chair Rep. Hank Vaupel (R-Handy Township)

Insurance—Chair Rep. Daire Rendon (R-Lake City)

Local Government and Municipal Finance—Chair Rep. Jim Lower (R-Cedar Lake)

Military, Veterans and Homeland Security—Chair Rep. Beau LaFave (R-Iron Mountain)

Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation—Chair Rep. Gary Howell (R-North Branch)

Oversight—Chair Rep. Matt Hall (R-Emmett Township)

Regulatory Reform—Chair Rep. Michael Webber (R-Rochester Hills)

Tax Policy—Chair Rep. Lynn Afendoulis (R-Grand Rapids Township)

Transportation—Chair Rep. Jack O'Malley (R-Lake Ann)

Joint Committee on Administrative rules—Chair Rep. Matt Maddock (R-Milford)

House Fiscal Agency Governing Committee—Chair Rep. Shane Hernandez (R-Port Huron)

Legislative Council—Chair Rep. Lee Chatfield (R-Levering)

MICHIGAN HOUSE NAMES SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE ON AUTO INSURANCE

The state House has created a temporary committee to focus on auto insurance reform. The committee, led by Rep. Jason Wentworth, (R-Clare), will push for bi-partisan support to change Michigan's no-fault auto insurance.

House Speaker Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) has set reforming the high cost of auto insurance in Michigan as a top goal, and said that the new committee will "allow us to focus on delivering a real solution this term and lowering rates for hard-working Michigan families."

Other members of the committee include Rep. Daire Rendon (R-Lake City), Rep. Donna Lasinski (D-Scio Township), Rep. Ben Frederick (R-Owosso), Rep. Beau LaFave (R-Iron Mountain), Rep. Lynn Afendoulis (R-Grand Rapids Township), Rep. Terry Sabo (D-Muskegon), Rep. Kyra Harris Bolden (D-Southfield) and Rep. Karen Whitsett (D-Detroit).

Democratic leader, Rep. Christine Greig (D-Farmington Hills), supports the bipartisan committee, and its efforts to "ensure we have a fair plan that makes high-quality auto insurance affordable."

In addition to the House committee, the Senate addressed auto-insurance reform with Senate Bill 1, which does not propose specific reforms, but will serve as a starting point for negotiations in the Senate.

Negotiations in both chambers are expected to address past proposals to replace the mandate requiring all auto insurance plans to guarantee unlimited lifetime medical benefits with a plan that allows motorists to choose reduced-price, reduced-coverage policies, along with creating a no-fault fee schedule for hospitals.

Attorney General Dana Nessel has also created a new Auto Insurance Fraud Specialist position in her office.

CHATFIELD INVITES TRUMP TO HOUSE CHAMBER FOR STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

House Speaker Lee Chatfield invited President Donald Trump to deliver his annual State of the Union Address at the state Capitol in Michigan last week after U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi requested Trump delay the speech because of alleged security concerns during the partial federal government shutdown.

According to a Tweet and Facebook post by Chatfield, Trump told Chatfield in a call on Tuesday morning that he had "other plans," and "...but as we discussed, I look forward to hosting you in Michigan again soon. Keep up the great work!"

ENGLER RESIGNS AS MSU PRESIDENT – AVOIDS TERMINATION

Michigan State University Interim President John Engler resigned after five Democratic members of the MSU Board requested his resignation and made plans to fire him if he did not do so.

The call for his resignation came after Engler recently said to the Detroit News Editorial Board that some of the Nassar survivors "have been in the spotlight who are still enjoying that moment at times, you know, the awards and recognition."

Engler sent an 11-page resignation letter to MSU Trustee and Board Chair Dianne Byrum on January 16 summarizing achievements that happened while he was interim president, and saying that it “has been an honor to serve my beloved university.” The letter stated for his resignation to be effective January 23, but the board accelerated the date to January 17.

Engler was appointed to the position nearly a year ago. Two of Engler’s Republican supporters on the Board did not seek re-election in 2018, and were replaced by Democrats Trustee Brianna Scott and Trustee Kelly Tebay. In addition, Trustee George Perles was replaced by Democrat Nancy Schlichting, leading to five Democrats who were not Engler backers.

Satish Udpa, the university’s executive vice president of administrative services was appointed interim president by the MSU Board of Trustees and took over the position on January 17. Udpa was also former dean of the school’s college of engineering.

The search for the university’s 21st president is still ongoing.

BENSON SEEKS TO SETTLE GERRYMANDERING LAWSUIT

After taking office Jan. 1, Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson replaced former GOP Secretary of State Ruth Johnson as named defendant on a lawsuit against the state which alleges partisan gerrymandering in 2011 when Republican lawmakers approved legislative and congressional district boundaries.

As the new defendant, Benson is seeking a potential consent agreement to prevent the case from going to trial, as scheduled, in February. If she settles, the potential deal with plaintiffs could incur a new district boundaries map for the 2020 elections.

Benson also filed a court brief this week backing a Republican request to delay the case—although for different reasons. Republicans had filed the request pending consideration of similar cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Following Benson’s brief, attorneys representing Michigan Republicans are seeking records from Benson, claiming she has a “potential bias” in favor of the plaintiffs

MM&A Briefs

Kildee helps initiate Congressional PFAS Task Force

U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee (D-Flint) and U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pennsylvania) announced a bi-partisan Congressional PFAS Task Force earlier this week to address PFAS contamination. Members of the committee from Michigan include: U.S. Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Watersmeet), U.S. Rep. Bill Huizenga (R-Zeeland), U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Dearborn), U.S. Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-Southfield), U.S. Rep. Andy Levin (D-Bloomfield Township), U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Holly), U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens (D-Rochester Hills), U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Detroit), U.S. Rep. Fred Upton (R-St. Joseph) and U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Tipton).

Whitmer names Kletke as Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer named Malcolm Kletke as Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs for the

governor's office and will be her first lobbyist for the state Senate. Kletke was on Whitmer's staff for eight years when she was in the Legislature.

Calendar of Important Events

Jan. 30 Sen. Curtis Hertel Jr. (D-East Lansing) Fundraiser
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine, Lansing

Feb. 5 State of the State Address – Gov. Gretchen Whitmer
Location: 7 p.m., Capitol Building, Lansing

Feb. 6 Rep. Brad Slagh (R-Zeeland) Fundraiser
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) Fundraiser
Location: 7:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing

Rep. Pam Hornberger (R-Chesterfield) Fundraiser
Location: 11:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing