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**Legislators elect their leaders for next year’s session**

*By WisPolitics.com*

A new two-year legislative session begins in January, and for the first time in years, majority Republicans have a new majority leaderand a new co-chair of the budget committee.

The incoming GOP leader in the Senate is Devin LeMahieu. He said he expects to have a similar leadership style to outgoing leader Scott Fitzgerald, a newly elected congressman who will resign his state Senate seat in January.

“Obviously, we’re two different people,” LeMahieu said. “But over the last six years, I’ve gotten to watch Congressman-elect Fitzgerald, and I learned a lot from him. I think we have pretty similar personalities where we’re fairly laid back.”

LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, beat out Sen. Roger Roth, R-Appleton, for the post during a closed caucus on Nov. 5, while Sen. Chris Kapenga, R-Delafield, was elected Senate president, the post currently held by Roth. LeMahieu, 48, was first elected to the Senate in 2014.

Sen. Alberta Darling, R-River Hills and the longtime co-chair of the Legislature’s budget committee, went into the Nov. 5 meeting vying for the No. 2 spot in leadership. But her office said she withdrew her name from consideration during the caucus. Darling has co-chaired the committee for a record six terms but was viewed as aligned with Roth heading into leadership elections. And a few days later, LeMahieu named Sen. Howard Marklein, R-Spring Green, as the new co-chair of the Joint Finance Committee.

In other races:

* Sen. Dan Feyen, R-Fond du Lac, was re-elected assistant majority leader.
* Sen. Pat Testin, R-Stevens Point, was elected president pro tempore,a post that was held by Marklein.
* Sen. Van Wanggaard, R-Racine, was re-elected caucus chair.
* Sen. Kathy Bernier, R-Lake Hallie, was elected caucus vice-chair.
* The other three caucuses all stuck with their current top leaders.

Assembly Republicans re-elected Robin Vos as speaker and Jim Steineke as majority leader, rejecting challenges from two members who had argued for a different approach. Republicans lost two seats in the November elections, but still have a wide majority.

In other Assembly GOP races:

* Rep. Tyler August, R-Lake Geneva, was re-elected speaker pro tempore after facing no opposition.
* Rep. Kevin Petersen, R-Waupaca, was elected assistant majority leader, beating out Reps. Shae Sortwell, R-Two Rivers, and Nancy VanderMeer, R-Tomah.
* Rep. Tyler Vorpagel, R-Plymouth, was elected caucus chair after mounting a late challenge to Rep. Dan Knodl, R-Germantown.
* Rep. Cindi Duchow, R-Town of Delafield, beat out Reps. Barb Dittrich, R-Oconomowoc, and Tim Ramthun, R-Campbellsport, for caucus vice-chair.
* Rep. Jessie Rodriguez, R-Oak Creek, was re-elected caucus secretary.
* Rep. Samantha Kerkman, R-Salem, was re-elected sergeant at arms, fending off a challenge from Rep. Scott Allen, R-Waukesha.

Assembly Democrats re-elected Gordon Hintz as minority leader without opposition. No Assembly Democratic leadership races were contested.

All incumbent leaders maintained their positions for the next session without any opposition, with Reps. Dianne Hesselbein, of Middleton, Mark Spreitzer, of Beloit, and Beth Meyers, of Bayfield, all staying on as assistant minority leader, caucus chair and caucus secretary, respectively.

Democrats also unanimously picked Rep. Lisa Subeck, of Madison, to serve as caucus vice-chair. She replaced state Rep. Steve Doyle, of Onalaska, who declined to seek another session in the leadership role.

And Rep. Kalan Haywood, of Milwaukee, became the caucus’ new sergeant at arms. He replaces Rep. Christine Sinicki, of Milwaukee, who nominated Haywood, 21, for the role, saying it’s time the caucus started grooming him “to move up” and that Democratic leadership should reflect the party’s diversity.

“Our caucus is starting to change,” Haywood, who is Black, said in an acceptance speech. “It’s bigger, more diverse and shifting alongside the people of Wisconsin.”

Senate Democrats also re-elected Janet Bewley, Town of Mason, as minority leader without opposition, despite losing two seats in the November elections. Republicans will hold a 21-12 margin in January.

Only one race was contested in the Senate Democratic caucus as the current assistant minority leader, Sen. Janis Ringhand, D-Evansville, fended off a challenge from Sen. Chris Larson, D-Milwaukee, a former minority leader.

Sen. Jeff Smith, D-Eau Claire, was elected caucus chair, while Senator-elect Melissa Sargent, D-Madison, was elected caucus vice-chair.

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