

The 129th Maine Legislature formally began earlier this week when 35 Senators and 151 Representatives were sworn in to their duly elected seats, kicking off the first session to feature one-party control of government in years. The November 6th elections not only saw Democrat Janet Mills prevail over Shawn Moody to succeed Republican Gov. Paul LePage, but legislative Democrats surge in each chamber. When the dust had settled they had emerged with a 21-14 majority in the State Senate and, due to the presence of unenrolled members, an 89-57-5 advantage in the House of Representatives.

As previously reported, the State Senate will be presided over by Sen. Troy Jackson (D) of Allagash, a populist from Aroostook County. Senators Nate Libby (D-Androscoggin) and Eloise Vitelli (D-Sagadahoc) round out Democratic leadership in the Senate as Majority Leader and Assistant Majority Leader, respectively. Meanwhile, Senators Dana Dow (R-Lincoln) and Jeff Timberlake (R-Androscoggin) have been selected by their caucus to serve as its Minority Leader and Minority Whip.

In the House, Speaker Sara Gideon (D-Freeport) will continue as Speaker though her leadership team has changed. Representatives Matt Moonen (D-Portland) and Ryan Fecteau (D-Biddeford) now serve as Majority Leader and Assistant Majority Leader, respectively, with Rep. Kathleen Dillingham (R-Oxford) and Rep. Harold Stewart (R-Presque Isle) newly elected as Minority Leader and Assistant Minority Leader.

The ceremonies were noted for their warm and congenial tone. This is generally viewed as a departure from the relative chaos of the last Legislature when a shutdown of state government lasted three days and both sessions made history for their length. In the Senate, incoming President Jackson has selected a seating chart that places Democrats and Republicans alongside one another in an effort to better relations. In addition, the proceedings coincided with the national day of mourning in honor of President George H.W. Bush, and he was warmly remembered amid many calls for bipartisanship.

Chief Justice Leigh Saufley of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court administered the oaths of office in each chamber as Gov. Paul LePage was recovering from surgery. This is widely believed to be the first time this particular eccentricity of the Maine State Constitution has been invoked.

Equally relevant was the selection of constitutional officers by the new Legislature. Democrats command such majorities that their nominees for the posts became de facto winners even before the

joint convention of the House and Senate, where the Attorney General, Secretary of State, and State Treasurer were formally chosen.

Prior to Wednesday's Swearing-In Day, Democrats had met in the House chamber to determine their nominees. Secretary of State Matt Dunlap and former Rep. Henry Beck of Waterville, who was running for Treasurer, were unopposed in their nominations. However, a highly-competitive race to be the Democratic nominee for Attorney General required four rounds of balloting to finally select a winner. Kennebec County District Attorney Maeghan Maloney was the low vote-getter on the initial ballot, which also included Senators Mike Carpenter (D-Aroostook) and Mark Dion (D-Cumberland), Rep. Aaron Frey (D-Bangor), and attorney Timothy Shannon of Yarmouth. Following the second vote, Carpenter, who served as Attorney General in the early 1990s, was eliminated and Dion was eliminated on the third vote. Finally, Frey prevailed over Shannon and will serve as Maine's top law enforcement officer.

While these races are generally uncontested when either party has significant legislative majorities, Republicans did attempt to reelect outgoing Treasurer Terry Hayes of Buckfield. Hayes, an unenrolled former Democrat, first won the office in 2014 with a coalition of Republicans and some Democrats. She was also a candidate for governor this year but failed to match the relative success of other recent independents. Beck consolidated the Democratic majorities and defeated her at the joint convention.

While the 129th Legislature has officially begun, it will stand adjourned until January 2nd when the 1st Regular Session effectively begins. Outgoing Attorney General Janet Mills will be inaugurated as governor on that day and her transition team has been steadily reviewing potential selections for key positions in her administration. With Mills serving as Chief Executive over majorities of her own party, the State House is certain to be a dynamic place in the coming session. We look forward to working with a diverse range of clients during that time on their particular needs.

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