

Legislative Update - Swearing In Day

On Wednesday, December 7th, 2016, the 128th Maine Legislature formally began with 'Swearing In Day', the annual ceremony where the victorious legislators-elect from the prior month's election are officially made senators and representatives. This is a day of much fanfare and a chance for family members to watch their loved ones' successes come to fruition as they begin their respective legislative careers.

The Governor must administer a separate oath of office to each legislative chamber as well as individual oaths to the House and Senate's presiding officers. The House is narrowly controlled by Democrats and former Asst. Majority Leader Sara Gideon (D-Freeport) was sworn in as Speaker of the House. In the Legislature's upper body, Sen. Mike Thibodeau (R-Waldo) will return for a second term as Senate President and lead a razor thin Republican majority of 18-17.



In both swearing in ceremonies Governor LePage expressed strong hopes that the Legislature would work with him and support legislation he plans to introduce to address referenda that was last month successful at the ballot box. The Governor hopes to see Question #2, an initiative to raise public education funding by placing a 3% tax on income over \$200,000, repealed or altered to placate the concerns of top earners. He also reserved strong words for Question #4, the recently successful minimum wage increase referendum, and told both bodies he would submit legislation to repeal aspects of the policy that affect the tipped-wage and tipped-wage credit taken advantage of by employers.

While proceedings in the Senate involved no irregularities the House saw a moment of fireworks when Rep. Lawrence Lockman (R-Amherst) moved for a review of Rep. George Hogan's (D-Old Orchard Beach) residency, the implication being that rumors Hogan had moved to Saco may in fact be true. House Minority Leader Ken Fredette (R-Newport) quickly moved to quash Lockman's motion and the Amherst Republican's inquiry was cut short.

However, House Republicans did place a candidate in nomination against Rep. Gideon when they nominated Rep. Sheldon Mark Hanington (R-Lincoln) as their pick for the chamber's presiding officer.

The Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate were also chosen, in addition to their assistants. The Senate has returned Heather R. Priest as its Secretary and selected former legislative aide Bradley Sawyer to be Asst. Secretary. In the House, Rob Hunt will once again serve as Clerk of the House with Jennifer McGowan as his assistant.

Following a lunchtime recess, most of the 186 members of the Legislature returned for a joint caucus in the House Chamber where they selected the four constitutional officers for the next two years. The most serious challenge to an incumbent was mounted by former Rep. Adam Goode who tried to rally Democrats against former Rep. Terry Hayes, who was supported by Republicans. Goode fell short in his bid.

Republicans also placed Josh Tardy in nomination for attorney general against the current office holder, Janet Mills. Mills also turned back the challenge and will continue to serve. Secretary of State Matt Dunlap and State Auditor Pola Buckley, both Democrats, were unchallenged and will remain in their respective offices.