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House committees, chairmen announced

By Jim Small, jim.small@azcapitoltimes.com

Incoming House Speaker Kirk Adams has cut the number of House committees to 15 from 18.

Speaker-elect Kirk Adams has winnowed the number of committees the Arizona House of Representatives will have during the next two years and announced who will chair those panels.

The 18 committees of the past two years has been trimmed to 15 committees for the upcoming term, which begins in January. Some committees, such the Education (K-12) and Higher Education panels, have been consolidated into a single committee. Others, such as the Homeland Security and Property Rights Committee, have been eliminated.

Scottsdale Republican John Kavanagh will head up the Appropriations Committee, which figures to be the most high-profile committee, as the state is grappling with an economic slowdown that has left it drowning in red ink. Adams has promised the Appropriations Committee will serve a more important role in crafting the state budget than it has in recent years.

Majority Leader Tom Boone, who will step down from that post in January, will head the new Public Employees, Retirement and Entitlement Reform Committee. Another new committee, Natural Resources and Rural Affairs, will be chaired by Bill Konopnicki.

Gilbert Republican Warde Nichols will lead the Rules Committee, which is responsible for reviewing every bill for constitutionality before it can reach the floor. Generally, the committee's action is perfunctory, but the chairman has the power to prevent any bill from reaching the floor for debate by the entire body.

Steve Yarbrough, who pulled out of the race for speaker and encouraged his supporters to elect Adams the day before Republicans voted on their next leader, will be Speaker Pro Tempore.

One noticeable absence from the list of chairmanships was current House Speaker Jim Weiers, whom Adams defeated in a Nov. 6 caucus election.

Shortly after that caucus meeting, Adams said Weiers would not have a diminished role in the upcoming session.

"He'll be a very important part of the caucus. He brings a lot of experience to the table," Adams said.

Full House committee rosters will be announced in the coming weeks.

Incoming Senate President Bob Burns is expected to announce committee and chairmanship selections this week.

House committees and chairmen:

Appropriations – Rep. John Kavanagh, Scottsdale

Commerce – Rep. Michele Reagan, Scottsdale

Education – Rep. Rich Crandall, Mesa

Environment – Rep. Ray Barnes, Phoenix

Banking and Insurance – Rep. Nancy McLain, Bullhead City

Government – Rep. Sam Crump, Anthem

Health and Human Services – Rep. Nancy Barto, Phoenix

Judiciary – Rep. Adam Driggs, Phoenix

Military Affairs and Public Safety – Rep. Jerry Weiers, Glendale

Natural Resources and Rural Affairs – Rep. Bill Konopnicki, Safford

Public Employees, Retirement and Entitlement Reform – Rep. Tom Boone, Peoria

Rules – Rep. Warde Nichols, Gilbert

Transportation and Infrastructure – Rep. Andy Biggs, Gilbert

Water and Energy – Rep. Lucy Mason, Prescott

Ways and Means – Rep. Rick Murphy