

WAPA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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A. 2005 Legislature

1. *TABOR Will Return in 2005*

Leaders in both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature have pledged to bring TABOR (the “Taxpayers Bill of Rights”) back to life in the 2005 session, which begins in January. In the Senate, Majority Leader Dale Schultz stated in a November 9 press release, that he is “committed to holding hearings and having a vote on TABOR as soon as possible.” In addition, Senator Schultz announced that Senator-elect Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend) will take the lead on TABOR in the Senate.

Speaker of the State Assembly, John Gard (R-Peshtigo), has also committed to addressing TABOR early next session. Representative Frank Lasee (R-Green Bay) is the lead author of TABOR in the Assembly. On December 9, 2004, Representative Lasee released an updated version of TABOR. (To review a copy of this document, go to <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm02/news/05-04674.pdf> .)

Representative Lasee also recently wrote an Op-Ed piece for the Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune clarifying “a number of misconceptions about both the property tax freeze and the Taxpayer Bill of Rights” that were contained in a November 30th editorial published in that paper. Lasee wrote, “TABOR does not freeze property taxes. It allows spending to grow at the rate of inflation plus new construction. ... The property tax “freeze” was a separate piece of legislation, not part of TABOR, which also did not freeze property taxes. It, too, allowed the levy to grow by the rate of new construction.” He also suggested that anyone who would like to be better informed about TABOR, should visit his web site at www.FrankLasee.net. (The complete Op-Ed is available online at <http://www.wisinfo.com/dailytribune/wrtdtopinion/284100266534326.shtml> .)

2. *Senator Lazich Steps Down as Assistant Majority Leader*

On December 2, 2004, Senator Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin), announced that she would step down as the Senate’s Assistant Majority Leader. Lazich was at the center of a controversy following Senator Dale Schultz’s election as Majority leader when she admitted telling a Milwaukee group that she had voted for Senator Fitzgerald, when it was later revealed that she voted for Senator Schultz. Schultz was elected to the leadership position with a vote of 10-9.

On December 14, 2004, Senate Republicans met and elected Senator Neal Kedzie (R-Elkhorn) as the new assistant majority leader. In addition to serving as assistant leader, Senator Kedzie will also chair the Senate Natural Resources and Transportation Committee and will serve on the Senate Campaign Finance Reform and Ethics

Committee, Agriculture and Insurance Committee, and Higher Education and Tourism Committee.

3. *Key Committee Chairs for 2005*

Both the Senate Majority Leader, Dale Schultz, and the Speaker of the State Assembly, John Gard, have announced which legislators will chair committees in each house next session. The following are a few of the committees that are most likely to be of interest to WAPA members:

- Joint Committee on Finance: Senator Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) and Representative Dean Kaufert (R-Neenah), co-chairs
- Senate Job Creation, Economic Development and Consumer Affairs: Ted Kanavas (R-Brookfield)
- Senate Veterans, Homeland Security, Military Affairs, Small Business and Government Reform: Ron Brown (R-Eau Claire)
- Assembly Economic Development: Terry McCormick (R-Appleton)
- Assembly Government Operations and Spending Limits: Frank Lasee (R-Green Bay)
- Assembly Property Rights and Land Management: Sheryl Albers (R-Reedsburg)
- Assembly Southeast Wisconsin Freeways: Mark Honadel (R-South Milwaukee)
- Assembly Urban & Local Affairs: Dan LeMahieu (R-Oostburg)

To read the biographies of any of the above listed legislators, go to www.legis.state.wi.us and click on “Senate” or “Assembly” to access the personal web pages for each legislator.

B. Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Municipal Annexation

At the November 18th meeting of the Joint Legislative Council Study Committee on Municipal Annexation, Chair Lasee asked for volunteers to form a subcommittee to work on draft legislation for committee consideration. Representative Mark Gottlieb, Warren Kraft, Roger Clark, Gerald Derr and J. Michael Mooney volunteered and were appointed by Chair Lasee to the subcommittee.

On December 9, 2004, the Subcommittee met to review and discuss a preliminary draft legislation relating to (1) municipal boundary agreements, including simplifying current procedures and providing for a mediated agreement procedure; (2) alternative dispute resolution and annexation; and (3) Department of Administration review of annexations. The subcommittee will make recommendations on draft legislation to the Committee at the next Committee meeting, which is likely to occur in early 2005.

To review the documents related to the subcommittee December meeting or the Committee's November meeting, go to <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/2004studies/ANNEX/index.htm> on the Internet.