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**Capitol View
Commentary by J.L. Schmidt**

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**The Times They Are A-Changin’**

*“Come* [*writers*](https://www.definitions.net/definition/writers) *and critics*

*Who* [*prophesize*](https://www.definitions.net/definition/prophesize) *with your pen*

*And keep your eyes wide*

*The* [*chance*](https://www.definitions.net/definition/chance) *won't come again*

*And don't* [*speak*](https://www.definitions.net/definition/speak) *too soon*

*For the wheel's* [*still*](https://www.definitions.net/definition/still) *in spin …*

*For the* [*times*](https://www.definitions.net/definition/times) *they are a-changin'”*

 Bob Dylan’s song lyrics set the perfect tone for what lies ahead for the 2023 Nebraska Legislature. If you thought this year’s session was one of the strangest … filibuster? Did somebody say filibuster? Just wait.

The potential for change next year focuses on the loss of influential, independent and moderate Republicans who often made the difference on major issues in the officially non-partisan Unicameral.

John McCollister, Mark Kolterman, John Stinner, and Matt Williams fit that description. After this year, all gone.

McCollister, the Republican son of a former U.S. Congressman from Omaha, proved to be a diplomat and mediator between the two sides when party politics reared its head. Kolterman, from Seward, ran the Retirement Committee, which dealt with some pretty heady teacher retirement issues, but also proved to be an asset in debates about economic development.

Stinner, a retired banker from Gering, steered the Appropriations Committee through some choppy fiscal waters and managed to keep the ship of state afloat with cash reserves that satisfied the Constitutional mandate. When the seas smoothed out with a glut of pandemic cash, he kept the crew on task instead of relaxing in the deck chairs.

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Williams, chair of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee, was another Republican who played well with others. A Gothenburg resident, he was gracious enough to give up his west-central Nebraska District 36 so it could be moved to accommodate population growth in far eastern Sarpy County.

Curt Friesen, Matt Hansen, Robert Hilkemann, Dan Hughes, Adam Morfeld. Gone.

Brett Lindstrom, term-limited but running for the Republican gubernatorial nomination, Gone. Term-limited Patty Pansing Brooks, running for Congress, Gone.

Sen. Williams is running for University of Nebraska Regent. Sen. Hansen is running for Lancaster County Clerk and Sen. Morfeld is running for Lancaster County Attorney.

The big loss, Sen. Steve Lathrop of Omaha, a Democrat finishing his third term after a term-limited four-year hiatus, has chosen not to run for a fourth term. As the oft outspoken advocate for prison reform, he said he’s worn out. He has been an excellent chair of the Judiciary Committee but admitted that it’s time to do something else with his life.

That’s 12 guaranteed new faces next year.

Now add in the possibility that Gov. Pete Ricketts might be positioned to appoint as many as three new senators before he leaves office in January -- and you could bet that he would choose dependable conservative Republicans.

Republican Sen. Mike Flood of Norfolk, who is running against Pansing Brooks, is only part way through a term. Sen. Mike Hilgers of Lincoln, a Republican, may be elected attorney general in November at the halfway point of his current four-year legislative term. Sen. Rich Pahls of Omaha, also a Republican who is halfway through a four-year term, has been absent from the Legislature recently due to health challenges. Status unknown.

The biggest change will come with a new face in the Governor’s Office. But I’m not going there, the primary is next week. Be sure to vote!

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*