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**Capitol View**

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**It’s a New Year and There’s a Whole Lotta New Going On**

Welcome to 2023, a new year with a whole lotta new going on at the State Capitol.

There’s a new governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, auditor and 14 new state senators assuming leadership roles in the Republican dominated Nebraska government. There will be a new U.S. Senator from Nebraska to be appointed by the new governor. There are 33 Republicans and 16 Democrats in the officially nonpartisan Legislature.

So, what does this mean to you and me? A new year marks a great chance to move one year further away from the Covid pandemic lock-downs and mask-ups. Hope springs eternal that medical science will find a wide-ranging vaccination or some other solution as we inch toward normalcy.

A bunch of new people in positions of authority marks a time to be cautious while we discern agendas and adjust to new management styles. Comfort levels will increase as the direction becomes clear. The selection of a new speaker and committee chairs will be instructive of the workings of the Legislature. The new governor’s first state of the state address should likewise be informative.

New Governor Jim Pillen, a former University of Nebraska football player in the Osborne era and a soon-to-resign University Regent, says he will commute to Lincoln from Pillen Farms at Columbus. The last Governor to actually live in the Mansion across the street south of the Capitol was Mike Johanns. Governor Kay Orr also lived in the mansion and oversaw a massive renovation project.

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His Lieutenant Governor Joe Kelly will likely be the presiding officer many days of the Legislature. Kelly was most recently the U.S. Attorney for Nebraska. Prior to that he was Lancaster County Attorney. He and Pillen have been friends since college.

Former Speaker of the Legislature Mike Hilgers of Lincoln was elected Attorney General. His legislative aid has been appointed to fill his remaining two years in the Legislature. He follows in the footsteps of Doug Peterson who was a strict law and order advocate and will likely be the same.

Former Lieutenant Governor Mike Foley heads back to the state Auditor job, a post he held from 2007 to 2015 when he joined the administration of Gov. Pete Ricketts. Foley was a state senator from 2001 to 2007. The job opened when Auditor Charlie Janssen of Fremont decided to not run again. He had been in office since 2015 and served one term in the Legislature before that.

It is presumed that Brandon Metzler, an assistant clerk of the Legislature since 2017, will be voted in as the next Clerk of the Legislature succeeding Clerk Patrick J. O’Donnell who is retiring after 45 years on the job, the longest of any legislative clerk in the country.

Likewise, it appears that State Sen. John Arch of Omaha, a health care consultant who has served in the Legislature since 2018, will be the next Speaker of the Legislature.

Don’t forget about Ricketts. It is almost certain that Pillen will appoint him to be the replacement for U.S. Senator Ben Sasse who steps down to become the President of the University of Florida.

That’s a lot of new in the air, but despite a few expected hiccups, it could be a refreshing change.

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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*.