

Change is Only Constant in State House of Representatives

- Minority Caucus Selects Leaders; Special Election to be Held -

**For Immediate Release:
For More Information, Contact:**

**Wednesday, November 19, 2008
Joe Fulgham (302) 744-4184**

The House Minority Caucus met Tuesday evening (11/18) and selected State Rep. Richard Cathcart (R-Middletown) to serve as Minority Leader and State Rep. Dan Short (R-Seaford) to be the new Minority Whip.

Rep. Cathcart had served as Majority Leader during most of the recently concluded 144th General Assembly session and is one of a small group of state legislators in modern history to have been elected to the State House, left office, and later returned. Rep. Cathcart served in the State House between 1978 and 1982. He regained a State House seat in 1997, winning a special election to replace the late Oak Banning.

The sagging economy, discontent over the policies of George Bush, and the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama helped fuel a wave of success for Democrats on Election Day that saw them take six seats in the State House of Representatives, wresting control from Republicans who had been the dominant party in the chamber for more than two decades.

“Our state is facing some of the most difficult challenges I’ve seen during my time in office,” Rep. Cathcart said. “As Minority Leader, I intend to fashion a cooperative relationship with House Democrats. We stand a much better chance of solving our problems if we work in a spirit of bipartisan cooperation.”

In addition to the dealing with the state’s financial woes, Rep. Cathcart said he plans to revisit many of the initiatives of the last session including good government legislation and a package of bills to remedy the problem-plagued Delaware Psychiatric Center.

State Rep. Dan Short, the former mayor of Seaford and a small businessman, replaces State Rep. Clifford “Biff” Lee (R-Laurel), who had previously served as whip. Rep. Short is serving just his second term in the House.

“I’m grateful that my colleagues have placed their faith in me to be a part of their leadership team,” Rep. Short said. “It’s all the more meaningful because they chose me knowing the difficulties we’ll be facing together in the next legislative session.”

With the choices made by the House Minority Caucus, the people that will lead the Delaware State House of Representatives in the upcoming 145th General Assembly are now in place. House Democrats met last week and selected State Rep. Robert Gilligan (D-Sherwood Park) as Speaker of the House; State Rep. Pete Schwartzkopf (D-Rehoboth) as Majority Leader; and State Rep. Valerie Longhurst (D-Bear) as the new Majority Whip.

House Democrats now hold 24 seats in the chamber compared to 16 held by House Republicans. One seat, formerly held by State Rep. Diana McWilliams (D-Fox Point), is now open after she officially submitted her resignation on Monday. McWilliams had announced her intentions not to serve another term just prior to the election, but was re-elected by virtue of the fact that she was running unopposed and made her decision too late to remove her name from the ballot.

Normally the Speaker of the House would be responsible for issuing a Writ of Election, setting into motion the process for holding the special election. Although Rep. Gilligan will be the next Speaker, he does not officially begin serving in that post until a House Resolution is passed on the first day of the new legislative session (Jan. 13th). As a result, the job of calling the special election will fall to Governor Minner.

Given the upcoming holidays, and the looming start of the 145th General Assembly, it is likely that voters in the 6th Representative District will head to the polls in mid-December to chose Rep. McWilliams' successor.

###