

Senate Democrats name new leaders

DeLuca replaces Adams as Pro Tem; all officials from New Castle County

By Tom Eldred and Leah Burcat

Delaware State News DOVER — Senate Democrats have named a new leadership team following the death Tuesday of Senate President Pro Tem Thurman Adams Jr.

Senate Majority Leader Anthony DeLuca, D-Newark, was elected unanimously to succeed the late Sen. Adams as pro tem.

"I am very proud to be able to assume this position," said Sen. DeLuca. "I pledge to you we will work together." Senate Majority Whip Patricia Blevins, D-Elsmere, was named to the majority leader's post and Sen. Margaret Rose Henry, DWilmington, was named to serve as majority whip.

All members of the leadership team are from New Castle County.

Tax bills released

It took two hours but all of the tax measures introduced on Monday as part of Gov. Jack A. Markell's administration's budget plan were released from committee on Wednesday.

The bills would increase taxes on corporations, limited liability companies, gross receipts, lottery winnings, public utilities and personal income.

While they did receive opposition, many of the committee members expressed concern about where the money would be made up if not through these measures.

JFC deliberations

Delaware's legislative Joint Finance Committee continued work Wednesday on changes, additions and deletions to the epilogue language in the state's proposed fiscal 2010 budget.

Lawmakers agreed to a \$9,000 funding reduction to the statewide Odyssey of the Mind program for the coming year. The state's contribution for the current year is \$60,000.

They also added language that would relieve the state from having to pay for criminal background checks for job applicants at long-term facilities in Delaware. Criminal background checks would still be required, but would be the responsibility of the individual institution or job applicant.

Although the JFC took earlier action to suspend Delaware's 211 Helpline, the committee agreed to reinstate the free information service to residents if funds become available later in the year. They also voted to cover funding reductions for Child Inc. and People's Place if expected federal economic stimulus monies fail to materialize.

They voted to permit the Delaware State Police to recover the costs of meals for recruits at the State Police Training Academy in Dover, as well as recovering the costs of patrols at the Delaware State Fair.

One issue not resolved was language that would require convicted sex offenders to pay a \$30 fee when they register their addresses with local municipalities.

"I think that's a recipe for failure," said Sen. David B. McBride, D-Hawk's Nest. "If they're not registering now, and now you're going to charge them? I'll support it but I don't think it's right."

Controller General Russell T. Larson reminded the committee that the \$30 fee was dependent on a bill yet to be voted on by the full legislature.

"The debate you're having is a valid debate," he said. "But it's dependent of what you're doing upstairs."

A future for Del Pointe

The House of Representatives on Wednesday suspended its rules and brought House Bill 194 to the floor and then immediately tabled the bill. The bill would allow an entity that has been granted a Delaware thoroughbred or harness racing license as of Sept. 1, 2008, to become a video lottery agent, essentially allowing the entity to open a casino.

The bill would apply to the **Del Pointe** project in Sussex County, a proposed racetrack and casino complex in Millsboro that would reportedly include a one-mile harness racing track, casino, water park, indoor sports complex, paintball park, movie theaters and restaurants. The legislation had been assigned to the House Gaming & Pari-mutuels Committee, but without a committee meeting scheduled before the end of session, House Majority Leader Rep. Peter C. Schwartzkopf, House Bill 194's lead sponsor, brought the bill to the floor and tabled it.

"It was never my intention to work House Bill 194 before we leave on June 30,"

said Rep. Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach. “ There is the possibility that the governor could call the House back before January for a special session to consider table games. I want this bill to be in a position to be considered at the same time as table games if that occurs.”

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Anthony DeLuca
Legislative
Notebook

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