

## House Democrats Caucus Retreat - MINUTES

Thursday, January 4 from 9:30am-4:00pm\*

**Attendees:** All House Democrats except for Rep. Herod; Rep Epps participated remotely; all members of the House Democrats caucus staff except Sarah Regan

### Minutes:

#### WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

- Speaker called the meeting to order at 10:01AM
- COS Rebecca Kisner introduced the House Majority Staff

#### HOUSE OPERATIONS

- Committee schedule and late bills
  - COS Rebecca provided an update on the 2024 committee schedule.
  - COS Rebecca went over deadline extension request statistics from the 2023 legislative session.
  - COS Rebecca went over the number of amendments drafted by bill drafters over the last few years to illustrate increasing constraints on drafter capacity;
  - COS Rebecca displayed a graph showing a significant - near doubling - increase in comp. time earned by non-partisan staff from 2012-2023.
- Floor operations
  - ML Duran re-emphasized her commitment to managing time on the floor and ensuring no bills die on the House calendar.
  - ML Duran reviewed current house rules around introductions of guests, announcements, tributes, memorials, and resolutions.
  - ML Duran reviewed tools to help track bills through the legislative process.
  - ML Duran described the process of setting special order calendars and how she communicates the special orders calendar to members of both parties.
  - Rep Sirota answered a question from Rep. Story about the timing of when the appropriations committee takes up bills in relation to closing the budget.
- House Services Committee updates
  - Rep. McLachlan described the role of the House Services committee, which she chairs. It is a bipartisan committee of four members; the others are Rep. Snyder, Rep. Winter, and Rep. Taggart, plus House Chief Clerk Robin Jones.
  - Rep McLachlan shared an update on new hires for nonpartisan House staff, including our new Assistant Chief Clerk Vanessa Reilly.
  - Rep. McLachlan described the role of the enrolling and assignable clerks and relayed housekeeping requests from the assignable clerks to members.
  - Rep McLachlan shared an update on hiring new Sergeants; the House will have two returning Sergeants and four new Sergeants for the 2024 session.
  - AML Bacon explained updates to the Sergeant manual and training, specifically the inclusion of de-escalation guidance that was contributed by subject matter experts from the Conflict Center and the DeAngelis Foundation, which should align with POST standards and focus on engaging with youth.

- Members inquired about whether Sergeants, as well as CSP troopers, will have an opportunity to practice these skills in advance in a training.
  - AML Bacon responded that yes, training will be ongoing. Having this new guidance also helps set expectations for new Sergeants being hired to come into the role. House Services does not directly oversee the CSP troopers but conversations with CSP are ongoing.
- Rep. McLachlan discussed draft guidance from the committee on desk displays and asked for continued engagement from members on this.
- Legislative Aide position
  - Speaker McCluskie introduced our new Legislative Aide Program Manager, Feliz Sanchez Garcia.
  - Speaker McCluskie shared updates on conversations with the Political Workers Guild (PWG) and an ongoing review of pay and benefits for the aide position.
  - Speaker McCluskie shared data from nonpartisan staff about the significant parking constraints in the Capitol circle as well as nearby garages and lots.
  - Speaker McCluskie shared that aides will have new official nametags this session, as well as paid holidays when the House is not in session.
  - Speaker McCluskie described ongoing research on developing professional pathways for aides, such as a graduated step pay system based on experience.
  - Members asked questions about exploring flexibility with parking, such as trading in circle spots for garage spots or donating circle spots.
  - Members shared feedback about respectful treatment of legislative aides and a desire to see further professionalization of their role with a state email.
- Stakeholding rules of engagement
  - Rep. Boesenecker, caucus co-whip, described guidance he is developing on stakeholding rules of engagement, including with the Governor's office. The goal is to establish guidelines for the caucus in navigating these relations.
  - Rep. Boesenecker highlighted the distinct roles of the two branches of government as it relates to the legislative process.
  - Rep. Boesenecker encouraged members to exercise timeliness, transparency, honesty, flexibility, and inclusivity in the stakeholding process.
  - Encouraged proactive communication with leadership and committee chairs.
  - Members asked questions, shared prior experiences and discussed how to hold others accountable to these guidelines. Speaker underscored this is a work in progress and encouraged members to set clear expectations with lobbyists.
- Workplace expectations
  - Speaker shared the work underway this interim with AML Bacon, Speaker Pro Tem deGruy Kennedy and Rep Weissman to strengthen the workplace expectations policy and clarify the tools available for accountability and enforcement when it comes to decorum and discourse in the chamber.
  - AML Bacon explained the conforming changes coming to the workplace harassment policy and joint rules to align with legislation passed last year.
  - Rep. Weissman referenced Joint Rule 38 and stated that we are striving for clarity to address the trends in behavior we've seen at the legislature.

- Speaker Pro Tem deGruy Kennedy described the harm caused by recent rhetoric and the nuances of training and empowering COW chairs to utilize the gavel fairly and consistently while respecting bounds of free speech.

#### BUDGET UPDATES

- Rep. Sirota provided an overview of the budget conditions, including historical context, current trends, and the breakdown of the 'big six' agencies
- Rep. Sirota provided updates from the most recent (Dec. 20) economic and revenue forecasts, including the outlook for the TABOR cap and refunds
  - Highlighted upcoming conversations on the TABOR refund mechanisms
- Rep. Bird presented LCS budget scenarios A and B; highlighted that this is a work in progress and that forecasts will be updated in March, and that the JBC has the option to choose between LCS and OSPB forecasts when closing the FY24-25 budget.
- Rep. Bird spoke to the statutory requirement to maintain a 15% General Fund reserve.
- Rep. Bird answered questions about ARPA recapture, noting there is more conversation to come on this as the federal deadlines for spending ARPA approach.
- Members asked how to follow the budget process between now and the March forecast/Long Bill, including accessing the quarterly General Fund overview documents. Rep. Bird pointed to the SMART Act process, and suggested contacting the JBC staff analyst for the agencies that fall under your committees.
- Rep. Bird presented an overview of the Governor's November budget proposal; highlighted the need to responsibly draw on the SEF for long-term reliability of public school funding, the value of the 15% reserve, the budget pressure from the roll-off of pandemic-era prepays, and the buy-down of the Budget Stabilization Factor.
  - Members discussed how to balance the Governor's budget priorities with those of the legislature.
- Rep. Sirota provided an overview of major supplemental requests.
- Rep. Sirota summarized the constraints and opportunities in the 2024-25 budget.
- Rep. Bird highlighted the budget process timeline.
- Members asked about other funds outside of the \$15M legislative set-aside (e.g. one-time funds, revenue reductions, etc.). Rep. Bird shared that one-time funds are not, in general, available this year, but these buckets are still developing.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP - NO MINUTES REQUIRED