

MACTE Legislative Update, 1.11.19
Prepared by Cyndy Crist, MACTE Legislative and Policy Liaison

They're Off! With the official ceremonies completed, the new Governor, Lieutenant Governor, other constitutional officers, cabinet, and legislature are now in place and beginning their work for 2019 and beyond. The constitutional officers were sworn in on Monday, 1.07, at the Fitzgerald Theater and laid out their priorities for the next four years. Legislators were sworn in on Tuesday, 1.08, and have begun articulating their 2019 priorities. Since this is a budget year, much of their attention will focus on the fiscal needs of the state and their plans to meet them.

Committees in Place. Few changes were made to the committee structure and leadership in the Senate since all but one member (who was elected to fill the seat vacated last year by Michelle Fischbach) are returning for the third year of their four year terms. One change is that the Senate has returned to combining the E-12 policy and funding committees into a single body. It will again be chaired by Senator Carla Nelson with Senator Gary Dahms as vice chair and Senator Chuck Wiger as minority lead. The committee is scheduled to meet on Mondays and Wednesdays at 3:00.

In the House, there will again be separate policy and funding committees. House Education Policy will be chaired by Rep. Cheryl Yoikum with Rep. Mary Kunesh-Podein as vice chair and Rep. Sondra Erickson as minority lead. It will meet on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 2:30. The House Education Finance Committee is now formally a division of Ways and Means and will be chaired by Rep. Jim Davnie with Rep. Julie Sandstede serving as Vice Chair and Rep. Ron Kresha as minority lead. This committee will meet on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 9:45.

Both Higher Education committees have new chairs – Senator Paul T. Anderson and Representative Connie Bernardy. Although most teacher preparation and licensure issues are heard in the E-12 committees, we do keep an eye on the higher ed committees since some issues of interest to MACTE are addressed there.

New Cabinet Members. Both E-12 and Higher Education now have new leaders. The new Education Commissioner is Mary Cathryn Ricker, who may be known to some of you from her previous work as a teacher and union president in the Saint Paul Public Schools. She more recently served as Executive VP for the AFT and is a National Board Certified middle school teacher. The Commissioner of the Office of Higher Education is Dennis Olson, Jr. who, until his appointment, was the Executive Director of the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council. Prior to that, he served as Director of the Office of Indian Education at MDE and as Commissioner of Education for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

MACTE Legislative Team. I am pleased to report that I will be joined at the capitol this year by Kevin Mackin from Saint Catherine University and Laura Mogelson from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. I am excited to begin shaping a team approach to advance MACTE's priorities at the legislature and grateful both for their willingness to step up and for the institutional support they have received to work with me this year.