



***PARSS Legislative Update  
January 16, 2023  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day***

***January in Harrisburg: The Usual and the Not So Usual***

The January calendar in Harrisburg brings a number of events to the Capitol. Every four or eight years, as the case may be, a new Administration comes to town. The transition in the Governor's Office creates a sense of suspense and intrigue as a new Governor organizes his leadership team and staff for the next term. No different this year as the new cabinet nominees and key staff appointments are announced. To date, the most significant appointment for the education community is current Lower Merion School District and former Reading School District Dr. Kahlid Mumin as Secretary of Education. [Get more details here](#) on this key appointment.

Simultaneously, in this gubernatorial transition year, is the reorganization of the General Assembly in preparation for a new two-year term. We see a quick transition in the state Senate with not many hurdles to quickly regaining operations. Leadership in both caucuses have been elected with a few new faces with many incumbents. The most significant change will be a new Republican leader, Senator Kim Ward (R-Westmoreland), replacing the retired Senator Jake Corman (R-Centre). Ward is the first female to serve as Senate President Pro Tempore. Senator Jay Costa (D-Allegheny) will continue to lead the Democrats. The November election largely kept the status quo in the Senate with Republicans holding a 28-22 voting edge.

The House on the other hand is another story. Here is an effort to provide a short explanation of the unusual dynamics at play. The election upset the balance of

power with Democrats picking up 12 seats to reach a one vote margin for control of the House. However, the unusual situation of having an election victor who passed before the election and after the ballot was finalized, meant that Rep. Tony DeLuca (D-Allegheny) would not be seated creating an absolute stalemate. In December, two victorious House Democrats, Austin Davis and Summer Lee both of Allegheny County, resigned since they were elected to serve as lieutenant governor and in the U.S. House respectively. If you are keeping score, it is 200-198 with Republicans holding a tenuous lead. However, all three special elections in Allegheny County are expected Democratic victories which would restore their control of the chamber.

There was suspense, intrigue, and political jockeying to determine how the biannual election of the House speaker would play out. There are usually very few secrets in the Capitol, but the eventual election of Mark Rozz (D-Berks) as speaker caught most off guard. Nobody predicted that 16 House Republicans would support a sitting Democrat for the speakership and, in fact, nominate him with the assurance Rozzi would become an independent by party affiliation and operation of the Speaker's Office. Here are [more details on this unusual story](#). The historic step to electing an independent speaker was perhaps too unusual to last as Republican supporters say Rozzi has reneged on his pledge to become an independent speaker. Here is what his Republican supporters said about [the very short-term bi-partisan agreement](#).

What is next? The answer is more jockeying and more deadlock in the House. The Senate is sending over a package of Constitutional Amendments that include the new Speaker's top priority—opening a litigation window for victims of child molestation who need the amendment to overcome the statute of limitations.

Well, there is at least an annual event of the usual persuasion in Harrisburg. Note: The state Farm Show concludes tomorrow.