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**Capitol View**

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**Expect New Faces in the 2023 Legislature**

Plan on at least 14 new faces in the 2023 Legislature, thanks mostly to term limits.

Eleven state senators term-limit out at the end of this year. Two quit after one session, Tim Gragert and Steve Lathrop. For Lathrop it was the end of his third session since he term-limited after two then sat out the required four years before running against incumbent Merv Riepe and winning another term.

One newbie, Teresa Ibach in District 44, has no opposition. The Sumner property manager and ranch wife is seeking the seat vacated by two-term lawmaker Dan Hughes of Venango.

Riepe is one of two veteran senators seeking a return to Lincoln. He’s running for his old District 12 seat in Omaha against Robin Richards of Omaha. In northeast Lincoln’s District 46, attorney Danielle Conrad is seeking a return to her old seat. She’s running against school social worker James Michael Bowers who is a member of the Lincoln City Council.

Incumbents Myron Dorn of Adams and Tom Brandt of Plymouth are both running unopposed. Nine other incumbents face what could be tight races.

Gone from the nation’s only one-house legislature will be 11 prominent faces including: former executive board chairman Hughes; Appropriations Committee Chairman John Stinner of Gering; Banking Chair Matt Williams of Gothenburg; Retirement Committee Chair Mark Kolterman of Seward; Transportation Committee Chair Curt Friesen of Henderson; John McCollister, Robert Hilkemann and Brett Lindstrom all of Omaha; Adam Morfeld, Matt Hansen and Patty Pansing Brooks all of Lincoln.

Morfeld, Hansen and Pansing Brooks are all running for other offices. Speaker of the Legislature Mike Hilgers of Lincoln is the presumptive next state Attorney General. His replacement in the Legislature would be named by the next Governor. Morfeld is running for

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Lancaster County Attorney. Hansen is running for Lancaster County Clerk and Pansing Brooks is running for Congress against incumbent Mike Flood who was elected in a special election in June following the resignation of longtime Congressman Jeff Fortenberry who was convicted of federal charges in accepting campaign funds from a foreign national.

Incumbent Robert Clements of Elmwood faces a challenge from Plattsmouth business owner Sarah Slattery. Legislative District 2 was redrawn to include a sliver of east Lincoln as the result of last session’s redistricting. The Elmwood banker is seeking his second term.

In Omaha’s District 6, Machaela Cavanaugh is seeking her second term in a race with former Omaha police officer and attorney Christian Mirch. Cavanaugh’s father was a state senator and a U.S. Congressman, and her brother is currently a state senator.

Omaha incumbents Megan Hunt, Wendy DeBoer, John Arch, and Kathleen Kauth all have challengers. Senators Ben Hansen of Blair, Mike Moser of Columbus, Dave Murman of Glenvil and Mike Jacobson of North Platte also face challenges.

With new faces and an unknown gubernatorial posture, it’s hard to predict what the next Legislature will be like. The fact that Republican Jim Pillen refused to debate Democrat Carol Blood will play a major role as the senators, the media and the rest of the electorate get to know the new person. If Blood isn’t elected governor, she still has two years left as a senator. Won’t that be interesting?

If the Republican senators who want to put an end to secret balloting for committee chairmanships prevail with a rules change to that effect, all bets are off. The nonpartisan Nebraska Legislature will become merely running dogs of the state Republican Party with a handful of Democrats and independents watching from the wings.

God forbid.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years*.