



Cafaro Steps Down as Minority Leader; Kearney Heads New Leadership Team

Senate Minority Leader Capri Cafaro (D-Warren) announced Tuesday afternoon that she is stepping down as leader. Sen. Eric Kearney (Cincinnati) takes over as the new minority leader. Others on the leadership team include Sen. Joe Schiavoni (Austintown), assistant minority leader; Nina Turner (Cleveland), minority whip; and Edna Brown (Toledo), assistant minority whip.

Schiavoni had previously served as assistant minority whip while Brown had been minority whip.

Sen. Charleta Tavares (D-Columbus) told *Hannah News* that the caucus vote on each of the leaders had been unanimous. This included Sen. Shirley Smith (D-Cleveland) who was not in Columbus on Tuesday "but was on the phone," according to Kearney. Smith had been assistant minority leader.

Cafaro has served as the Democratic Senate leader since 2009. However, she told reporters Tuesday that unanticipated political responsibilities for a legislative leader in a presidential election year could possibly take her focus away from her district, where hands-on advocacy is needed on emerging issues like oil and gas. She also noted that she is running for re-election and she needs to spend time in her district.

"I have always given 110 percent to the people I work for in the 32nd District, and that is not about to change now," Cafaro said. "However, I wanted to make sure that the Democratic caucus would be guided by someone with the experience, temperament and relationships to lead during a presidential election cycle."

She said she has given her "full support" to Kearney.

Likewise, Kearney said she will continue to play "a very active role" in the caucus, noting that her committee assignments will include agriculture, insurance and health.

Cafaro appeared to relish the thought of "returning to the front lines" of policy development, implying that she was tiring of being relegated to the role of "meddler in chief."

The caucus said that she is the longest serving Senate minority leader since former Sen. Ben Espy, who served in the 1990s.

Kearney said, "Going forward I hope to lead the Democratic Caucus with a business-like approach emphasizing teamwork, unity, accountability and discipline."

He has represented the 9th Senate District since December 2005, making him the senior member of the caucus.

Kearney also announced that Sen. Tom Sawyer (D-Akron) will become the ranking minority member on the Senate Finance Committee.

Other committee shifts will be forthcoming, Democratic Caucus spokesman Mike Rowe said.

Story originally published in *The Hannah Report* on January 24, 2012. Copyright 2012 Hannah News Service, Inc.

© Copyright 1986 - 2012 Hannah News Service, Inc. Columbus, Ohio. All Rights Reserved.

THE HANNAH COLLECTION
Capitol Connection | Hannah Report | ActionTRACK™
Ohio News Wire | The Complete Statehouse | State Health Clips
21 West Broad Street, Suite 1000 (10th Floor) Columbus, OH 43215
614.227.5820 phone - 614.228.5897 fax

Founding Member of
NOLA
National Online Legislative Associates