



FRESHMEN SENATORS — Preparing to take Senate seats for the first time are (from left) Carl Pursell (R-14th District); Daniel S. Cooper (D-15th District); and David A. Plawecki (D-12th District). Cooper is a former state representative. Pursell is a former Wayne County commissioner. Plawecki has no former public office experience. (Observer photo by Dennis L. Pajot)

Pursell And Plawecki Are Silent But Visible

By DENNIS L. PAJOT

Redford Township's new state senator, David Plawecki (D-12th District), nervously took the oath of office from John B. Swainson, newly-elected justice of the State Supreme Court.

Then he took his seat on the Senate floor for the first time. It's directly front and center where all eyes can easily focus upon him.

In a sense, all eyes were focused on Sen. Plawecki that first day of the 76th Session of the state legislature.

Not only is Plawecki, at 22, the youngest member of the Senate, he is also the only person elected to that body last fall who captured an opposing party's seat.

His election gives the Democrats a 19-19 split on the Senate floor, where last year Republicans held a 10-18 edge. Plawecki defeated the Senate's lone female senator, Mrs. N. Lorraine Beebe. Both live in Dearborn Heights.

REDFORD TOWNSHIP thus has helped do three things:

- Force a showdown for political power between the two parties in the state's most prestigious policy-making body.
- Replace femininity with youth.
- Pass Observerland leadership for abortion law reform, for which Mrs. Beebe was most publicized, to another new state senator, Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth), whose 14th District includes Livonia, Farmington and western Oakland County.

Plawecki sat quietly the first day, listening while more experienced voices played out the first act of the leadership struggle.

Fellow Sen. Coleman A. Young, Democratic floor leader, summed up the situation best in mid-debate: "Everybody knows the name of the game. The question is whether 19-19 means 50-50, or whether it means the same as 20-18 did last year."

The answer will have to wait until Feb. 1 or after, because the Senate recessed itself until then so that another potentially decisive question can be resolved: will one of its members be disqualified in a recount being fought?

PURSELL SITS right behind Plawecki on the Senate floor.

No newcomer to political fighting, Pursell also was silent the first day.

But Pursell is also very much in the limelight of the power struggle. As a Republican he stands to be among the majority membership of committees of the Senate, if the Republicans can wager their 19-19 membership split into Senate control with the tie-breaking Republican vote of President of the Senate James Brickley, now lieutenant governor.

As hinted by Young, 20-18 last year meant that Republicans were able to stack committee memberships in their favor. The Republican caucus has formally proposed to do so again this term.

If Republicans gain control, Pursell is one of five Republicans the caucus will place on the so-called "super committee": appropriations.

This is no small post for a freshman senator, but it will be smaller and ever so much less satisfying to Pursell if the Democrats succeed in forcing 50-50 membership.

Have you ever tried to get anything done with four votes opposed to four votes? There is no tie-breaking seat on such committees.

PURSELL REACHED the Senate after solidly defeating incumbent Republican George Kuhn of West Bloomfield in a rematch of the 1966 primary fight. Kuhn has been considered a thorough conservative. Pursell is decidedly more liberal and is proving it.

One of Pursell's first capitol hill actions was to sign a renewed proposal for abortion reform sponsored by Sen. Gilbert Bursley of Ann Arbor. Kuhn was mainly responsible for a Bursley bill's failure last term. Pursell campaigned on a stance of moderate abortion reform, which the bill advocates, but against complete repeal of existing abortion laws.

Mrs. Beebe co-sponsored Bursley's original bill and set the state astir with a ringing speech in its behalf. Its current occupant, a Catholic, said in his campaign he is sympathetic to abortion reform but not convinced it can properly be a matter for lawmakers.

Plawecki is completely untested as a public office holder. He failed to even gain a seat on the Dearborn Heights city council in his only other bid for office. He'll be watched very, very closely.

Pursell is continuing a public career, having for the past two years served as a member of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners. In that capacity he gained respect for his ability to get things done despite being one of only two Republicans on a 26-member body.

"What's 19-19 compared to 24-24?" Pursell might well be musing.

Faust Quiet But Busy

By DENNIS L. PAJOT

State Sen. William Faust (D-13th District) of Westland lost his distinction of being the only senator in a wheelchair when the 76th session convened Jan. 13.

He was the only one so distinguished that wheeled down the aisle to be sworn in during pre-convening ceremonies, however. He took his oath then from Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas E. Brennan.

Later, when the Senate fulfilled its constitutional obligation to begin work at noon and an official reenactment took place, Republican Sen. Charles O. Zollar was very much present. He raised his hand while sitting in a wheelchair at the front of the Senate chamber.

Zollar, whose doctor advised against his attending, is supposed to be in a hospital, recuperating from a heart attack a few weeks ago.

Faust landed in his wheelchair after being struck by a hit-run driver in 1966.

THE CAPITAL building was abuzz all morning with news that he would be in the building ready to roll onto the Senate floor if needed to decide a power struggle between Democrats and Republicans.

He didn't wait. Like a fierce competitor anxious to join the battle, he came in beforehand. During the hour the Senate was in session, the expected battle opened, but Zollar did nothing more than cast votes in minor skirmishes, and the main attack was spared him for another day.

Faust, meanwhile, took about the same part that day, saying nothing while other party leaders trumpeted arguments for and against.

But Faust wasn't "in the wings" either. Just prior to the Senate's convening, Faust had been deep in strategy discussions with other Democrats seeking to wage a 19-19 floor tie into 50-50 membership in Senate affairs despite the presence of a Republican in the Senate president's chair.

EARLIER THAT day Faust's wheels had maneuvered around legislators' relatives and friends and just plain tourists in the festive halls, past makeshift filing spaces in these hallways and even narrower paths to the cramped corner office of Detroit Democrat Jackie Vaughn.

There, for whatever purposes, both public and partisan, he added his name seeking the 18-year-old vote in Michigan.

HIS FATHER, Paul Faust of Westland, was there to witness the second swearing-in of his son as a senator. Faust also had Mrs. Max McKinney, mother of Westland Mayor Gene McKinney, present.

He repeatedly praised her for efforts that helped him win re-election last fall.

Should we call her your campaign manager? The Observer reporter asked.

"I'd like that very much, yes," said Faust.



SEN. FAUST takes the oath of office as 15th District state senator, representing Westland, Garden City, Canton and downriver communities, from State Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas E. Brennan in ceremonies at the state capitol. (Observer photo)

2 From ONI In Press Talks

Two Observer Newspapers editors were leaders in the 33rd annual newspaper workshop sponsored Friday by the Wayne State University Press Club.

News Editor Tim Richard led a discussion of local government reporting, and women's church editor Margaret Miller led a discussion of women's news.

A morning session on lawlessness featured Circuit Judge Horace Gilmore and Sheriff William Lucas as panelists. President of the WSU Press Club is Mrs. Betty Lewis, former publisher of the Southfield News, now part of the Observer family of community newspapers.

PUNCH DICK PURTAN...

EVERY MORNING

It won't hurt a bit. In fact, you might even like it. That is, if you like people-put-ons, funny phone calls, today music and that certain Purtan humor that seems to make expressway traffic move a little faster.

Give it a try. Punch Purtan tomorrow morning... right on the button.

WXYZ1270