

# The Frederick News-Post

## Political notes: New committee assignments, Olson named to redistricting commission

Steve Bohnel

January 14, 2021

ANNAPOLIS — Along with virtual bill hearings and operating in significantly different atmospheres in the statehouse, Sen. Ron Young (D-Frederick) and Del. Jesse Pippy (R-Frederick and Carroll) also face another change this session: new committee assignments.

House Speaker Adrienne Jones (D-Baltimore) announced Pippy would be moving from the Judiciary Committee to the Economic Matters Committee, and Senate President Bill Ferguson (D-Baltimore city) has moved Young from Judicial Proceedings to Budget and Taxation.

The House Economic Matters Committee considers legislation involving alcoholic beverages, banking regulations, business operations and regulations, economic development and several other related issues.

The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee reviews bills involving the state's capital and operating budgets, education funding, taxation and property assessments and similar areas.

Pippy said his new role will help him focus on important economic recovery efforts statewide.

“We need to rebuild our economy, we need to get folks back to work, and I think I’ll have an opportunity to have a role and be in that process by being on this committee,” he said.

Young's move to Budget and Taxation comes, in part, due to Senate President Emeritus Mike Miller (D-Calvert, Charles and Prince George's) retiring from the chamber this year.

Young had asked last year to be on that committee, but Miller stepped down as Senate president and asked to serve on Budget and Taxation, he said.

With the coronavirus pandemic, the Kirwan education funding bill and other factors, the committee's work will be important, Young said.

"It's just a committee I wanted to be on," he said. "It's just pretty important ... seeing where the money is directed."

Walter Olson named to redistricting commissionA familiar Frederick County name has been tapped to serve on another one of Gov. Larry Hogan's (R) redistricting commissions.

Walter Olson, a Republican and senior fellow of the Cato Institute in Washington D.C., is one of three co-chairs to the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission announced by Hogan earlier this week.

Olson had previously served on the Emergency Commission on Sixth Congressional District Gerrymandering, which was tasked with creating a map for the sixth congressional district, which serves southern Frederick County and the city of Frederick.

Olson is serving with Alexander Williams, a retired federal judge, and Dr. Kathleen Hetherington, president of Howard Community College, who are co-chairs. The commission will consist of three Democrats, three Republicans and three independents—and has the massive task of submitting a recommended map to the state legislature with both new congressional and state legislative districts throughout Maryland for the 2022 elections.

The governor's executive order establishing the commission's guidelines provides clear rules on their job, Olson said. They must consider county and municipal boundaries and natural geography when considering any proposal. Commission members will also need to be aware of splitting up any similar communities when considering any submitted map, he added.

Olson is confident the commission will hold a very public process—with hearings across the state this time, whether virtual or in-person—and that will lead to a good end product.

The legislature could reject any of their maps and submit another one to the governor, but they would need to defend themselves after that process, he added.

It's what Olson, a New Market resident, enjoyed in his time on the prior emergency commission and another similar one where he and others recommended better procedures and policies for drawing congressional and state districts.

“We had a lot of testimony in the last two commissions, and that's always interesting because they come with the real practical problems,” Olson said. “Part of our job is to help as many people as we can with their practical questions. It's no fun to live in a gerrymander.”