

FRESHMEN SENATORS TARGET AREAS OF INTEREST

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) After the swearing-in Nov. 19, Oklahoma's legislators will begin getting organized for the 46th Session. Seven freshmen senators will contribute their expertise and ideas to the legislative process. *Capitol Network News* talked with these seven new members of the senate this week to find out about their preliminary goals. Like most incumbents in the senate, the freshmen want to reform the worker's compensation system, further economic development and encourage the business climate in Oklahoma.

Sen.-Elect James R. Dunlap, R-Bartlesville, currently a Representative and a veteran of the House since 1989, will now represent senate district 29. He is the only legislator moving from the House to the Senate. Dunlap is a general contractor in the Bartlesville area. He ran for the Senate of-

Election Challenges, cont. from page 3 sorting of city ballots from some of the ballot boxes and the separation of absentee ballots by voting precinct.

Meanwhile, Dennis added, a hearing was underway in a nearby courtroom on allegations of irregularities in last week's general election. Roggow contends that 11 voters, including his opponent's parents, cast their ballots improperly during the election, because they voted in a precinct in which they were not registered.

Randy Wedel, R-Stillwater, withdrew his request for a recount of the Logan County ballots from his apparently unsuccessful race for the Senate District 21 seat against Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, citing the anticipated success of his irregularity allegations. Only 32 votes separated the two candidates.

Wedel's attorney argued in a Payne County courtroom Tuesday that as many as 68 voters cast their ballots improperly during last week's election. That argument was being advanced Wednesday in a Logan County courtroom, as well, and was scheduled to be heard Thursday in Lincoln County.

Recounts in the House District 41 seat will conclude Thursday with Logan and Kingfisher counties scheduled to reopen their ballot boxes and manually count the ballots.

While the results of the recounts could affect the outcome of the election, it will be up to the judges involved to determine whether the allegations of irregularities are sufficient to warrant calling a new election.

fice, he said, for two reasons. "The current senator was retiring," Dunlap said, and while the "House of Representatives has been very friendly to small business, worker's compensation reform has stalled in the Senate. I want them to realize how small business is," he added.

Because of his business experience, Dunlap is most interested in legislation on small business issues and worker's compensation reform. "I'll be interested in what Lt. Gov. Fallin's committee comes up with on worker's comp legislation," Dunlap said. "I want Oklahoma to be as business-friendly as possible. I'm also interested in franchise issues."

Dunlap is looking for answers, not glory. He said he'll ask for help with small business legislation from more experienced senators, like Senator James Maddox, D-Lawton, whom Dunlap describes as "a true champion of the cause," of small business.

Sen.-Elect Owen Laughlin, R-Woodward, won over Democrat incumbent Don Williams for the district 49 seat. Laughlin, an attorney, ran for the senate post because, "I want to see a place where my children could and would come back to live. We've created an economic environment [in Oklahoma] that makes it difficult to survive."

Laughlin, too, believes worker's compensation reform is a major issue for the legislature. "It's an area we need to address," he said. "Also, we tax business too much, which translates into taxing individuals too much."

As a former assistant district attorney, Laughlin was personally involved with the criminal justice system. "We shouldn't be releasing criminals early," he said, and offered a plan. "We've got to make inmates work and build prison space. We can't afford to build expensive penitentiaries. I hope to introduce legislation like that. We've got to start figuring out how to do it. The first year? That remains to be seen."

Sen.-Elect Robert Milacek, R-Waukomis, is a teacher and former Oklahoma representative. He served in the House from 1976 to 1982, and quit, he said, because his three daughters were growing up and he didn't have enough time with them. Now retired as a high school and college teacher, Milacek ran for the district 19 senate seat because he was, "dissatisfied with the basic philosophy of my opponent," (Senator Ed Long).

His target this legislative session is, "in one word — jobs. Jobs are the key to the

welfare of any state. Jobs answer the education and criminal problems," he said. Milacek wants Oklahoma to make Oklahoma's business climate "more conducive for small business," with worker's compensation reform and tax incentives.

Sen.-Elect Mike Morgan, D-Stillwater, is currently answering a challenge to his election by opponent Randy Wedel, R-Stillwater, for the district 21 senate seat, vacated by Bernice Shedrick. Morgan is an attorney who ran for the post because he felt, "Shedrick's leaving office would leave a void, and because friends and family wanted me to." If Morgan's election survives the challenge, he said he has "no personal agenda to present at the Capitol."

Sen.-Elect Jeff Rabon, D-Hugo, defeated incumbent Jack Bell, D-Idabel, in the August 27 primary election, and had no other challengers for the district 5 seat. He knows how government works, having served as an aide to former Senator David Boren and former Representative Bill Brewster.

Rabon ran for the senate to help his corner of Oklahoma. "I'm a lifelong native of southeast Oklahoma," he said, "and I'm concerned we were getting left behind down here. Everyone wants to fish our lakes and hunt our deer, but we don't get our fair share up there [Oklahoma City]."

Considering the needs of his Senate district, Rabon said he will support legislation for better transportation in southeast Oklahoma. "U.S. Highway 70 runs through Durant, Idabel and Broken Bow," he said. "It is a two-lane highway with no shoulders. Sitting on that two-lane highway is billions of dollars worth of industry—Weyerhaeuser, Tyson and others."

Infrastructure requirements in southeast Oklahoma prompted Rabon to request membership on the appropriations, transportation and wildlife and tourism committees, "which reflect the needs of this district."

Sen.-Elect Kathleen Wilcoxson, R-Oklahoma City, is still teaching school this week. She teaches fifth grade and also "teaches teachers to be more effective in the classroom," she said.

Active in local politics since 1980, Wilcoxson "found that Senator Cole was retiring and decided to run" for the district 45 Senate seat. "I've always wanted to do this, and I thought this was the time. I want to be involved in the growth of the state," she said.

Wilcoxson ran as a pro-business, pro-
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