

Kilgore to lead House panel on business
Delegate wins nod for unit overseeing commerce, labor

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A friend of utilities, telephone companies and high-interest lenders is the new head of the House committee that oversees business.

Del. Terry G. Kilgore, R-Scott, replaces Del. Harvey B. Morgan, R-Gloucester, as chairman of the Commerce and Labor Committee.

Kilgore, who will step down as head of the House Republican Caucus, the political and fundraising arm of the GOP majority, backs Dominion's plan for a coal-burning power plant in his region.

Kilgore, too, is an ally of payday and car-title lenders, both criticized by consumer advocates for their high rates and perceived targeting of the poor.

Kilgore, a lawyer and fundraising executive, is again carrying for Verizon a bill -- vetoed this year by Gov. Timothy M. Kaine -- that would prevent the State Corporation Commission from stopping sales of phone-company land lines.

Kilgore's appointment was widely expected after Morgan's announced switch to the chairmanship of the Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee.

Morgan, a pharmacist, said the assignment better suited his Chesapeake Bay-oriented constituency.

Though Morgan will remain on the Commerce and Labor Committee, by relinquishing its chairmanship he gives up a symbolic perch from which he attacked payday lenders and continuing efforts to trim the oversight powers of the SCC.

Speaker William J. Howell, R-Stafford, yesterday announced the chairmanships of the House of Delegates' 14 committees. Seven were due new leaders because of retirements and reassignments.

Howell's choices were generally respectful of the seniority system guiding legislative appointments.

But there was one surprise: The appointment of Del. Mark L. Cole, R-Spotsylvania, over three more senior members, as chairman of the Privileges and Elections Committee.

The committee will draw legislative districts in 2011.

Among those passed over by Howell: Del. Robert G. Marshall, R-Prince William, who launched a lawsuit challenging this year's GOP-authored transportation financing plan, and Del. S. Chris Jones, R-Suffolk, the committee's vice chairman and a supporter of higher taxes in 2004.

Other new chairmen: Lacey E. Putney, I-Bedford, (Appropriations), Terrie L. Suit of Virginia Beach (General Laws), Kathy J. Byron of Campbell (Science and Technology), and Joe T. May of Loudoun (Transportation).

Putney's appointment was announced earlier by Howell.

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