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## **Capitolwire: Cutler, Benninghoff Elected to Top State House Leadership Posts**

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HARRISBURG (June 22) – Rep. Bryan Cutler capped a quick rise to the top Monday with his election as House Speaker by a floor vote made unanimous by declaration.

The Lancaster County Republican immediately took the gavel as the 141st Speaker for the remaining months of the legislative session ending on Nov. 30.

“And let us do our work together,” Cutler asked of his colleagues at the close of a short speech.

Cutler, 45, became the fifth speaker to take office in the midst of a legislative session due to the officeholder either resigning or dying since the end of World War II. Cutler was elected to the House in 2006 after a career spent in the health care field and as an attorney specializing in health care law.

He was elected House majority leader in 2019; prior to that he was majority caucus whip following election to that post in 2015.

Cutler also continues a recent streak where a House majority leader moves up to become speaker when a vacancy occurs.

Rep. Kerry Benninghoff, R-Centre, succeeds Cutler as majority leader.

Cutler emerged as an early favorite for the speakership after GOP Speaker Mike Turzai resigned last week to take a private sector job as general counsel for Peoples Natural Gas Co.

Cutler’s colleagues in the House Majority Republican Caucus nominated him for the speaker’s job during a morning caucus. House Minority Leader Frank Dermody, D-Allegheny, was also nominated for speaker in a mainly symbolic move. The House roll call showed a 110-91 majority of votes to elect Cutler.

Dermody then moved to make Cutler’s election unanimous and House Chief Clerk Dave Reddecliff declared it a unanimous vote.

Cutler’s elevation to the chamber’s top constitutional office led to a shuffle in other leadership posts in the House Republican Majority Caucus.

The caucus met shortly after Cutler's election and elected Benninghoff as majority leader to replace Cutler. That led in turn to the election of Rep. Donna Oberlander, R-Clarion, to replace Benninghoff as majority caucus whip.

The leadership changes came during the last scheduled session week for the House before a summer recess. They happened when the usual busy pace of consecutive June session weeks leading up to the end of the fiscal year on June 30 has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pennsylvania recently enacted a \$25.1 billion five-month stopgap budget to respond to the fiscal uncertainty and loss of state tax revenue due to stay-at-home orders, business closings and job layoffs.

That likely leaves decisions on spending priorities for the remaining seven months of Fiscal Year 2020-21 until after the Nov. 3 election.

And the start of a new legislative session next year will bring another round of leadership elections shaped by which party is in control.