

SENATE HAS ITS FIRST PARTISAN FLOOR FIGHT (Cont.)

In one protest, he argued that Senator Maurer is a member of the 114th General Assembly and his status can only be altered by reasons of misfeasance, malfeasance or nonfeasance. In the second, he argued that since there was no challenge raised to the seating of Senator Maurer on Monday his status can only be changed by a two-thirds vote of the Senate.

In a statement issued after the session, Senator Zimmers called the actions of the Republican majority "flagrantly partisan" and said they establish an "unproductive and divisive tone" for the new session.

"This action flies in the face of their (Republican senators) recent pledges of cooperation for bipartisan activity. Rather than operating as independent agents representing their districts, the Republicans have instead chosen to act as puppets to their Republican bosses," he said in his statement.

SENATE BEGINS WORK ON DEATH PENALTY BILL AND OPEN CAUCUS PROPOSAL

The Republican-controlled Senate Judiciary Committee began hearings Tuesday on reinstating the death penalty in Ohio and is scheduled to start taking proponent testimony Wednesday even though Senate committees have not yet been officially named.

Between times, Judiciary Committee Chairman Paul Pfeifer (R-Bucyrus) also presided over a committee that is drafting permanent rules for the Senate for the new 114th General Assembly and said he hopes to have the rules ready for a floor vote Wednesday afternoon.

Rules for the conduct of business are adopted for each new session and while approval is often routine, the Republicans want a clause in the new rules to end the time-honored tradition of closed party caucuses in the Senate.

When Republicans slipped into the minority in the Senate they began holding open caucuses and came within one vote last session of amending the rules proposed by the then-Democratic majority to require most caucuses to be open.

Whatever decision the Senate makes on caucuses the majority and minority leadership in the House is expected to continue plotting their political strategy in private.

Reinstating the death penalty was turned into a major campaign issue by Republicans in the last election. The House passed a death penalty bill early in the last session but the Democratic leadership in the Senate held the bill up for nearly 19 months. When it finally came to the floor it was defeated by a coalition of Democratic opponents and Republican proponents who wanted a stronger bill.

Senator Pfeifer said he does not want to limit testimony on the death penalty but feels the philosophical issues were thoroughly explored during the Senate committee hearings last session and attention should now be focused on constitutional and due process issues.

GOVERNOR REAPPOINTS THOMAS PULSIFER TO RAIL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Thomas Pulsifer, who was caught in the middle of a legal and political wrangle last month over his reappointment to the Ohio Rail Transportation Authority, was reappointed to the authority Tuesday by Governor Rhodes.