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Egan among Spitzer's selections

Former OGS chief is governor's choice to return to that job; seven other administration picks named

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ALBANY -- Gov. Eliot Spitzer on Wednesday announced eight more appointments and nominations to posts in his new administration, even as the Republican-controlled Senate has yet to act on a list of earlier nominees.

The new appointees include state government veteran John C. Egan as commissioner of the state Office of General Services.

Egan, 77, who worked under three previous governors, said his first day back at OGS, where he left the top job 18 years ago, will be Friday. He also headed the state Dormitory Authority and Department of Transportation before becoming chief executive officer at Albany International Airport in 1995.

Egan and Spitzer's other appointees need to be confirmed by the Senate, which has yet to act on any of the 18 names the governor has sent up for consideration since he took office Jan. 1. Some already are working in an acting capacity.

The Senate did rapidly confirm Spitzer's reappointment of Chief Judge Judith Kaye to the Court of Appeals and his nomination of new Judge Theodore Jones Jr.

John McArdle, a spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno, said there is no concerted effort to hold up Spitzer's appointments, despite the fact that Bruno and Spitzer haven't exactly been seeing eye to eye as of late.

"I don't think there would be a problem with most of them," McArdle said. "They'll go through the committee process, and we'll see."

The Legislature is on break through Feb. 26.

Spitzer cost Bruno a seat in his dwindling GOP majority by tapping former Republican Sen. Michael Balboni to serve as his public safety czar. Democrat Craig Johnson won a special election for the seat Feb. 6, bringing Bruno's majority to 33-29.

Aides to the governor and Senate Democrats have publicly acknowledged that they're trying to take control of the Senate before the 2008 elections by persuading Republican senators to switch parties or take jobs in the Spitzer administration.

McArdle said some have "voiced concern" over at least two of Spitzer's appointments: Assemblyman Alexander "Pete" Grannis, D-Manhattan, as commissioner of the state Department of Conservation; and Angela Sparks-Beddoe, a former energy lobbyist, as chairwoman of the Public Service Commission.

The New York State Rifle & Pistol Association has raised questions about Grannis' qualifications and says he is "hostile" to gun owners and too close to animal-rights groups.

Environmentalists have raised questions about Sparks-Beddoe, noting her former employer, New York State Electric & Gas, is fighting the PSC over a decision last August, when the utility was told to cut its rates by \$37 million annually.

Egan is unlikely to face such criticism. He is a longtime friend of Bruno's, and is held in high regard by Democrats and Republicans.

The New Scotland resident said activity at the Renaissance Corp., where he has served as full-time volunteer president since retiring from the airport in 2003, has slowed dramatically. He also is executive director of the New York State Task Force on High Speed Rail.

He said he'll aim to stay with the OGS job, which pays \$136,000 annually, for at least four years.

Egan, who also is overseeing the redevelopment of the Harriman State Office Campus, expressed enthusiasm for the work ahead.

"We can always make it better," he said. "We can always examine our performance, utilize technology and the great experience and intellect of the employees to improve. We can consume less energy. We can design buildings with more efficient properties. We can purchase products in New York state at the lowest prices."

The agency, he noted, manages nearly 36 million square feet of space in 600 locations around New York; buys some 40,000 products every year for state hospitals, prisons, offices and other facilities; designs upward of \$250 million in projects; and has more than \$400 million worth of construction under way at any one time.

Spitzer's other appointments included Delmar native Nancy G. Groenwegen, president of the Civil Service Commission; Robert Hermann, director of the Governor's Office of Regulatory Reform; Barry L. Kluger, inspector general of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Daniel D. O'Hara, director of the New York State Fair; Robert S. Hite, member of the Public Employment Relations Board; Jerome Lefkowitz, chairman of the Public Employment Relations Board; and Eric J. Schmertz, member of the Public Employment Relations Board.

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