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Chadrad Communications, Inc.
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601
E-mail: kcsr@chadrad.com

(Neb)-Brewer Elected Committee Chairman [Listen](#)

By: John Axtell Posted at: 01/10/2019 03:45 PM

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) - The 2019 session of the Nebraska Legislature got underway Wednesday with 13 new state lawmakers sworn into office along with another 13 senators re-elected in November to their second and final 4-year terms.

The ostensibly nonpartisan Legislature is now composed of 30 Republicans, 18 Democrats and one left-leaning independent, but committee chairmanship votes Wednesday were less one-sided than 2 years ago when conservative Republicans claimed nearly all of them.

Democrats and some moderate Republicans blasted the 2017 votes as a partisan power grab, while conservatives argued that it better reflected the GOP-dominated state. This time, 4 Democrats were voted in as committee chairmen.

Jim Scheer of Norfolk, a Republican, won unanimous re-election as speaker of the Legislature for 2-more years and said the atmosphere was notably better than it was two years ago.

Two Panhandle senators, both Republicans, unanimously won chairmanships. John Stinner of Gering was reelected chairman of the budget-writing Appropriations Committee and Tom Brewer of Gordon, a retired Army colonel, moved up from vice-chair to chairman of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Brewer, one of the hard-line conservatives elected with the backing of Gov Pete Ricketts last year, cited his experience in nominating himself for chairman

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Lou Ann Linehan of Omaha, another Republican, was elected chair of the Revenue Committee and said she plans to start work right away on a property tax package to ease the burden on farmers, ranchers and homeowners.

Linehan warned that "We're going to have to lock ourselves in a room until we come up with something."

She said she hopes to find a plan that can win support from both ag and business groups, which have been at odds over tax policy in recent years, and would work closely with Gov Ricketts, who has identified property taxes as one of his major legislative priority again this year.