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New senator: 'I look forward to going to work'

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Holding his 3-year-old daughter Katherine, and with wife Vicki and 8-year-old son Trayton standing alongside, Carlinville contractor Sam McCann took the oath of office Wednesday to begin his first two-year term in the Senate.

“It feels awesome. It feels fantastic,” he said later. “It’s simultaneously, I feel like (I’m) flying and I also feel the gravity and weight of the situation – the state of our state – and I look forward to going to work.”

McCann was among four newly elected senators who took their oaths before other Nov. 2 winners were sworn in. McCann, who estimated 60 or so friends, family members and supporters were in the chamber to wish him well, blew a kiss to many of them in the gallery above the Senate podium after he recited the oath.

McCann, 41, a Republican, defeated former Sen. Deanna Demuzio, D-Carlinville. Demuzio and her late husband, Vince, had combined to represent the area since the mid-1970s.

McCann campaigned on the need for fiscal restraint, and he said Wednesday he would not have voted for the tax increase that passed in the lame-duck Senate less than half a day before the swearing-in.

While he would “never ever say never” to the possible need for a tax, he said, “Why in the world, at a time like this, would we place even more impediment upon families and business do be able to grow and to hire?”

He also noted that even as lawmakers debated the tax increase Monday night, only perhaps 25 or 30 people were gathered outside the chambers in the rotunda.

“It seems to me that if we’re ever going to get to a place where we get back to this whole concept of government of the people, by the people, for the people, folks are going to have to show up more than just somewhere along the campaign trail,” he said.

“Something tells me the vote might have gone a little differently had the people come to the people’s house and participated.”

However, McCann also said he was encouraged that Senate President John Cullerton, D-Chicago, said in his speech accepting

another term leading the Senate that a top priority will be to to cut employer costs for worker's compensation.

On McCann's new Senate desk was a flower arrangement in a vase shaped like an old, red pickup truck. It was a present from a campaign aide who is now his legislative assistant – Cindy Miller. She's a former Demuzio staffer but also a longtime family friend of McCann.

"This is a reminder of the campaign trail," McCann said. He said a 1947 Ford truck "was our signature in all the parades around the district."

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Rosenthal unhappy at tax hike

One of the newest members of the Illinois House from central Illinois is not happy with the tax increase that passed in the waning hours of the 96th General Assembly.

"I think the tax increase is negative," said Rep. Wayne Rosenthal, R-Morrisonville, who was sworn in as a member of the 97th General Assembly on Wednesday. "Other states are saying, 'Thank you very much Illinois,' and that's something we need to change. We need to create a better environment here, that's the bottom line. We need to bring jobs back to Illinois."

Rosenthal, a Lincoln Land Community College trustee and a graduate of what is now the University of Illinois Springfield, said education is tied to job growth, and that is something he plans to address in the 97th General Assembly.

"If we can provide the education and then provide the jobs for them to stay here in Illinois, I think that's a big plus," Rosenthal said.

With his wife Marcia, sons Dustin, Sean and Casey, and father Kenny watching from the audience at Sangamon Auditorium, Rosenthal and the 117 other representatives were given the oath of office Wednesday by retired Illinois appellate justice Alan Greiman.

"It was exciting for me," said Rosenthal, 60, a retired brigadier general in the Illinois Air National Guard.

With his 30-year career in the military, where he flew an F-4 fighter jet for 18 years, Rosenthal highlighted his leadership qualities.

"When I retired, I was the logistics group commander, and I had been the fighter squadron commander before that, so I have a lot of leadership experience," Rosenthal said. "I look forward to working with the people here in Illinois."

-- *Andy Brownfield*

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