

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst announces new leadership for several Texas Senate committees

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AUSTIN – Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst announced new leadership for eight Senate committees Wednesday, saying the moves will help prepare the Senate for what many expect to be a difficult legislative session.

One of the key changes affects Sen. [John Carona](#), R-Dallas, who will shift from chairman of the transportation committee to head of the business and commerce committee. A spokeswoman for Carona said the senator welcomes the assignment and looks forward to dealing with business issues facing the state.

Sen. [Bob Deuell](#), a [Republican](#) whose district includes eastern Dallas County and [Rockwall](#) County, will chair a committee for the first time, taking over the nominations committee. And Sen. [Chris Harris](#), R-[Arlington](#), will take over as chairman of the jurisprudence committee after heading the economic development committee last session.

"Texas is facing a number of complicated challenges, from creating jobs and balancing the budget, to securing our border, improving public education, building new highways and ensuring a clean environment," Dewhurst said in explaining the changes. He also shuffled the memberships of several of the panels.

Typically, the lieutenant governor doesn't announce committee assignments for an upcoming session until after the November elections, so Dewhurst's moves signal his belief that the 2011 session that begins in January will not be easy. Among the challenges are legislative and congressional redistricting and a state revenue shortfall expected to approach \$18 billion over the next two years.

Chairs of most major Senate committees – including finance, state affairs, education, higher education, criminal justice, and health and human services – were not changed. And no [Democrats](#) were involved in the moves.

The series of changes was caused in part by the resignation of Senate Natural Resources Committee Chairman [Kip Averitt](#), R-Waco, earlier this year because of health reasons. He was replaced as chairman Wednesday by Sen. [Troy Fraser](#), R-Horseshoe Bay.

Other new chairmen are: [Kevin Eltife](#), R-Tyler, administration; [Mike Jackson](#), R-La Porte, economic development; [Tommy Williams](#), R-The Woodlands, transportation and homeland security; and [Jeff Wentworth](#), R-[San Antonio](#), veterans health.