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Bollin To Chair House Approps; Hall Picks Farhat For Minority Vice Chair Over Puri's Choice

The chairs for the [House Appropriations](#) Committee are set for the term.

House [Speaker Matt Hall](#) named [Rep. Ann Bollin](#) (R-Brighton) as chair of the House Appropriations Committee and [Rep. Matt Maddock](#) (R-Milford) as the majority vice chair. [Rep. Alabas Farhat](#) (D-Dearborn) was named minority vice chair. Farhat was not House [Minority Leader Ranjeev Puri's](#) (D-Canton Township) choice for that position.

"We needed people that were meticulous, that will get into the weeds and the details and look at each one of these programs and determine where is the value for the taxpayer, what is the return on investment for the taxpayer?" Hall (R-Richland Township) said.

Bollin is a fourth-term member of the House who has served on the Appropriations Committee. Last term, she served as the minority vice chair of the House General Government Appropriations Subcommittee. She's also worked on the budget for Health and Human Services, Corrections, Agriculture and Rural Development, Higher Education and Community Colleges.

Bollin said her goal is to restore public accountability and fiscal responsibility.

"It's going to be a principled budget, not a political budget," Bollin said. "I look forward to working across the aisle with our Senate counterparts and the governor for a sustainable, fiscally responsible budget on behalf of the taxpayers."

[Sen. Sarah Anthony](#) (D-Lansing), the chair of the [Senate Appropriations Committee](#), following the announcement, told reporters that she was excited to get to work on the budget with her House counterpart.

"I'm excited," she said. "Our constituents are looking for us to stand in the gap and mind the state's coffers, and whether that's looking at road funding, essential service in the DHHS budget. You can slice and dice the chairs all you want. I want to make sure that people have the service they need ...I spend the most time with the House Appropriations chair, so knowing who that is so we can finally get to work was exciting, and I've worked with Representative Bollin since we first came into the House a few years back, so I'm looking forward to working with her."

Hall selected Maddock, one of the ultra-conservative members of the Republican caucus, as the majority vice chair.

"I came here to chew bubble gum and to cut budgets, and I'm all out of bubble gum," Maddock said.

Maddock, despite not serving on any committees last year, served on House Appropriations during his previous two terms.

As a freshman in the 2019-20 term, Maddock was chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation. In his first Department of Transportation budget proposal, Maddock sought to take bids for some of the state's assets, including airports, rest stops and, most famously, the Blue Water Bridge in Port Huron. The latter of those proposals came under heavy criticism. Maddock was not assigned to chair a subcommittee in his second term.

Maddock and Hall have historically not been on good terms within the Republican caucus, but Maddock praised Hall for his ability to put together a strong team for the budget.

"We may not always agree on everything ... but I think Speaker Hall is wise enough to see real talent and use it where it's needed," he said. "I was looking for a good outcome, and I can't think of anything better than this team right now."

Hall also named Farhat the minority vice chair. The pick was not in line with Puri's recommendation, who publicized his recommendations Tuesday afternoon after submitting them to Hall.

During the press conference, Hall sent a member of his staff to find Farhat to join him, Bollin and Maddock in the House Appropriations Committee Room.

Prior to naming Farhat, Hall said that he wanted to make sure that he made good selections for both Republicans and Democrats based on

their campaign promises, backgrounds and skill set.

At the press conference, Hall welcomed Farhat into the room and apologized for not sharing the news of the appointment with him sooner.

"I'm still composing what exactly to say right now," Farhat said. "I'll say this, though, the budget is a serious process ... It's a constitutional obligation we have to pass a balanced budget, and I'll be working with my caucus to deliver real wins and value to taxpayers. I know we agree on roads, so hopefully, there's a lot more alignment there. Right now, I think the conversation has to be around the cost-of-living crisis that people are experiencing and how we solve that and how we take real steps towards affordability, which I know we've started these past two years."

Farhat said he planned to lean on Anthony, who attended the press conference.

Tuesday's announcement was unconventional in a couple of ways. It's the latest a speaker has announced the Appropriations chair in 28 years. Since then, speakers generally have announced their choice in November or December. Also different was the use of a press conference. Speakers typically announce their pick via press release. That the speaker's choice for minority vice chair also was part of the press conference was another wrinkle.

What was not unusual was for Hall to spurn the minority leader's preference for minority vice chair. Former House Speaker Kevin Cotter did so in the 2015-16 term. And in the last term, Hall as minority leader wanted then-Rep. Andrew Fink as minority vice chair, but then-Speaker Joe Tate picked [Rep. Sarah Lightner](#) instead.

At the press conference, Farhat requested that House Democrats have input on committee assignments, which Hall granted, specifying he would take input from Farhat.

"I will give you that opportunity to give us the feedback, so that we can make sure we have good people that are ready to help bring value for our tax dollars," Hall said.

Hall alleged that Puri made committee recommendations to punish members, but no member of the Democratic caucus was left out of Puri's recommendations. A source speaking on background with knowledge of the process said the only decision that could be viewed as "punishment"

in the Democratic recommendations was not recommending [Rep. Angela Witwer](#) (D-Delta Township) for House Appropriations. That decision had more to do with what Republicans were likely to accept, the source said.

Witwer was Appropriations chair in the 2023-24 term though she did not serve on the committee her first two terms in the House.

A Democratic source speaking on background said that there were members of the House Democratic Caucus who were not pleased with Farhat as the pick for minority vice chair.

Puri's pick was [Rep. Will Snyder](#) (D-Muskegon), though he did recommend Farhat serve on the House Appropriations Committee.

The Democratic recommendations that Puri submitted to Hall on Tuesday were based on an internal caucus Committee on Committees process, which was chaired by [Rep. Jasper Martus](#) (D-Flushing) and guided by the preferences of members and their experience, according to the letter Puri sent Hall.

"The CoC process was very collaborative, including multiple surveys as well as follow-up discussions with members as finalizations were made," Puri's letter said.

Snyder was recommended because he was seen as a middle ground pick who would still push back against Republican interests, the Democratic source said, because it seemed unlikely Witwer would be accepted by House Republicans.

The source compared the situation that unfolded Tuesday to what happened in 2015, when former Speaker Kevin Cotter appointed former Rep. Pam Faris as the minority vice chair of the Appropriations Committee despite the Democrats' preference for then-Rep. Brandon Dillon.

At that time, Faris and all other Democrats on House Appropriations Committee said that they would abide by the wishes of Democratic leadership and decline the vice chair slot. So, Cotter appointed then-Rep. Harvey Santana, who gained a reputation of working with Republicans and was ultimately asked not to caucus with Democrats.

Hall appointed Farhat prior to House Democrats publicizing their recommendations.

The source said although not all House Democrats were aware of the differences in what their Committee on Committees requested and Tuesday's minority vice chair appointment, members were likely to ask Farhat to reject the assignment.

Puri, though asked for comment on the Appropriations appointments, provided a statement on committee assignments more broadly.

"It is a long-standing tradition for minority leadership to weigh in on their caucus' committee assignments. These recommendations are an important part of the legislative tradition – it is fundamental to uphold the customs of our system in order to provide confidence in our democracy and ensure transparency in the process," he said. "Our caucus members shared which committees they felt best suited for, and it is from that process we have made our recommendations. ... With my recommendations today, we aim to continue representing and serving Michigan's diverse population by bringing our skills and commitment to the committee process."

Farhat, when asked about Puri's recommendation for the minority vice chair, reiterated that he was optimistic he could deliver for House Democrats.

"I spoke to the governor, we are ready to get to work," he said.

Hall said that he was uninterested in the relationship dynamics related to his Appropriations picks.

"These are the type of decisions that leaders have to make ... no one care about who I got along with or didn't get along with. All they care about is, are we putting the best people forward to get the results that we told the people of Michigan we were going to do?" he said. "I'm proud to say today these people leading our Appropriations Committee are going to deliver on that balance."

Hall said one of his priorities with the budget was to fund roads without raising taxes and to review programs for their effectiveness. He also expressed interest in limiting the use of conference committees for the budget process.

"We're not coming here because we want to slash," Bollin said. "All we want to do is increase the transparency and accountability and make sure that every program is giving us value for the dollar."

– By Elena Durnbaugh

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