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Wickersham out of tax commission

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LINCOLN — A former state senator who has criticized administration officials will not be on the newly reconstituted Tax Equalization and Review Commission.

Nebraska lawmakers passed a bill this year reducing the number of commissioners from four to three, a move backers said would save money but others said was aimed at getting Bob Wickersham of Harrison off the commission.

The bill terminated all four current commissioners and allowed Gov. Dave Heineman to fill the three new spots.

Heineman announced his choices Friday.

They include Omaha attorney Tom Freimuth, who will represent the 2nd Congressional District. He replaces Commissioner William Warnes of Bellevue, who no longer lives in the district following this year's redrawing of election lines.

Commissioners Rob Hotz of Lincoln and Nancy Salmon of Aurora, representing the 1st and 3rd Congressional Districts, respectively, were reappointed.

Wickersham, who holds an at-large position, will be out of his \$105,040 job as of July 1.

Supporters of the legislation said the changes would cut costs and streamline the process of protesting valuations. The bill allows hearings to be conducted with a single commissioner and reduces the need to hire a lawyer.

The bill also requires changes in the protest process at the county level within the next few years.

On Friday, Wickersham said he was not optimistic that the changes would ease the commission's workload in the near future.

"I will be surprised if they are able to keep up over the next two years," he said.

Heineman, a Republican, reappointed Wickersham, a Democrat, to a six-year term in 2008. But Wickersham clashed with the state property tax administrator last year.

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