

OKLAHOMA CITY — A veterinarian from Cushing will serve as second-in-command when House members return for the legislative session that begins in February. Republican Rep. Lee Denney was recently tapped as speaker pro tem-elect. She will be in the chair at the front of the chamber presiding when House Speaker Jeff Hickman, R-Fairview, has other duties, which is a considerable amount of time. It can be an arduous job, with late nights, long debates and passionate opinions among the 101 House members. "The (House chamber) floor is someplace to be impartial," Denney said. "Every member was elected by a constituency. They have a right to be heard on the floor and be treated with respect and have their opinions valued and listened to." The 61-year-old mother of two grown children has two more years to serve before she runs up against the 12-year term limit. In the past decade, her biggest regret in office has been term limits, but she sees both sides of the debate. "I feel like term limits cause us to lose institutional knowledge," Denney said. "We have some people that are very effective policy makers. But with term limits, we get a lot of fresh faces, new ideas and new energy. It is bittersweet." Longtime friend and desk-mate Rep. Lisa Billy, R-Purcell, describes Denney as a team builder and a consensus builder with a strong work ethic. The House speaker echoed her praise. "I have always referred to Lee as my other mother," Hickman said. "I don't know if she likes that or not. We are near and dear friends who have served together a decade now. I have great respect for her. No one works harder on the issues that she is dedicated to." Denney said her hobbies include reading, walking and spending time with her dogs and cat. "I am not very crafty," she said. She says her greatest accomplishments in office are drawing attention to the issue of puppy mills and working to get more money to schools. Denney holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and a doctorate of veterinary medicine, both from Oklahoma State University. Barbara Hoberock 405-528-2465 barbara.hoberock@tulsaworld.com Be the first to

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