

Dec. 7, 2009

GOVERNOR NAMES JAMES W. SPEARS AS CHIEF OF STAFF

DMAPS cabinet secretary a familiar face in Manchin administration

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Gov. Joe Manchin today named James W. Spears, cabinet secretary of the West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety, as chief of staff for the Manchin administration, effective Jan. 1. He succeeds Larry Puccio, who on Dec. 1 announced he would step down at the end of the year.

Manchin said Spears brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position, and emphasized that he has worked closely with all facets of state government since 2005.

“Jim Spears is very talented and he has the experience and know-how to handle the pressures that a round-the-clock job of this level requires,” Manchin said. “West Virginia has counted on his sound guidance to oversee our most crucial public safety functions and his selection for this post reflects how strongly I feel about his leadership ability.”

Spears joined the Manchin administration in 2005 as cabinet secretary, overseeing 12 divisions of approximately 12,000 employees with a budget of over \$500 million and serving as the governor’s homeland security adviser. Divisions in DMAPS include the Adjutant General/WV National Guard, Corrections, Criminal Justice Services, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Juvenile Services, Protective Services, Veterans Affairs, Parole Board, Regional Jail and Correctional Facility Authority, State Fire Marshal, State Police and the Homeland Security State Administrative Agency.

Spears said he is looking forward to the challenge of the day-to-day operation of state government.

“I’m thankful to the governor for his confidence in me as I know the bar has been set very high for this position,” Spears said. “I have no doubt that serving as chief of staff will require a lot of hard work and the ability to make tough decisions; however, that is a requirement of any job in the Manchin administration. I’m eager to continue that success.”

He added that he appreciates the hard-working staff at DMAPS for the accomplishments while serving in his previous post.

Spears is a native of Elkins, W.Va., and a graduate of Davidson College in North Carolina, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in history and graduated as an ROTC distinguished military graduate. While serving in the U.S. Army, he completed a master’s degree in International Relations from the University of Southern California. He also attended several post-graduate military and State Department programs in France, Washington and California, and he speaks French, German and Slovak languages.

Spears was a principal adviser to six U.S. ambassadors in Luxemburg, Slovakia and Africa. His experience includes the coordination of congressional and public affairs for the Defense Intelligence Agency and developing peacekeeping assistance programs in Africa. He served for 22 years as a U.S. Army officer before retiring from the military.

Spears is married and has four children.

Additional biographical information and an official photograph are available at <http://www.wvdmaps.gov/secretary.html>.