

## **LONG TIME GOVERNMENT LEADER IS LEAVITT'S NEW CHIEF OF STAFF**

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Long-time government executive Ted Stewart is Gov. Mike Leavitt's new chief of staff.

Stewart is currently executive director of the state's Department of Natural Resources, but his government credits include four years as U.S. Rep. Jim Hansen's chief of staff in the 1980s, seven years on the Public Service Commission and a short stint as executive director of the State Department of Commerce. And, oh yes, Stewart, a conservative Republican, ran for the U.S. Senate in 1992, losing a close convention fight to Sen. Bob Bennett and Geneva Steel chairman Joe Cannon.

Stewart, 49, moves into the governor's suite of offices on Monday.

"I'm honored that I was picked," Stewart said Thursday afternoon.

"Ted Stewart is an able and experienced administrator. He has diverse experience in public service and the private sector, having led two state departments, served in a key staff role in Congress and been chairman of the Public Service Commission," said Leavitt. "Ted has sound judgment, and is widely respected for his accomplishments throughout the state. He will be a great addition to the strong and seasoned team of professionals on my personal staff."

Leavitt's long-time chief of staff Charlie Johnson left government last year. For a time Bob Gross, whom Leavitt had hired to form the new, huge Department of Workforce Services, served as chief of staff. But Gross asked Leavitt if he could return to Workforce Services just before the 1998 Legislature and Leavitt tapped one of his long-time aides, Bob Linnell, to fill in temporarily as chief of staff until Linnell retired from state government at the end of March.

Vicki Varela, long-time Leavitt spokeswoman, keeps her current title of deputy chief of staff.

Stewart lists as one of his assets the fact that he's worked in a variety of state management positions, from natural resources to business regulation to electrical regulation.

"My general (political) philosophy goes well with the governor's. We're a fit," said Stewart. He's survived five years as natural resources director, a job that usually eats up government bureaucrats.

He points with pride to several natural resources successes: "We're in the process of bringing back the state's deer population (severely harmed by overhunting and several years of especially hard winters). We've made great improvements in the state parks system, the chief of which is This Is The Place State Park, which will be privatized" this coming year.

Stewart says his critics will likely point to the spread of whirling disease among state fish populations in the 1990s as one of his failures. The disease has infected some private fish hatcheries and remains a serious threat to wild trout populations in the state. "But it's the nature of the disease that it is very difficult to stop in wild fish populations," he said.

Stewart was carefully watched, and criticized by some, in the handling of the outbreak of whirling disease in a private hatchery owned by Leavitt's immediate family.

But Stewart has been praised by many legislators, Republicans and Democrats alike, for handling growing natural resource problems at the same time legislators were restricting growth.

"I don't know how long I'll serve; it's at the governor's pleasure." Leavitt's second four-year term runs out the end of 2000, and there's much speculation that he will seek a third term.

Stewart declined to rule out another run at elective office himself in the future. "Right now,

that is not a decision I even have to think about. And I won't."