

LEGAL PROFESSION



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Maryland's Attorney General J. Joseph Curran Jr. kisses his wife Barbara after formally announcing that he will not seek re-election for the job of attorney general.

What's next for Joe Curran?

Service, advocacy, a book — oh, and 'one more campaign,' but not his own

BY ANN W. PARKS

Daily Record Assistant Legal Editor

You would have thought J. Joseph Curran Jr. was just embarking on a political career, not finishing a long and storied one.

Arriving in front of an appreciative, applauding crowd gathered at the Tremont Grand Hotel in Baltimore yesterday, Maryland's attorney general made "V-for-victory signs" with his fingers as family, friends and supporters waved signs proclaiming "40 more years."

And, while Curran laughingly said he was looking forward to "one more campaign" (a reference to the gubernatorial aspirations of Baltimore Mayor Mar-

tin O'Malley, his son-in-law), he himself intends to "change courses slightly" by not seeking re-election after nearly 20 years in the post and more than 40 in public life.

Instead, Curran says, he'd like to do some work in the private sector. He practiced law privately for 24 years while in the General Assembly, before serving as lieutenant governor and, later, attorney general.

"I go [sometimes] to Annapolis, to the Court of Special Appeals, to the Court of Appeals," the understated Curran told The Daily Record. "I'd like to continue to do that."

He cites advocacy for children

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and the mentally ill as among some of the chief projects he'd like to be involved in, although he's not sure yet just how those cases will come his way. While he has no plans to do any lobbying, Curran says there are several issues concerning family violence that still need to be addressed.

He also wants to do some pro bono work, as well as writing and speaking at the local law schools on the development of Maryland law over the past 50 years — particularly the turbulent 1960s, when he was a young legislator fighting to liberalize Maryland's laws on segregation, miscegenation and abortion rights.

"I have enough material to write more than one book," he said. "All the people in Maryland's hierarchy, I knew them well."

Baltimore lawyer Stephen H. Sachs joked that "the most exclusive club in Maryland" — that of former state attorneys general — will be getting a second member. (Sachs was Curran's predecessor in the post, serving from 1979 to 1987.)

"He's not going to want for opportunities to lawyer," said Sachs, who practiced law full time for 13 years after leaving public office — though he was still in his 50s when he did so. Sachs now does legal work for the Public Justice Center, the Maryland Disability Law Center, and the Women's Law Center of Maryland.

"I think he's going to find himself busy and in demand, and enjoy the role of elder statesman," Sachs said, adding that, as a former attorney general, Curran will have the luxury of picking and choosing the cases he wants to be involved in — the things he cares about the most.

"I associate him with the protection of children, the advancement of the disabled," he said, noting that the fact that Curran can choose will make his advocacy all the more powerful. And sometimes, Sachs said, a former attorney general's presence can bring a "certain heft" to the case — if he talks, judges listen.

As an appellate advocate, Sachs said, Curran's candor and sincerity is palpable — persuasively arguing "A, B and C" while acknowledging "X, Y and Z." As attorney general, Curran won two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court that expanded law en-

forcement's ability to prosecute child abuse.

Still, "I think Joe might have to get used to driving a car again," Sachs joked.

Setting the standard

Frederick County State's Attorney Scott Rolle is planning to issue a statement of his own today concerning the possibility of succeeding Curran to the post. Montgomery County State's Attorney Douglas F. Gansler will announce his plans next week; Montgomery County Councilman Thomas F. Perez has also thrown his hat into the ring.

Curran told The Daily Record yesterday that while his successor would "make his own mark in time," he hopes that individual would be available to help agencies, the legislature and the governor to work for the best interests of the citizens.

"The citizen comes first," he said.

"This is an anxious office right now; we'd like to believe the successor would follow in Joe's footsteps," said Assistant Attorney General Paul Raschke, who said Curran "set the benchmark" in terms of professionalism, ethics, and service to the community. "It's going to be really hard to replace him."