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Senate, Governor Campaigns in Limelight

**BYLINE:** By Michel McQueen, Washington Post Staff Writer

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**BODY:**

Take a lieutenant governor, a deputy attorney general, a former prosecutor of major political corruption cases and a former three-term attorney general, all vying to capture Maryland's top legal job. In most election years that lineup would promise one of the hottest campaigns around.

But in a year likely to produce nationally monitored gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races, the quest for attorney general already has become the bridesmaid of Maryland's 1986 campaign season.

"In its own right it's a very interesting race, but how can you compete with political Star Wars?" asked one observer.

No Republicans have announced for the office, but already the four Democratic candidates have taken diligently to the campaign trail, some of them as long ago as December 1983. To debates at Ellicott City, the 14th District, Mount Royal, and Howard County Democratic clubs they have dutifully gone, as well as to countless coffees, receptions and brunches. This weekend they debated at Anne Arundel Community College here, a few miles north of Annapolis at a conference for party regulars.

"Whenever anybody needs entertainment they ask the attorney general candidates. The gubernatorial candidates don't come," said Eleanor Carey, now the senior deputy attorney general, who is hoping to replace her boss and mentor Stephen H. Sachs, who is running for governor. If successful, she would be the first woman in state history to hold the job.

Candidate Russell (Tim) Baker, a former federal and state prosecutor with a resume as glittering as it is long, echoed the point, saying, "It'll be very difficult for me to get out the message. The press has not given us the attention this important office deserves, and I don't think it ever will."

So far, the candidates have largely avoided the intense verbal combat that gives a contested race some of its flair. Their joint appearance Saturday resembled less a debate than a series of live commercials, with each candidate reiterating his or her accomplishments. The only spark came when Francis B. Burch, the former three-term attorney general, said Carey had wrongly taken credit for creating the Consumer Protection Division, an accomplishment he claims.

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"I started consumerism in Maryland in 1969," he said earlier.

Mainly, the candidates agree, their campaigns will center on name recognition and highlight their experience, and to that end each of them is highlighting a long career in law enforcement. Carey and Baker have begun fund raising to help win that critical recognition, and each claims to have raised about \$100,000. Lt. Gov. J. Joseph Curran Jr. has raised about \$30,000. Burch has raised no money in his quest to recapture his old job.

Each has pledged to follow Sachs' example by declining to run on a ticket with a gubernatorial candidate, thereby ensuring independence, they say. Each is pledging to help the state enhance its economic development efforts, which to some is a minor stab at Sachs, who is generally perceived as less than popular in the state's business community for his vigorous pursuit of corporate offenders. On the other hand, at the weekend debate each of them pledged to be an activist in the office, a label associated with Sachs.

They differ mainly in the issues they see as priorities for the office, which provides legal representation for most government agencies:

\*Russell (Tim) Baker, 43, is a corporate lawyer who has represented the Rouse Co., developers of Baltimore's Harborplace. As an assistant U.S. attorney, he served on the team that successfully prosecuted former Baltimore County executive Dale Anderson, former vice president Spiro Agnew and former Prince George's commissioner Jesse Baggett on corruption charges. He served as deputy assistant attorney general in the Carter administration and U.S. attorney for Maryland.

Said Baker, "The most pressing problem in Maryland right now is narcotics." He pledges to implement a statewide narcotics strategy to reduce the flow of illegal drugs as well as educate the public about the dangers of narcotics. Among his plans is the formation of a statewide narcotics strike force that would pool resources across jurisdictions. He promises many ideas to enhance economic development by drawing on his experience as a corporate lawyer.

\*Francis B. Burch, 67, is a former Baltimore solicitor, as well as attorney general from 1966 to 1978. As solicitor he argued a landmark Supreme Court case defending the Baltimore school system's right to hold prayer sessions during the day, but he ultimately lost. He has been in private practice since leaving office. Burch, who is an unannounced candidate, says he is mainly running on his record, which he says includes setting up the first consumer protection offices in the state and starting the antitrust division. He said he will outline his goals for the office later.

\*Eleanor Carey, 43, is a former clerk to a Court of Appeals judge, congressional aide and tax lawyer. She is touting her experience as supervisor of the attorney general's Consumer Protection Division and hazardous waste strike force, both of which have won several controversial and highly publicized lawsuits. She also claims credit for implementing a program to arbitrate consumer complaints that is largely staffed by volunteers.

Carey pledges to uphold "the promise that the attorney general's office will be the people's lawyer, that every complaint or request will be followed up and treated fairly."

\*J. Joseph Curran Jr., 53, has been lieutenant governor since 1982, after serving 23 years in the General Assembly. He served as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee for 16 years, the basis of his belief that he has "played a role in passing many of the laws we live under today." More recently, he has led task forces to tighten drunk-driving laws, enhance victims' rights and revise liability insurance legislation.

He stresses his ability to manage the office as well as work cooperatively with other government agencies. "The principal focus of this office is to see to it that government functions, that all agencies of the government function in accordance with government policy." He is particularly interested in the problems of the mentally ill after they leave court-ordered custody and pledges creative solutions to other complex social problems.