

Miller calls this Senate term his last

By Jon Ward
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ANNAPOLIS — Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr., the longest-serving state Senate president in Maryland's history, said yesterday that he likely will leave the legislature after completing his current term.

"This is probably my last term," Mr. Miller, a Southern Maryland Democrat, told The Washington Times. "I've accomplished all I wanted to accomplish."

Mr. Miller, who turns 64 next month, would hand over the gavel in 2010 after serving 24 years as Senate president.

He was first elected to the legislature as a delegate in 1970 and moved to the Senate in 1974. He was elected Senate president in 1986.

Yesterday, Mr. Miller said that enacting slots legislation and health care reform would dominate the upcoming session, which will begin in January.

He said he will name two black women from Baltimore to Senate leadership positions: Sen. Lisa A. Gladden as vice chairman of the Judicial Proceedings Committee and Sen. Joan Carter Conway as chairman of the Education, Health and Environmental Matters Committee. Mrs. Conway will replace Sen. Paula Colodny Hollinger, Baltimore County Democrat, who resigned to make an unsuccessful run for Congress.

"I really feel like there's a historic opportunity to have an African-American chairwoman in the Senate," Mr. Miller said. "It's the right thing to do."

Black voters are the key to Democratic success in Maryland elections, and Democrats have come under increasing pressure to bring black officials into state leadership positions.

Mr. Miller has put two other black Democrats into key Senate positions: Nathaniel J. McFadden of Baltimore as majority leader, and Sen. Ulysses Curry of Prince George's County as chairman of the Budget and Taxation Committee.

A father of five and grandfather of 10, Mr. Miller was born in Clinton and attended Surrattsville High School.

He graduated from the Uni-

versity of Maryland at College Park in 1964 and received a law degree from the University of Maryland in 1967.

He built his fortune in private law while building his political power base from the State House in Annapolis. The legislature's newest office building is named after Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller was re-elected last week to his ninth term in the Senate, handily defeating his Republican challenger, Ron Miller.

He has been a strong ally on the slots issue for Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., a Republican who was defeated in the Nov. 7 election.

Mr. Miller promised Mr. Ehrlich in 2002 that he would give the governor three years of cooperation, but would not work with him in an election year.

He was true to his word. Mr. Miller led the Democrat-controlled legislature in overturning 21 of the governor's vetoes this past session.

Mr. Miller came under scrutiny in September when a Prince George's developer accused the Senate leader of punching him at a County Council meeting. The criminal charges were dropped for lack of evidence.

In January, Mr. Miller told the Baltimore Daily Record that politics "is sort of like war."

"You hold on to your own, and you take some from the other person," he said.

■ *This article is based in part on wire service reports.*