

<http://www.sunspot.net/news/local/bal-md.politics23apr23.column?coll=bal%2Dlocal%2Dheadlines>

By Michael Dresser and Howard Libit

## Bromwell leaves big shoes to fill

### **Task: The Senate will be hard-pressed to find a successor to head the Finance Committee with Sen. Thomas L. Bromwell's skills and presence.**

Political Game

April 23, 2002

THE SENATE of Maryland has been around for more than 350 years, so the departure of one senator doesn't make much of an impact in the grand scheme of things.

Some senators, however, leave a void that is felt many years after they move on. They become part of Senate lore -- Jack Cade, Fred Malkus, Harry "Soft Shoes" McGuirk.

And now Tommy Bromwell.

The Baltimore County Democrat, who is leaving to become head of the Injured Workers' Insurance Fund, has been a commanding figure in the Senate during the eight years he has served as chairman of the powerful Finance Committee.

In that role, Bromwell, 52, has served as supreme arbiter (at least on the Senate side) of competing economic interests.

Bromwell, however, was more than just a title. The five-term senator brought style, presence and a swagger to the job. He didn't just give floor reports; he gave performances. Whether he was clashing with other Senate titans, cracking wise at Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller or making an impassioned plea for "the little guy," he made the chamber a more interesting place to be.

The accent was blue-collar East Baltimore and his political resume says he was once a tavern-keeper, but pity the colleague who underestimated his intelligence. A powerful debater with a booming voice to match, he was quick-witted and funny while showing an excellent grasp of complex legislation.

"People enjoyed what he had to say," Miller said. "He will be very much missed -- as will his consensus-building skills in the committee."

Bromwell's departure opens up one of the plum positions in a Senate that could see sweeping changes because of redistricting and the election.

Sen. Arthur Dorman, vice chairman of the committee, is not seen as a possible successor. The 75-year-old Prince George's County Democrat missed most of this year's session with health problems and did not look well when he returned.

The leading candidate for promotion is Sen. Thomas M. Middleton, an amiable moderate from Charles County. The well-regarded Middleton, who serves as chairman of the Budget and Taxation Capital Budget Subcommittee, is regarded as one of the few senators with the abilities to be a future Senate president.

If Miller looks within the Finance Committee for a new chairman, Montgomery County's Sen. Leonard H. Teitelbaum and Anne Arundel County's Sen. John C. Astle could benefit. Neither, however, has the political skills of Bromwell.