

# Bromwell wants top job with Maryland's IWIF

## Board will discuss state senator's hiring

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State Sen. Thomas L. Bromwell of Baltimore County has emerged as the leading candidate to take a lucrative job heading Maryland's Injured Workers Insurance Fund, sources said yesterday.

The board that runs IWIF is expected to discuss hiring Bromwell at a meeting today, a source close to the panel said.

Bromwell, 51, confirmed last night that he is interested in the job, which is expected to pay in the range of \$150,000. "Yeah, the money is good," Bromwell said. "But there's also an issue that this [agency] is ready to go to the next step."

Bromwell, a former tavern owner and contractor, works for an Internet wiring company as a construction manager. He does not have experience managing what is in effect a major insurance company, but by several accounts, he has developed a good understanding of workers' compensation issues as chairman of the Senate committee that oversees IWIF.

"I'm not the brightest guy in the world, but I'm not the dumbest guy in the world either,"

Bromwell said.

Word of his interest in the job drew criticism from the head of a Maryland group that advocates strict state ethics policies.

"What you have here is a \$1 billion company carefully constructed legislatively by the man who now wants to run it," said Kathleen S. Skullney, executive director of Common Cause/Maryland. "If that doesn't create the appearance of a conflict, I don't know what does."

Asked about possible critics, Bromwell said: "I want them to

name three people in the state or Maryland who know more about workers' compensation, what IWIF is and who has a better relationship with the General Assembly and the governor."

Bromwell said he discussed the job last week with Gov. Parris N. Glendening, who appoints the IWIF board. Although Bromwell and Glendening have occasionally clashed over the governor's legislative agenda, Glendening is not objecting to Bromwell seeking the IWIF post.

IWIF, created in 1914 by the legislature, sells workers' compensation insurance to Maryland companies. It has assets of more than \$1 billion and is the largest single provider of workers' compensation coverage in the state, holding about 20 percent of the market.

The insurer has been without a chief executive since the resignation of Paul M. Rose in March.

Another Democratic legislator, Del. Michael E. Busch of Anne Arundel County, considered the job but turned it down, as did John P. Davey, a Prince George's County lawyer and a longtime friend of Glendening.

Bromwell, a 22-year veteran of the General Assembly, has served for six years as chairman of the Finance Committee, which handles high-stakes issues ranging from insurance and health care to utilities and horse racing. Should he leave the Senate to take the IWIF job, Bromwell would be giving up the chance, at least for now, of landing two prominent political posts.

He is widely seen as a leading contender to become the next Senate president after Sen. Thomas V. Mike Miller, who has held the post for 15 years.

Bromwell is also seen as a possible candidate to succeed Baltimore County Executive C. A. Dutch Ruppertsberger, who cannot seek a third term in 2002.

If he is offered the job and decides to accept it, Bromwell said it would be hard to leave politics.

"I love the Senate of Maryland, what can I tell you," he said. "I think it shows. So, there's a lot that has to be [considered]."

Sources familiar with the search said Bromwell first expressed interest in taking the job after Davey turned it down last week. When Davey's decision became known, Bromwell became actively interested. "I think he suddenly realized that there was this opportunity staring him in the face," an IWIF source said.

Sources within the agency said they did not expect problems in reaching an agreement with Bromwell that would be acceptable to the seven-member board.

As a committee chairman, Bromwell has played a key role in overseeing IWIF operations. He served on a task force appointed by Glendening to review the agency.