

Bromwell turns down job to stay in Senate

'Loose ends' lead him
to reject IWIF post

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In a surprise reversal, state Sen. Thomas L. Bromwell turned his back yesterday on a \$150,000-a-year job heading a state agency, announcing that he will instead stay in the Senate where he holds the chairmanship of a powerful legislative committee.

The Baltimore County Democrat said he decided after several weeks of contemplation to turn down the job of chief executive officer and president of the state Injured Workers Insurance Fund, a position that would have paid him \$150,000 plus \$50,000 a year in benefits. He was due to assume the job Jan. 1.

"I hate to give up a \$200,000-a-year job," he said, "but it ain't all about money. It's about doing what I've got to do.

"I love the Senate of Maryland," he said.

Bromwell becomes the third person with strong Annapolis ties to turn down the job running the agency, which sells workers' compensation insurance coverage to thousands of Maryland businesses.

Bromwell's decision ends weeks of speculation about who would succeed him as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, a key legislative panel. And it renews speculation that Bromwell might someday seek to succeed Democratic Sen. Thomas V. Mike Miller of Prince George's County as president of the Senate, one of the top jobs in state government.

Bromwell had been scheduled to resign from the Senate last week but asked the IWIF board for a one-month delay for "personal reasons." His appointment to the IWIF job had been announced in late September.

IWIF board Chairman Daniel McKew said he was disappointed, but not surprised, by Bromwell's decision. He said the agency will resume its search for a chief executive officer.

The job has been vacant since early spring when Paul M. Rose, a former legislative auditor and close ally of Bromwell's, resigned.

"We'll start all over," said McKew, who said he learned of Bromwell's decision yesterday morning.

McKew said he was more surprised when Bromwell said he wanted to take the IWIF job.

"As the date got closer and closer, he couldn't bring himself to leave the Senate," McKew said. "That's where his real passion is."

McKew said that although Bromwell had not formally assumed the role of IWIF chief executive officer and president, he had been meeting with staff members and attending board meetings since his appointment was announced.

Before Bromwell, two others considered the job but decided not to pursue it: Del. Michael E. Busch of Anne Arundel County and John P. Davey, a Prince George's County lawyer and longtime friend of Gov. Parris N. Glendening.

Bromwell, 51, said a number of factors led him to his decision, including his desire to play a role in several pending legislative issues.

"There's a lot of loose ends ... a lot of issues someone has to keep an eye on," Bromwell said, noting among other things a legislative redistricting plan that must be approved by the General Assembly in 2002.

Bromwell said he was particularly anguished when supporters kept calling him and urging him to stay in the Senate.

"When you ride in a parade and three different times people come up to you and say, 'Please don't go,' that really gets to you," he said.

Bromwell's salary at IWIF

would have been roughly five times his \$30,000 salary for the part-time Senate position.

Bromwell said he and his wife, Mary Pat, agonized over the issue for the past several weeks before reaching a decision during the weekend.

Before yesterday's announcement, Bromwell had made it known that he wanted his aide, John R. Schneider, to succeed him in the 8th District Senate seat.

That choice drew criticism from, among others, Senate President Miller, who worried that a strong Republican candidate could take the seat from the relatively inexperienced Schneider in the 2002 election.

Last night, Schneider said he was not surprised that Bromwell opted not to leave the legislature, where he has served since 1979.

"I just had that inner feeling that he loved the Senate so much that I thought he'll find a way to stay down there," Schneider said.

But some of Bromwell's colleagues were startled.

"I'm surprised but delighted, from the standpoint of both the Baltimore County delegation and for the Senate itself," said Sen. Michael J. Collins, another Baltimore County Democrat. "I just hope it's a good decision for Tommy personally."