

Traditional act for legislators

■ Pedigree: *If state Sen.*

Thomas L. Bromwell becomes head of the Injured Workers' Insurance Fund, he will be another of many veteran Assembly members who have moved on to lucrative jobs after serving in office.

By THOMAS W. WALDRON
SUN STAFF

WHEN STATE Sen. Thomas L. Bromwell surfaced last week as the leading contender to become chief executive of the Injured Workers' Insurance Fund, there was some predictable grousing.

Bromwell, after all, doesn't have what you might call a top-shelf resume for running what is in effect, an insurance company with \$1 billion in assets.

Besides being a legislator for the last 22 years, Bromwell, 51, owned a tavern, ran a small construction company and now works as a construction manager for an Internet wiring firm.

But if he takes the IWIF job, which pays in the neighborhood of \$150,000 and includes the use of a car, Bromwell will be part of a longstanding tradition of legislators moving on to more lucrative jobs that would have been out of their reach without a General Assembly pedigree.

Bromwell's predecessor as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Thomas P. O'Reilly, now heads the state Workers' Compensation Commission.

Another former Finance chairman, Catherine I. Riley, is a member of the Maryland Public Service

Commission, while former Sen. Frank J. Komenda of Prince George's County is the well-paid lobbyist for the University System of Maryland.

That's just for starters, and doesn't include the many legislators who got themselves appointed judges.

Of course, it's not just legislators cashing in.

Sitting on the eight-member Maryland Parole Commission are no less than three legislative relatives: Michael C. Blount, son of Sen. Clarence W. Blount; Thomas V. Miller III, son of Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller; and Patricia K. Cushwa, widow of former Sen. Victor Cushwa and briefly a state senator herself.

That's not even mentioning a fourth commissioner, former Sen. Nancy L. Murphy.

Do all of them have special expertise in parole matters? Nah.

Is such patronage an ingrained part of Maryland political life? You bet.

As for Bromwell, he is the first to acknowledge that some will question his credentials for the IWIF job.

As he points out, many snickered when Mike Miller made him the chairman of the Finance Committee six years ago.

Bromwell is a rough-hewn backslapper, known more for partying and banter than for deep thinking.

But in fairness, he has risen to the challenge of running one of the legislature's most demanding committees, say lobbyists and other legislators.

Indeed, he has been a key player in all sorts of health-care and insurance issues in recent years.

As Bromwell himself memorably put it: "I'm not the brightest guy in the world, but I'm not the dumbest guy in the world either."

Maybe that's good enough for the job of executive director of IWIF — at least for a former state senator.