

# Frosh for ... something?

## Baltimore event triggers rumors

by Thomas Dennison

Staff Writer  
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ANNAPOLIS — Baltimore area political heavyweights are throwing a fund-raiser next month for Sen. Brian E. Frosh, fueling speculation that the gentlemanly lawyer from Bethesda may be testing the waters for a statewide run in 2006.

Frosh (D-Dist. 16) will make his first fund-raising trip into Baltimore on Nov. 9 for an event at Da Mimmo Restaurant, an event likely to attract the city's high-powered legal and political community given the list of hosts, who include Attorney General J. Joseph Curran Jr. (D) and his predecessor, Steven A. Sachs (D); Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley (D); U.S. Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes (D) of Baltimore; and U.S. Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-Dist. 3) of Baltimore.

Frosh's Baltimore excursion, along with his growing reputation in Annapolis as the state's leading environmentalist and good government expert, is prompting some Democratic insiders to speculate about the Senate Judicial Proceedings chairman's political future. Most of that speculation is centered on a run for attorney general if Curran, 73, decides to step aside in 2006.

"It's too early to fix on anything other than my Senate seat in 2006, but I'm certainly flattered that people are talking about" attorney general, Frosh said Thursday. "I want to be able to defend my seat. If another option comes my way, I would certainly consider it."

The only way Frosh would consider running for attorney general is if Curran were to retire, something the former state senator, lieutenant governor and Baltimore icon is not ready to talk about.

Curran said it is "certainly my intention" to run for re-election, but his feelings about Frosh and his statewide credentials were clear.

"Although he is an outstanding representative for Montgomery County, he is a tremendous leader for the entire state of Maryland," Curran said in an interview Thursday. "Brian is coming to Baltimore to let people see him and let people get to know him. I would encourage him to go all over the state and let people know that he has a statewide perspective on things."

Curran said he has not raised any money for his own re-election, saying he has been trying to raise money for U.S. Sen. John F. Kerry's presidential campaign and for O'Malley, who is married to Curran's daughter, Baltimore District Judge Catherine Curran O'Malley.

He did have a prediction for Frosh.

"I wouldn't be surprised if, down the road, you would see Sen. Frosh in higher-level positions in Maryland," Curran said.

"Reading the tea leaves of why Frosh is having a fund-raiser in little Italy suggests some interesting possibilities," said Patrick Gonzales, president of an Annapolis polling and political consulting firm. "I can certainly see why people would say" that Frosh is weighing a run for attorney general or other statewide office.

The race for attorney general has been one of the quieter contests so far, considering that Curran has not said anything publicly about stepping aside and that the Democratic primary for governor could be duked out between Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan and O'Malley.

There has been talk, however, that Curran would not run for re-election if O'Malley runs for governor because of their family ties. That has spurred potential candidates, such as Montgomery County State's Attorney Douglas F. Gansler (D), into sending not-too-subtle hints that they are in the running.

Prince George's County State's Attorney Glenn F. Ivey (D), a Harvard-trained lawyer and a polished speaker who is popular among Democratic activists, is being mentioned as a top prospect for attorney general. As

an African American, Ivey is very attractive to top leaders in the Democratic Party, who want a diverse ticket in 2006.

Montgomery County Councilman Thomas E. Perez (D-Dist. 5) of Takoma Park has also been mentioned as an attorney general candidate. He is seen as someone who could galvanize the state's growing Latino population while emboldening the progressive wing of the Democratic Party.

Having Frosh in the race for attorney general raises a lot of political intrigue. He is a noted environmentalist who would be portrayed as a consumer advocate, differing from law-and-order candidates like Ivey and Gansler.

With many of Baltimore's luminaries hosting next month's fund-raiser, some Democrats have surmised that the city's political players could rally behind Frosh. Several Baltimore political insiders said that a candidate for attorney general from the city has not yet emerged because Curran is seen as intending to wage a re-election campaign.

Over the past two years, Frosh has broadened his cachet in Annapolis beyond environmental issues. He opposes slot machines, has sponsored bills to pump more money into higher education and is a leading figure in the battle over medical malpractice reform.

"He would be eminently qualified for a higher statewide political calling because of his intellect and his integrity," said Gil Genn, a lobbyist and former Montgomery County delegate who spent 12 years with Frosh as a district mate.

The fund-raiser is not the first time Frosh has mixed and mingled in Baltimore's legal community. He has met with lawyers in Baltimore where he has distributed a 10-page packet of information that includes a detailed resume and media clippings that include opinion pieces and a story titled "The Frosh Prince" that appeared in *The Gazette* last year.

One lobbyist said he received the packet of Frosh's biographical information along with the fund-

raising invitation, but Frosh said the two were separate, and it was a mistake if someone received the two together.

Even if Frosh does not run for attorney general, the Baltimore fund-raiser will help him build a campaign war chest that could be used to help fellow Senate Democrats in 2006.

Senate Finance Chairman Thomas McLain Middleton (D-Dist. 28) of Waldorf had a fund-raiser in Baltimore County this week to raise money for his own campaign and to have on hand if necessary in 2006.

Middleton and Frosh are both considered to have safe Senate seats, but any of their extra campaign cash could come in handy for what is expected to be a strong Republican effort to knock off vulnerable Democrats.

"I want to be able to defend my Senate seat, but if I can help some of my colleagues, I would like to do that, too," Frosh said.

Frosh and Middleton are also frequently mentioned as potential successors to Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Dist. 27) of Chesapeake Beach.

Miller is showing no signs of stepping aside, and Frosh and Middleton are both loyal to him. But if there is an opening for Senate president, having Baltimore contacts and cash on hand will be vital.