

Madden to leave Senate to pursue other interests

Minority leader plans to quit at year's end

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State Senate Minority Leader Martin G. Madden, a moderate Howard County Republican who helped craft Maryland's welfare reform program, said yesterday that he will end his 11-year career in elected office for personal and business reasons.

Madden, 52, who has led the Senate's Republicans for three years, said he plans to leave his General Assembly seat at the end of the year. His district covers most of eastern Howard County and the Laurel area of Prince George's County.

Madden is a self-employed insurance agent. He said his decision to leave the Senate was prompted in part by "an exciting and unique opportunity to substantially grow my business." That opportunity, he said, would take too much of his time for him to stay in his leadership role.

"Once

the decision was made not to run for re-election" next fall, the decision to step down at the end of this year "fell into place," he said. "The Republican caucus needs a fully energized minority leader over the next 14 months."

Madden's decision avoids what had been shaping up as a possible primary contest with fellow Howard County Republican Sen. Christopher J. McCabe. Republicans had expected Democrats who control the redistricting process to throw the two men into the same senatorial district.

But Madden said redistricting had "absolutely zero effect" on his decision to retire.

His departure comes as one more blow to the moderate wing of the state Republican Party, which has lost almost all of its Senate members to defeat, defection or death in the last five years.

The two-term senator, elected in 1994 after a term in the House of Delegates, expressed confidence that his successor in the Senate would be "a person out of my mold."

His replacement will be chosen by the Republican state central committees for Howard and Prince George's counties — assuming that the two panels can agree on a candidate. If they can't, Democratic Gov. Parris N. Glendening would choose between the two nominees, a result Madden said he would prefer not to see.

Strong vote-getter

The retirement deprives Howard County's GOP of one of its strongest vote-getters — a candidate who won re-election in his heavily Democratic district in 1998 when other Republicans were being swamped. He said he had been sounded out by fellow Republicans about a possible candidacy for governor but decided he had no interest in such a race.

The next Senate Republican leader will almost certainly be more conservative than Madden, who often voted with the Democratic majority on such issues as gay rights, gun laws and a tobacco tax increase. While he fit in comfortably with his fellow Republicans in his opposition to abortion and support for business, he also compiled a strongly pro-environment voting record.

Madden said he assumes his successor as minority leader will be Sen. J. Lowell Stoltzfus, an Eastern Shore conservative who now serves as minority whip. He said the Republican caucus would make its choice in November or December.

Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, a Prince George's Democrat, said Madden will be missed by senators of both parties.

"Democrats particularly are going to miss him because he was part of the glue that held the Senate together," Miller said.

Republicans defect

Madden's tenure as minority leader was marred by the loss of two moderate Republicans — Anne Arundel County's Robert R. Neall and Montgomery County's Patrick J. Hogan — who switched to become Democrats.

Miller said the defections, which left only 13 Republicans in the 47-member Senate, took a toll on Madden. "His job became more difficult with each passing year," the Senate president said.

Madden said his proudest accomplishment in the Senate was his pivotal role in enacting a sweeping welfare reform bill in 1996.

Glendening praised Madden's work on that legislation, which the senator crafted in cooperation with the administration and General Assembly Democrats.

"His strong leadership on welfare reform helped create an effective program that has helped result in a 68 percent drop in welfare cases," the governor said.

Madden said he was "very much at peace" with his decision, which he expects to give him more time with his wife, Julie, and four children.

"I've never envisioned myself as a lifetime politician," he said.