

Madden to head GOP in Md. Senate

New minority leader says
GOP growth depends on
return to principles

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With his unanimous election as minority leader of the Maryland Senate yesterday, Sen. Martin G. Madden of Howard County moved to the center of what one of his colleagues predicted will be a tumultuous new political atmosphere.

Madden will lead 15 GOP senators in the 47-member chamber, unchanged from before the recent election — but four of the Republicans are newly elected and more conservative. Many are predicting the new Republican chemistry could be more combustible.

Madden tried yesterday to minimize the potential for conflict. "When the majority party's right, we'll work with them," he said. "When it's not, we won't shrink from our responsibility."

At the same time, the GOP's post-election leadership adjustments continued outside Annapolis as Michael Steele, chairman of the Prince George's County Republican Central Committee, announced he would run for party chairman.

An unsuccessful candidate for his party's nomination to run for state comptroller this year, Steele ran on an unofficial ticket with the GOP's gubernatorial nominee, Ellen R. Sauerbrey. Now, with Sauerbrey mulling a run for the state party post herself, the two could be opponents.

The 40-year-old lawyer is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University and Georgetown University Law School and is one of the GOP's most prominent African-American officials.

"My goal," he said, "is to make the Maryland Republican Party inclusive and dynamic. I want the state party to possess the resources and the capability to motivate voters across the spectrum to respond to our message."

Steele's appeal as a candidate for party chairman would go directly to one of the GOP's enduring weaknesses: its inability to win votes among blacks.

In the Nov. 3 election, Gov. Parris N. Glendening took an estimated 90 percent of the state's black vote — some of them drawn from the Republicans by attack ads suggesting that Sauerbrey's voting record in the General Assembly marked her as a threat to civil rights laws and to black Marylanders.

Sauerbrey has not made a decision about running for the post. But yesterday she said, "Politics is not very high on my agenda" right now. Her stepfather recently suffered a stroke and she has been spending time with him in Iowa. "I have a very full plate right now," she said.

Steele said he expects Sauerbrey won't run. In the meantime, he said, Republicans need to recommit themselves to their party's ideals.

"Ours is the party of opportunity," he said, "and we need to communicate that to the voters."

Madden, too, expressed determination to see his party grow — primarily by returning to what he called its "core principles" and "strength" — fiscal responsibility, lower taxes and a more efficient government.

A coalition-builder with credibility among Democrats as well as Republicans, Madden served as a subcommittee chairman assigned the task of fashioning a welfare reform program for Maryland. Many of his committee's ideas are now in state law.

Republican Sen. J. Lowell Stoltzfus of Somerset County, was elected minority whip, the second-highest post available to Republicans.

Madden was expected to face strong competition for the minority leader's post from Carroll County Sen. Larry Haines. But in the end, Madden — with a majority of Republican senators committed