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HEADLINE: GOP's Madden enters race for Senate seat

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BODY:

Standing by a picnic table next to Lake Elkhorn in Columbia, Republican state Del. Martin G. Madden announced that he would run for the state Senate seat representing East Columbia, southern Howard County and Laurel.

He said he hoped to surprise Democrats responsible for redrawing legislative districts, apparently to separate him from his strongest areas of support.

"It's an uphill race, but every race I've had has been uphill," said Mr. Madden, a 45-year-old insurance agent from Clarksville.

Mr. Madden is the first Republican to announce a challenge to incumbent Sen. Thomas M. Yeager, a 57-year-old Democrat who has held the seat since 1983.

Del. Virginia M. Thomas, a Democrat who represents East Columbia, announced her candidacy last month.

"I think people are ready for a new senator who's down there to shake up the Senate," Mr. Madden said. He was joined yesterday morning by a small group of Howard County Republican supporters, including Paul H. Rappaport, a candidate for lieutenant governor; his wife, Circuit Court Clerk Margaret Rappaport; and Del. Robert L. Flanagan, chairman of the county's legislative delegation.

After the lakeside announcement, Mr. Madden went to more familiar territory -- Laurel, which is in his old district -- to repeat his announcement for Prince George's County reporters.

In his announcement, Mr. Madden called the Senate an "obstructionist institution, thwarting the will of the people."

"One person held up abolition of state scholarships" given out by legislators, Mr. Madden said, and a strong crime bill was severely weakened in the Senate.

Mr. Madden first attempted to win his current seat in the legislature in 1986 but trailed the two Democratic victors, Robert J. Dipietro and William C. Bevan.

Mr. Madden won his seat by more than 3,000 votes in 1990 after an intensive door-to-door campaign with John S. Morgan, who also won and has since been redistricted into a Laurel-North Laurel single-member district.

The pair won with strong support from voters in Elkridge, but redistricting in 1991 put Elkridge voters into a district that includes West Columbia and part of Baltimore County.

Mr. Madden said he kept all of his 1990 campaign promises, which included voting against increases in income taxes and most other taxes, and pushing for an ethics bill to curb the influence of campaign contributions on county Zoning Board decisions.

After three failures to win support for different forms of ethics legislation that would apply to Howard, Mr. Madden won House and Senate approval of a weaker ethics bill, only to see it vetoed by governor last week.

He also noted his voting record on environmental issues, which earned him a perfect score last year from the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, combined with a top-third ranking by the Maryland Business for Responsive Government for his pro-business voting record.

Mr. Madden sometimes appears to be an outspoken conservative. He has called for drug testing of welfare recipients and has voted against abortion-rights legislation. At other times, he defies type, voting with environmentalists and gun control advocates.

Mr. Flanagan said Mr. Madden could fill a leadership void in the environmental arena left by the retirement of Gerald W. Winegrad, a Democrat representing central Anne Arundel County.

"With Senator Winegrad leaving, I think 'Senator Madden' would be the likely leader on environmental issues," Mr. Flanagan said.

Mr. Yeager questioned the assertion that Mr. Madden's record stands out.

"I don't think it's any better than my environmental record," Mr. Yeager said.

Mr. Madden's announcement was no surprise to Mr. Yeager.

"It's been rumored, and Marty had actually told me about a month ago that he was considering," Mr. Yeager said.

Mr. Yeager said he and Mr. Madden have had a good working relationship and that the challenge would not change that.

"In these situations, you always have to separate professionalism from friendship," Mr. Yeager said.

Ms. Thomas said yesterday that she was focusing her efforts on the primary and did not want to comment on Mr. Madden's candidacy.

Carol Arscott, former chairwoman of the county Republican Central Committee, noted that Republicans have made respectable showings in a number of Columbia precincts. Mr. Madden said he managed to come in second in 1990's two-seat race in Huntington, the one Columbia neighborhood in his old 13B District.

Mr. Madden estimated that he would need \$ 40,000 to \$ 50,000, after fund-raising expenses, to run a successful campaign. He has about \$ 15,000 in the bank, is running a raffle and is planning a "garden party" fund-raiser for July 20.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, BARBARA HADDOCK/SUN STAFF PHOTO, Del. Martin G. Madden foresees "an uphill race."