

Arnick named to fill old seat

Remains bitter over judgeship

By Dana Ballesterro
CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

DUNDALK, Md. — Less than eight months after his dreams of becoming a judge were dashed, John Arnick appears headed for a political resurrection.

But the former state delegate, nominated to fill his old General Assembly seat, remains bitter, angrily blaming the news media for his downfall.

"With freedom of the press goes a responsibility. I don't think they fulfilled that in my case," the Baltimore County Democrat said in an interview at his law office last week.

Mr. Arnick was appointed to the Baltimore County District Court but stepped down during the confirmation process amid a firestorm in response to claims that he made lewd and degrading comments about women.

In Mr. Arnick's view, the news media ignored his legislative history — including support for an Equal Rights Amendment and

other women's rights issues — and the overwhelming support he received at the nomination hearings.

"Somebody said I said something. They judged my whole life on that," Mr. Arnick said. "I had a hearing and everybody spoke [in my favor] and nobody reported it."

He said the media's focus on the allegations created an atmosphere that forced him to resign before a Senate confirmation vote.

"I had given up what had been my life and I had to start all over again . . . as an old man," said the 59-year-old lawyer.

The controversy stemmed from charges by former lobbyist Judith Wolfer and Nancy Nowak, a former aide to Gov. William Donald Schaefer.

Ms. Wolfer told the Senate Executive Nominations Committee that Mr. Arnick called domestic abuse victims "lying bitches," made degrading comments about women in general and made racist and ethnic jokes.

Ms. Nowak did not testify but accused Mr. Arnick of calling her a "dumb blonde" and a "blond bimbo" in front of legislators.

During the hearings, Mr. Arnick said he did not recall making the comments.

Mr. Arnick said last week that he "spoke poorly and that's the end of it." He compared the controversy with the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill U.S. Supreme Court nomination hearings. But unlike Justice Thomas, Mr. Arnick did not prevail.

It was painful to watch the \$82,300-a-year judgeship, his longtime dream, slip away, he said. "I think every lawyer has that thought in mind, that they would someday like to be a judge," he said.

Mr. Arnick spent 23 years in the House of Delegates and served as chairman of the Judiciary Com-

mittee, where he supported the domestic-violence legislation sought by Ms. Wolfer and Ms. Nowak.

Last Monday, the Baltimore County Democratic Central Committee nominated Mr. Arnick to serve the 15 months of the term left vacant by the Aug. 31 death of Delegate Edward "Nipper" Schafer. Mr. Schafer had replaced Mr. Arnick when he stepped down for the judgeship.

Mr. Schaefer is expected to approve the nomination, said a spokesman.

Mr. Arnick said he will do "as good a job as I can and as good a job as I did before." He would not say if he will run for the seat next year.

Asked whether he drew any lessons from the controversy, Mr. Arnick said it is "too complicated a thing to answer.

"Too much happened. Life goes on. Do the best you can with what you've got and hope — and hope — that there are enough people out there that will do the right thing," he said.

"Doing the wrong thing is generally a lot easier than doing the right thing. Taking the easy way out. I've never been known to do that."