

- Del. **Rushern L. Baker III** (D-Prince George's). After fighting for three years to rid Prince George's County of its bickering Board of Education, Baker finally succeeded, winning a passionate debate that pitted the right of county residents to elect their representatives against the future of the county's children, including Baker's own.

#### Losers

- Sen. **Clarence Mitchell IV** (D-Baltimore). He threatened to switch parties after Glendening eliminated his central city district. At session's end, Mitchell rededicated himself to the Democrats, but no one really cared.
- CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield executives. The merger of the Washington region's largest not-for-profit health insurance company with a for-profit California firm may yet go through. But thanks to the General Assembly, CareFirst execs will not be collecting the \$33 million "bonus" they negotiated for themselves as part of the deal.

#### Other Tidbits

**Snatching Victory From the Jaws of Defeat:** Sen. **Christopher Van Hollen Jr.** (D-Montgomery). Everyone thought Van Hollen was nuts when he gave up his post as chairman of a Senate budget subcommittee to protest cuts to health and education -- and to preserve his liberal voting record as he runs for Congress. The move could have left Montgomery County without a voice on the budget conference committee. But Van Hollen's independence helped him negotiate a good deal for Montgomery in the Thornton bill, a much bigger deal. And so he emerged a hero after all.

**Snatching Defeat (Almost) From the Jaws of Victory:** The Montgomery County House delegation. Although Van Hollen won amendments to Thornton that gave Montgomery much more money, the county's House members at first remained adamantly opposed to the bill. After Duncan explained in a two-hour meeting that voters might not look kindly on those who voted to kill a bill that contained buckets of money for Montgomery County schoolchildren, Del. **Peter Franchot** (D) rallied the troops.

**It's Good to Be King:** Senate President **Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr.** (D-Prince George's) didn't want to annoy the state's judges (who are now reviewing the state's redistricting plan) by passing a bill to restrict their power to shorten the sentences of convicted criminals. So Miller ordered committee Chairman **Walter M. Baker** (D-Cecil) to keep the proposal in the Judicial Proceedings Committee -- never mind that a majority of the panel had voted to approve the bill. There's democracy, and then there's Maryland.

**Best Disappearing Act I:** Conservative Republican Sens. **Alexander X. Mooney** of Frederick County and **Andrew P. Harris** of Baltimore County delighted in being the foils to Miller and other Democrats in past years. This session, they sat on their hands. Why? We don't know, but it sure made things dull.

**Best Disappearing Act II:** Glendening. The once-activist governor was a virtual nonentity in his last legislative session. Why? Well, he was a lame duck who was distracted by his new marriage and impending fatherhood. Nobody thought *that* was dull.

**Strange Bedfellows I:** Del. **Sharon Grosfeld**, liberal Democrat from Montgomery County, and Del. **Carmen Amedori**, conservative Republican from Carroll County, found themselves in the House Judiciary Committee voting together for a plan to let sick people smoke marijuana for pain relief and against a proposal to broaden the authority of police to wiretap suspects. Pretty soon, Democrats will start saying they like GOP gubernatorial candidate **Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.**

**Strange Bedfellows II:** In fact, a lot of Democrats in Annapolis *do* say they like Ehrlich, a former legislator and now a member of Congress who is the GOP candidate for governor. "I thought he was one of the best legislators I've ever worked with," said Del. **Kenneth C. Montague Jr.** (D-Baltimore), one of the legislature's most liberal members.