

Curran back in capital as lobbyist

Trades council hires former state delegate who resigned seat

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The revolving door at the Maryland State House has spun again.

Former Del. Gerald J. Curran, who resigned his seat in the House of Delegates two years ago amid an ethics probe into his business dealings, is back in Annapolis — this time lobbying for a Baltimore construction union group.

Curran has teamed with former Del. Connie Galazzo DeJuliis to represent the Baltimore Building and Construction Trades Council before the General Assembly — specifically on legislation requiring that the prevailing wage be paid to construction workers on school building projects.

James L. Correll, president of the council, said it wanted to hire a lobbyist for the first time and approached Curran about possibly representing the group on the prevailing wage bill,

"We wanted to try what I feel are more professional people who had previous experience as legislators and know the system and had the ability to go where the normal, average guy wouldn't be able to go," Correll said. "People like Gerry Curran and Connie can sit down with people they were once colleagues with and talk in a straightforward manner."

Curran, 60, an insurance broker, said he weighed the notion of lobbying and talked to friends about it before agreeing to return to the halls of Annapolis, where he represented Northeast Baltimore for 32 years.

"The reception has been very positive," said Curran, the well-liked former chairman of the House Commerce and Gov-

ernment Matters Committee.

Both Curran and DeJuliis, 53, a Baltimore County Democrat who served one term in the House of Delegates before running unsuccessfully for Congress in 1994 and 1996, have registered as lobbyists with the State Ethics Commission. She was out of town yester-

day and could not be reached to comment.

Her husband is James R. "Ron" DeJuliis, business manager of Local 37, Union of Operating Engineers and vice president of the building trades council. Correll said the DeJuliis' relationship was not the reason the council's executive board unanimously agreed to hire her.

"Ronnie left the room" when the matter was decided, Correll said.

No problem

House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr., an Allegany County Democrat, said he saw no problem — "no more than it is for any other former legislator" — with Curran's lobbying in Annapolis.

As required by state law, Curran and DeJuliis have sat out one full legislative session before returning to the State House to lobby.

Taylor's reaction to Curran's return was similar to that of other lawmakers. "Some people might say it's unseemly, but I don't have any problem with it," said House Minority Leader Robert H. Kittleman, a Howard County Republican.

Correll said Curran's resignation from the House came up when the board considered hiring him. "There were questions about the status of it, and why he resigned, and we were very comfortable with his answers," he said.

He said the prevailing wage bill, part of Gov. Parris N. Glendening's legislative package, is the trades council's "No. 1 bill."

Under the bill, the state's prevailing wage law would be extended to school construction projects that are now exempted. The wage scale is based on the average wage being paid to workers in each of the state's 24 jurisdictions, including those paid to union workers.

Emotional farewell

Curran resigned from the House of Delegates in February 1998, after the legislature's ethics committee launched an investigation into his business dealings.

In an emotional speech to the House, he mentioned his health, the cost of defending himself and his desire to spare his family further stress over the ethics probe as the reasons for not completing his eighth term. He denied wrongdoing.

His resignation saved the House from a potentially painful floor vote on possible ethics sanctions against him. At the time, the General Assembly was reeling from the expulsion of Larry Young, a Baltimore Democrat, from the Senate the month before.

The ethics committee began its investigation of Curran after *The Sun* reported that he lobbied state officials to approve an insurance program for which he served as broker. He also entered potentially lucrative arrangements with private enterprises that had business before the legislature, but he did not report those to the ethics committee, as required by law.