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HEADLINE: Longtime delegate is candidate for treasurer; House parliamentarian opposes speaker's choice to replace ailing Maurer

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BODY:

The race for state treasurer just got a lot more interesting. With the support of many women legislators, a veteran female delegate is bucking House leadership by running for the job.

Del. Pauline H. Menes, 71, a Democrat who has represented Prince George's County for 29 years, announced her candidacy yesterday at a meeting of the legislative women's caucus.

She faces the front-runner, Del. Richard N. Dixon, 57, a conservative Carroll County Democrat who enjoys the support of House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. of Cumberland.

To complicate matters, former Del. Tyras S. Athey, 68, of Anne Arundel County is testing the waters for a possible run for the \$ 100,000-a-year job, friends say.

They are competing to replace Lucille Maurer, who announced her resignation last week because of ill health.

The treasurer is responsible for managing and investing state money; government bond sales; and representing lawmakers on the Board of Public Works, which awards millions of dollars in state contracts every time it meets.

As House parliamentarian, Mrs. Menes is a member of the speaker's leadership team, making her decision to run against Mr. Taylor's candidate a bold one.

Mr. Taylor declined to comment on her candidacy. But House Majority Leader John Adams Hurson, a Montgomery County Democrat, said Mr. Taylor "would rather have an election in which there were not two present House members running against each other."

The full General Assembly is expected to vote on a treasurer Jan. 19.

Mrs. Menes' supporters acknowledge she faces an uphill race, but predict she will pick up votes among women, African-Americans and Democrats who find Mr. Dixon too conservative.

Mrs. Menes, a former economist, received several testimonials of support from members of the women's caucus yesterday. She is the dean of female lawmakers, serving longer than any other woman and all but one man in the House of Delegates.

She earned her place in the history of legislative women in 1972, when she called for more women in House leadership roles. The speaker at the time responded by appointing her to head the "Women's Rest Room Committee."

The incident, which garnered considerable newspaper coverage, highlighted the difficulty female legislators faced in being taken seriously in the State House.

The resignation of Mrs. Maurer, a former delegate, particularly saddened women legislators, many of whom regarded her as a role model in Annapolis. Some would like to see a woman replace Mrs. Maurer and have described Mrs. Menes as a natural successor.

The Maryland legislative Black Caucus also is expected to play a role in the contest. Chairwoman Joanne C. Benson, a Democratic delegate from Prince George's, said yesterday that the caucus will not be swayed by the fact that Mr. Dixon is African-American in deciding whom to support.

Delegate Dixon, who represents a district that is 98 percent white, said he has not been active in the Black Caucus. Some caucus members are said to have reservations about Mr. Dixon's conservative politics.

Mrs. Menes said she hoped her "openness" and good relationships with many legislators would help her in the election.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, BARBARA HADDOCK TAYLOR: SUN STAFF, Del. Pauline H. Menes

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