

Schaefer returns to office with flourish

Former governor takes oath as comptroller

By JOANNA DAEMMRICH
SUN STAFF

On the steps of the State House was a marching band, in the balcony a string ensemble. The marble lobby was resplendent with flags and mobbed with well-wishers. Generations of politicians greeted one another as if at a family reunion.

William Donald Schaefer made his triumphant return.

In a ceremony that rivaled his past inaugurations, the 77-year-old Schaefer officially ended his retirement yesterday to become Maryland's comptroller.

Striding back into the House of Delegates chamber, Schaefer was cheered by a standing-room-only crowd, and delivered a spirited, 25-minute address that was gubernatorial in tone and included several swipes at his successors as governor and mayor.

"I'm glad to be back," said Schaefer as soon as Gov. Parris N. Glendening had sworn him in.

Schaefer promised to be an "independent and fair-minded" financial guardian, to continue the legacy of the late Louis L. Goldstein, who had been the state's comptroller for almost 40 years.

Schaefer also made clear that he intends to expand the job. Besides collecting taxes, he said, he will work to improve the state's business climate, traditionally a role of the governor.

"Education should be a priority but not the only priority," he said, in a reference to Glendening's ambitious school spending program.

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"Educating a work force is meaningless without the promise of employment."

In an equally obvious criticism of

Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke, conspicuous in his absence, Schaefer called for the state to take over the Baltimore Convention Center. The center, which completed a \$151 million expansion two years ago, has struggled because of low bookings.

Schaefer is taking over the state's third-highest but perhaps least-understood office. As comptroller, he will sit on the state Board of Public Works, beside Glendening and state treasurer Richard N. Dixon. Many State House observers predict the independence of Schaefer and Dixon could make it difficult for Glendening to achieve everything his administration wants.

The office had long been synonymous with one man — Goldstein, elected for the first time when Dwight D. Eisenhower was president. Most Marylanders knew Goldstein by his first name and from the gold coins he handed out with his trademark slogan: "May God love and bless y'all real good."

Goldstein was campaigning for an 11th consecutive term last July when he died of a heart attack at age 85.

Goldstein's three children were in the crowd yesterday to watch the changing of the guard. So were hundreds of other prominent Marylanders, including many who had known or worked for Schaefer during his 15 years as mayor and eight years as governor.

Beside Schaefer was his long-time companion, Hilda Mae Snoops. Former Gov. Marvin Mandel sat in the front row with his wife, Jeanne.

Former Schaefer Cabinet members Nelson J. Sabatini, the health secretary, and Bishop L. Robinson, the head of corrections, were there. So was Nancy S. Grasmick, the school superintendent under both Schaefer and Glendening.

Walter Sondheim, Baltimore's 90-year-old civic leader and president of the state school board, showed up. So did Maryland's top judge, Chief Judge Robert M. Bell, and Bruce C. Bereano, the well-known lobbyist recently sentenced to a halfway house for illegally funneling campaign cash to politicians.

As many as 800 people were there to witness Schaefer's return to public life, more than turned out last week for Glendening's inauguration.

Glendening made a point of being gracious, noting Schaefer's many achievements, from building the National Aquarium in Baltimore to pioneering the light rail system. He credited Schaefer with making tough decisions during the recession of the early 1990s that have enabled Glendening to do more in current good times.