

# Schaefer takes the gloves off

By BARRY RASCOVAR

**T**ODAY we start finding out if this state is big enough for two governors to operate in the State House complex at the same time.

Fireworks will be missing from this morning's Board of Public Works meeting. But be patient: An explosion between former Gov. William Donald Schaefer — now state comptroller — and Gov. Parris N. Glendening is inevitable.

Sure, both men made nice when the new comptroller was sworn in Monday.

Mr. Glendening praised Mr. Schaefer — deservedly so — for making agonizing budget cuts during the recession of the early 1990s that allowed Mr. Glendening to reap political benefits later on.

For his part, Mr. Schaefer said he didn't intend to set up a competing branch of government.

Yeah?

You wouldn't reach that conclusion from the comptroller's glitzy, jam-packed inaugural that upstaged the governor's swearing-in events last week. Or the arrows aimed at Mr. Glendening.

The incumbent may want to be known as the "Education Governor," but Mr. Schaefer is worried about a lack of economic development by this administration.

Mr. Glendening said last week that education "must not be a priority, but *the* priority." Mr. Schaefer's response: "Education is not the only priority. . . . An educated work force is meaningless without the promise of employment."

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He ticked off the Schaefer agenda:

Pension-fund investments in venture capital funds; a business advisory panel for his office, a problem-resolution program to cut red tape for taxpayers; a state takeover of the management of the Baltimore Convention Center; a program to make investments in smaller communities; targeted economic growth efforts; and programs to spur regionalism.

He's going to be Mr. Economic Development to the governor's Mr. Education. He'll be the man many business leaders turn to when problems arise. They trust him; they don't trust Mr. Glendenning.

All this could be laughed off as a sideshow except for one thing: Mr. Schaefer has considerable leverage as a member of the Board of Public Works.

This quiet panel wields enormous power. It approves billions in state spending. When the legislature isn't in session, the three-member board is the most potent group in town.

Ordinarily, the governor gets his way on the board. This time, though, two of the three members aren't big Glendenning fans.

There's Mr. Schaefer and then there's Treasurer Richard N. Dixon, a maverick conservative from Carroll County who doesn't hesitate to vote against the governor.

Now he has an ally in the new comptroller, giving them the votes to overrule Mr. Glendenning.

The governor's Smart Growth policy could become a sticking point. Mr. Glendenning cut three key road projects from his budget — bypasses around Manchester and Westminster and a bypass around a small community in Montgomery County known as Brookeville — because he said bypasses would spur uncontrolled growth.

That last deletion has Montgomery County Executive Douglas Duncan steaming. Brookeville lies on Route 97, which has become a favored commuter route for Howard and Carroll county residents.

That congestion is destroying the little town. Unlike the two Carroll road projects, the Brookeville bypass could wind up before the Board of Public Works. That's when you could see Mr. Glendenning beat a hasty retreat, or else face a 2-1 defeat.

A new political dynamic has been added to the State House. The governor is not overly popular, despite his big re-election win last year. Mr. Schaefer, on the other hand, remains highly respected and admired by political insiders.

His office could serve as a rallying ground for shifting coalitions opposed to various Glendenning policies.

Two governors in one State House?

Starting today, it will be the best show in town.

*Barry Rascovar is a deputy editorial page editor.*