

# New district may give Broadwater second chance

by Walter Lee Dozler

Staff Writer  
*The Gazette* 1/4/02

CAPITOL HEIGHTS — If the Maryland legislature follows through on plans to carve out a new district in Prince George's County, it might be the golden opportunity Tommie Broadwater is seeking to resurrect his political career.

The Democratic powerbroker and former state senator is making it known he wants the new Senate seat. Invitations are going out for a Jan. 12 fund-raiser that will kick off his campaign.

"I've been involved in politics since I left the Senate," said Broadwater, who served in the legislature from 1974 to 1983. "People have called me and said they want me to run. They know that I worked hard for my constituents and I have never asked for anything for myself. This is a great opportunity to represent the new district."

A number of local politicians say Broadwater's commitment to public service and his constituents has been his forte.

He has worked with local community and business leaders, universities and politicians to help with scholarships for hundreds of Prince George's County students who may not have been able to attend college without the assistance.

But in 1983, his political career was cut short when he was convicted of committing \$70,000 in food-stamp fraud. He spent four months in federal prison and lost his Senate seat.

He tried to regain his old seat in 1994 but lost to Decatur Trotter.

"I've paid my debt to society," said Broadwater, a self-employed bondsman, entrepreneur and restaurateur. "That was nearly 20 years ago. We need to move on. I have been involved in politics ever since and people feel I have progressed during those years."

Del. Carolyn J.B. Howard (D-Dist. 24) of Mitchellville agreed. Broadwater may have lost his Senate seat, she said, but not his influence on Prince George's politics.

"Tommie is the ultimate politician," Howard said. "He is so good with people. They will forget the negative and vote for him."

Sen. Nathaniel Exum (D-Dist. 24) of Capitol Heights, who unseated Trotter in 1998, considers Broadwater a mentor.

"He has a good chance to win. ... His experience and knowledge of the political system will benefit our younger people," he said. "He will give them the wisdom of his experience."

According to the proposal adopted by the Governor's Redistricting Advisory Committee, the new legislative District 47 would stretch along the Washington, D.C., border from Langley Park through Brentwood, Cheverly and Landover Hills and east to Lanham. It would take in parts of what is now District 22 and 24.

Del. Darren M. Swain (D-Dist. 24) of Bowie and Bladensburg Mayor David Harrington also have been mentioned as possible candidates for the seat. Neither has made a formal declaration.

Broadwater said his campaign would have a familiar theme — community involvement.

"This county is still changing. It's time to bring Latinos and Asians into the process. That is how it should be," he said. "We need them at the table and I intend to make sure they are part of my slate either in elected or appointed positions."

Broadwater has been an outspoken critic of Maryland's Democratic Party, charging that the leadership has failed to reward the majority-minority population for its loyalty to the party.

"With the new census information, we [minorities] should make up the majority of the legislators because we are the majority of the population," he said. "That's the fair thing to do in the redistricting process. Let's see if the leadership has the will to do that. Let's see how they cut up the pie."

That has not endeared him to some party leaders who have

quietly expressed their displeasure with a potential Broadwater candidacy.

"I'm an independent businessman so the leadership can't control me," Broadwater said.

Broadwater lives in Glenarden, which is expected to remain in District 24. If elected, Broadwater, by state law, has a year to move into the new district, where he owns property.

Broadwater, who said he needs to raise between \$150,000 and \$200,000 to run, is ready to hit the campaign trail.

"We need to find out what the boundaries will be, then start raising money," he said. "After that, I'll open a campaign headquarters and start some listening sessions so I will know what the concerns are in the district."

"I have never forgotten my roots," he said. "We need people to tell it like it is and I am really good at that."