

# With O'Malley's choice of Brown, a diverse alliance

## Prince George's delegate to be running mate in governor's race

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Forging a politically potent partnership between two of Maryland's Democratic strongholds, Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley officially announced yesterday that he has enlisted Prince George's County Del. Anthony G. Brown as his running mate in his campaign for governor.

The pairing of Maryland's marquee mayor and one of its most popular lawmakers establishes what many observers say is a formidable, diverse ticket rooted in two regions critical for O'Malley to win the Democratic primary against Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan.

"I couldn't be happier about the potential that this team holds out for getting our state moving again," said O'Malley, who will formally unveil the ticket Monday. "There are a number of peo-

ple who are glad that this ticket reflects in some way the diversity of our state."

O'Malley is the white, two-term mayor with widespread name recognition in Baltimore City and County, areas that are home to 30 percent of the state's registered Democrats; Brown is the black House of Delegates majority whip from a county that has more Democrats than any other jurisdiction. Montgomery County has the second-largest population of registered Democrats.

The Baltimore-Prince George's alliance in an O'Malley-Brown ticket is expected to offer a racial and geographic appeal to a Democratic Party eager to defeat Republican Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., who selected a black running mate from Prince George's in his 2002 victory over former Lt. Gov.

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend. Her selection of a white conservative damaged the Democratic Party's standing with black voters, analysts said.

The early formation of an O'Malley-Brown ticket, 10 months before the September primary, may not bode well for Duncan, who has floundered in his running mate search.

Still, many observers say it is too early to predict whether O'Malley's selection of Brown will inflict lasting damage on Duncan.

"O'Malley needed someone from Prince George's County or Montgomery County to balance the ticket, and he needed someone who doesn't bring a lot of baggage," said U.S. Rep. Elijah E. Cummings. "I don't think we can write off Duncan."

Cummings, however, said Duncan will have a hard time topping

an O'Malley-Brown ticket.

O'Malley, 42, considered six to 10 candidates, but he said that with advice from former Gov. Harry R. Hughes and Cummings, he decided on Brown, 44, for his "integrity," "character" and "passion for public service."

Brown said he decided to run with O'Malley after forgoing an interest in running for attorney general, a position held by O'Malley's father-in-law, J. Joseph Curran Jr.

"I asked myself where would I have the best opportunity to improve the lives of everyday Marylanders," said Brown, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve who served in Iraq from Sept. 14, 2004, to June 29. "I concluded that being a partner with Martin O'Malley would enable me to do just that."

The two men share a vision for the environment, education, public safety and health care. But O'Malley said he expects that "we'll come across a number of issues where we differ."

One issue, which Duncan highlighted yesterday, is slot machines, for which Ehrlich has failed to win approval in the state legislature for three years.

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O'Malley favors a limited number of slot machines at racetracks. Brown has been a slots opponent who has favored giving local jurisdictions the ability to determine whether they want slots.

The difference did not seem to hinder the four-month courtship between the mayor and Brown, which culminated Wednesday night at the mayor's Northeast Baltimore house. Over crab cakes and tenderloin, O'Malley invited the Harvard Law School graduate to be his running mate.

Brown said the job's ceremonial nature did not discourage him from taking it because, he said, O'Malley wants him to take a significant leadership role in four areas: higher education, health care, economic development and homeland security.

"We have talked about specific powers," said Brown, who added that his eight years in the legislature would give their administration an advantage in achieving their agenda.

O'Malley agreed that Brown — more than Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele, who had never previously held elected office in Maryland — will be able to use his consensus-building skills as majority whip to push their legislative priorities through Annapolis.

Steele, who is running for U.S. Senate, said he is excited for Brown and wishes him well. He wouldn't say whether he thought Brown was a good choice for O'Malley, though Steele acknowledged that he's living proof that picking someone from Prince George's County can be good strategy.

But ultimately, Steele said, voters will expect O'Malley, Duncan and Ehrlich to pick running mates who offer depth, not just geographic balance.

"It's not a beauty contest," he said. "Hopefully these are individuals of substance. I know Anthony Brown is." Several political observers agreed that voters are unlikely to decide whom to support based on lieutenant governor candidates. But they also agreed that a weak candidate can hurt a campaign.

"It's too early for mortal blows to campaigns," said Donald F. Norris, a public policy professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. "Who votes for lieutenant governor? Lieutenant governors don't win elections."

Duncan sounded a similar argument in a news release in which he expressed his respect for

Brown and detailed their work together in Annapolis to fight Ehrlich on slot machines. But, the statement from Duncan's spokesman added, the election is about him and O'Malley, not lieutenant governor candidates.

"Voters will look at the promises the candidates have made and the promises they have kept or failed to keep," the news release stated.

Carol L. Hirschburg, a Republican campaign consultant, said O'Malley's choice does not put any pressure on Ehrlich or Duncan, who still must choose running mates. Both need to simply pick respectable candidates with no baggage.

"The choice for running mate can only hurt you; it can't help you," Hirschburg said.

One of Duncan's leading contenders for lieutenant governor is state Sen. Gwendolyn T. Britt, a Prince George's Democrat and Duncan supporter. Britt said yesterday that she is in preliminary discussions with Duncan's top campaign staff.

"I have not had any firm offers," Britt said. "I would support Duncan whether he asks me or not."

Duncan's campaign had also considered Freeman A. Hrabowski III, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Prince George's County State's Attorney Glenn F. Ivey, and Baltimore City Councilman Keiffer J. Mitchell Jr. Hrabowski and Ivey declined. Mitchell said he had never been contacted.

Isiah Leggett, former chairman of the state Democratic Party and a Duncan supporter, commended O'Malley on his "good choice" and

said the early naming of Brown may give the mayor an even stronger lead in the polls over Duncan.

"The fact that O'Malley went first places him out front and makes a statement about his campaign," Leggett said.

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Sun reporters David Nitkin and Andrew A. Green contributed to this article.