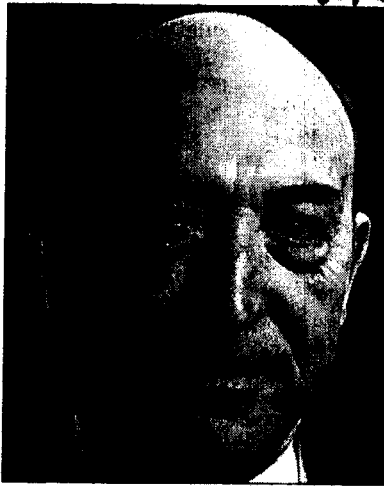


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BARBARA HADDOCK/STAFF PHOTOS

Del. Tyras S. Athey will become secretary of state.

Del. Sheila E. Hixson is expected to chair a House committee.

Athey leaving legislature to be secretary of state

By John W. Frece
Staff Writer

Anne Arundel County Del. Tyras S. Athey, longtime chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, said yesterday that he will resign from the General Assembly to take the job of Maryland secretary of state.

Mr. Athey, a 66-year-old liquor store owner, said Gov. William Donald Schaefer offered him the \$70,000-a-year post late last week and he decided yesterday to take it.

The veteran legislator, who was first elected from his Jessup area district in 1966, will replace Winfield M. Kelly Jr. Mr. Kelly resigned in February to become president and chief executive officer of the Landover-based Dimensions Health Corp., which operates medical facilities in Prince George's County.

Mr. Athey, in turn, will likely be replaced as chairman of the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee by Del. Sheila E. Hixson, a Democrat from Montgomery County who is the committee's vice chair, said House Speaker R. Clayton Mitchell Jr., a Kent Democrat.

Ms. Hixson, who substituted for Mr. Athey when he was out with a bad back during the legislative session, was one of the few Montgomery County delegates to remain loyal to Mr. Mitchell during a failed attempt by another Montgomery legislator to oust him last year.

This past session, she chaired the legislature's women's caucus when it was under pressure to reverse its support for the controversial nomination of Baltimore County District Judge John S. Arnick. It never did.

Mr. Athey's selection as secretary of state breaks a lock on the job that Prince George's County officials have

held since Fred L. Wineland was given the constitutional post in 1971.

Unlike its globe-trotting namesake at the national level, the job of Maryland secretary of state is essentially that of a record-keeper.

The secretary oversees charitable organizations, the registration of notaries and the extradition of prisoners.

The secretary of state also receives petitions from voters who wish to put a law to referendum, in addition to deciding which presidential candidates are well known enough to be included on Maryland's primary ballot.

Mr. Athey said he realized that he may not have the job for more than a year and half, when Governor Schaefer's second and final term is due to expire.

"The legislature is always interesting, but there comes a time when you have to move on," Mr. Athey said. "I'm not getting any younger."

Mr. Athey's move, coupled with last week's death of Del. Patrick C. Scannello, will leave vacant two of the three delegate seats for the 32nd Legislative District.

Staff writer Marina Sarris contributed to this article.