

MARYLAND POLITICS

Once-Mighty Machine Needs Tuneup

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If anyone had any doubt that the power of the Democratic machine in Prince George's County politics has waned, consider the instructive example of Paul G. Pinsky, who was sworn in this week as the interim senator from the 22nd Legislative District.

Pinsky replaces Thomas P. O'Reilly, who quit the Senate this year to take an appointed post on the state Workers' Compensation Commission. Pinsky, a delegate from Cheverly, already had announced his intention to challenge O'Reilly, a 16-year incumbent and close associate of Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Prince George's).

When O'Reilly decided not to seek reelection, Democratic Party officials and allies of Miller tried to interest several other officials in running against Pinsky, whom they regard as too liberal and not enough of a team player. More importantly, Pinsky is not a firm vote for Miller in what some politicians say will be a tougher-than-anticipated reelection bid for Senate president.

Miller's allies approached Del. Richard A. Palumbo (D-Prince George's) and County Council member Anne T. MacKinnon about running for the seat. Even Police Chief David B. Mitchell was sounded out.

All to no avail: None of them

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Prince George's Democratic Machine Running on Empty

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jumped in the race. When the county Democratic Central Committee met last week to make a recommendation on the seat, the vote was unanimous for Pinsky over Hyattsville City Council member Charles J. Kenny Jr.

Pinsky, 44, a former head of the county teachers union, expressed pleasure over the turn of events. "Obviously there are some people who might have been a detractor some time ago who are now supporting me," he said this week. "We've kept our compass, and they've come around."

To win a full four-year term, Pinsky still must beat Kenny in the Sept. 13 Democratic primary. Republican John A. Schaefer, of New Carrollton, also is running for the seat.

Questions of Relevancy

The Prince George's County Municipal Association sponsored a series of live televised forums last week for candidates for county executive and County Council.

Although the executive candidates have participated in forums for several months, last week's events were the only ones planned

before the September primary for all the council candidates.

Many of the questions focused on planning and zoning, neighborhood revitalization and the council's relationship to the Board of Education—issues commonly handled by county officials.

But other questions concerned AIDS, cancer research and funding for bicycle trails—much to the consternation of some candidates.

"The major issues are budget priorities, schools and public safety, and some of the questions were a little less relevant," said former Bowie City Council member G. Frederick Robinson, who is a candidate in the 4th council district. "It may not have been as instructive to viewers as it might have been."

Most of the candidates agreed about the need to end the council's ongoing dispute with the Board of Education and that the county must find new ways to deal with the escalating crime rate. Several candidates suggested initiating a curfew for juveniles and forming a regional police department.

County cable television subscribers who missed last week's live broadcasts will have several opportunities this month to see it again.

Held over three days, the forums run a total of nine hours and will be rebroadcast by MultiVision's Channel 25B and by MetroVision's Channel 24A on Aug. 7, 13, 16, 18, 23, 24, and 25.

Reading Behind the Lines

The purpose of campaign news releases is to put the best light on candidates, even if some important facts are left in the shadows.

Take, for example, the release put out last week by one of the Republican candidates for governor—the release reporting that the Maryland Greater Washington Board of Trade PAC "has endorsed Helen Delich Bentley's gubernatorial bid."

A check with the business-oriented group disclosed that the endorsement of Bentley was for the Sept. 13 GOP primary only. It had endorsed Prince George's County Executive Parris N. Glendening in the Democratic primary. Afterward will come an endorsement for the Nov. 8 general election.

Asked about any confusion the release might cause, Bentley press secretary Key Kidder replied: "I was hoping I could slip that past you."