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HEADLINE: Dixon is elected state treasurer; Carroll Democrat is overwhelming choice of legislators

BYLINE: Marina Sarris, SUN STAFF

BODY:

Maryland legislators voted overwhelmingly yesterday to elect Carroll County stockbroker Richard N. Dixon as state treasurer, rejecting a liberal candidate backed by women and the NAACP.

At a joint session of the House and Senate, lawmakers voted 134 to 54 by secret ballot for Delegate Dixon, a conservative Democrat backed by House Democratic leaders and Republicans.

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Dixon declared, "I'm proud to be the first treasurer from Western Maryland and also the first African-American treasurer of this great state."

Although he is breaking a racial barrier, the cigar-chomping Vietnam veteran was not the undisputed choice of African-American leaders.

The legislative Black Caucus narrowly endorsed him after some members criticized his conservative voting record.

The Maryland conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People supported his rival, Democratic Del. Pauline H. Menes, a white liberal from Prince George's County.

Mr. Dixon, 57, a sixth-generation Carroll countian, jokingly chided his detractors yesterday.

"Some people have mentioned my name in connection with Clarence Thomas. The only thing Clarence Thomas and I have in common is we both drive Corvettes," he said, drawing applause and laughter.

Supreme Court Justice Thomas is a black conservative who opposes affirmative action.

Last year Mr. Dixon abstained from voting on a bill that increased the amount of state business designated for minority-owned firms. He said he was reflecting the will of voters in his conservative, mostly white district.

Mr. Dixon declined to say yesterday how he personally felt about the bill.

As treasurer, he told the legislature, "My perspective will now be statewide."

The treasurer, who is paid \$ 100,000 a year, manages and invests state money, administers bond sales and represents lawmakers on the Board of Public Works, which awards billions of dollars in state contracts.

As such, Mr. Dixon could help ensure that minority contractors receive their legal share of state business. Some African-Americans were concerned that he might not take advantage of that opportunity.

"That's silly and unreasonable criticism," Mr. Dixon said. "I would support the law."

Mr. Dixon, who is taking a pay cut to become treasurer, said he will resign from the House and his longtime job at Merrill Lynch in Baltimore within two weeks.

He is expected to assume his new post around Feb. 1.

The Carroll County Democratic Central Committee is expected to fill his House seat within 30 days of his departure. Mrs. Menes said she was disappointed at her showing.

Despite the support of the legislative women's caucus and the NAACP, she said she could not overcome a lobbying effort by House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr., a Western Maryland Democrat.

"There were pressures brought to bear," she said.

The speaker said he would allow Mrs. Menes to remain parliamentarian and a member of his leadership team, though she opposed his choice for treasurer.

GRAPHIC: COLOR PHOTO, BARBARA H. TAYLOR : SUN STAFF, Del. Richard Dixon: The conservative stockbroker was elected in a 134-54 vote.

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