

# Cas Taylor in charge

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Casper R. Taylor has waited for this chance for the better part of two decades. He has now been all but anointed as speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates. Suddenly, Western Maryland has one of its own in a top power position in Annapolis.

House Democrats picked Mr. Taylor yesterday as their candidate for speaker to succeed R. Clayton Mitchell, who suddenly announced his retirement last week. Since Democrats have a lopsided majority in the House, Mr. Taylor's election will be a formality when the House convenes in January.

The speaker-elect has a daunting task. He must keep peace in the House and forge coalitions among the potentially feuding factions. At the same time, some House leaders will be using the session to advance their own campaigns for speaker. A battle royale could develop after the 1994 elections, when a new batch of delegates heads to Annapolis.

For the moment, though, Cas Taylor has center stage. If he can hammer out a consensus agenda among House members, the 1994 session could produce meaningful legislation and enhance Mr. Taylor's reputation as a leader. It won't be easy, though, especially with an impatient Gov. William Donald Schaefer breathing down Mr. Taylor's neck and Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller look-

ing to take advantage of any disarray in the House.

Mr. Taylor's record indicates that he is adept at balancing competing interests. For the past seven years, he has run the House Economic Matters Committee, a hotbed of lobbyists' intrigue and of special-interest legislation. While Mr. Taylor has been accused of getting too chummy with some business lobbyists, he has managed to craft forward-looking legislation, such as last session's massive health-insurance reform bill.

Equally important, Mr. Taylor is clearly concerned with statewide issues. He understands the importance of helping all regions of Maryland, especially the ones that are impoverished. Just as Mr. Taylor has been an unwavering advocate for economic development in Western Maryland, he has been a loyal ally to Baltimore City in its quest for greater state assistance in confronting the urban problems that seem so overwhelming.

Mr. Mitchell was accused of being too dictatorial as House speaker. We expect that Mr. Taylor will bend over backward to let all points of view be heard, and that he will broaden the leadership circle to counties that feel left out. That would be the mark of a good leader. We wish Mr. Taylor well in his first session as House speaker.