

Taylor plans to keep a steady course

By JENNIFER L. MONEY

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After successfully grasping the reins of the Maryland House of Delegates Tuesday, Cas Taylor now has one goal in mind: Keep the course.

"This is not the time to reinvent the wheel. We have serious state issues that have been identified and we need to deal with those," said Taylor, D-Allegany/Washington, who was tapped to succeed retiring Speaker of the House Clay Mitchell.

Democratic leaders in the House threw their support behind the Cumberland Democrat this week, after Mitchell's surprise departure just two months before the Maryland General Assembly session begins.

A formal vote of the Democratic caucus — all but guaranteed to go Taylor's way — is scheduled for next Tuesday.

While Taylor has wanted the top office for a long time, he doesn't plan any major renovations for the time being, he said Wednesday.

He plans to pick up where Mitchell left off, coping with welfare and education reform and spiraling budget problems.

"Life is dealing us a very difficult hand

to play," said Taylor, an 18-year veteran of the State House and the well-respected chairman of the House Economic Matters Committee. "It's important that the House move forward with as few changes as possible."

That means Del. D. Bruce Poole, D-Washington, will remain in his seat as House Majority Leader, putting Western Marylanders in two of the most powerful slots in state government for the 1994 session.

Taylor will have to run for re-election as speaker after this year, and he said it's too early to think about his plans for next term.

As Speaker of the House, he has the power to appoint committee chairmanships, House Majority Leader and other key positions. In conjunction with the governor and the Senate president, he will steer the course of state government.

Because of the power of the seat, local lawmakers and other delegates have speculated that Taylor's position will bring economic benefits to Western Maryland.

For example, Mitchell's home area of the Eastern Shore saw a new bridge at Kent Narrows and other benefits of his position.

But Taylor said he doesn't plan to treat Western Maryland to any political favors.

"The right thing for state government to do is to fairly and equitably treat every area of the state," he said.

But his position as Speaker of the House will help Western Maryland communicate with the rest of the state, he said.

"I've always had a dream of making Western Maryland a better and more prosperous place to live," he said. "And the way to do that is make sure Western Maryland is working with the rest of the state."