

Speaker-to-Be Rewards Allies ^{WASH}

Del. Casper R. Taylor Jr., ¹²⁻²³⁻⁹³ who will become ^{POST} speaker of the House of Delegates when the General Assembly convenes Jan. 12, has rewarded his political allies in a recently announced leadership shuffle. In the process, delegates from Anne Arundel and Baltimore counties made the biggest gains.

Taylor (D-Allegany) has removed Del. D. Bruce Poole (D-Washington) as majority leader and replaced him with Del. Kenneth H. Masters (D-Baltimore). Masters, a lawyer and Vietnam War veteran, backed Taylor in his quick and successful bid this fall to replace the retiring speaker, R. Clayton Mitchell (D-Kent).

Poole rejected Taylor's offer of a lesser post: chairman of the Committee on Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review. That job will go to Del. John A. Hurson (D-Montgomery), who worked closely with Taylor on legislation revising Maryland's health care laws in the 1993 legislative session. The committee, which reviews executive branch regulations, has less clout than the House's "standing committees."

To replace himself as chairman of the influential House Economic Matters Committee, Taylor tapped Del. Michael E. Busch (D-Anne Arundel), another strong supporter of Taylor's speakership bid.

Taylor, citing widespread support from rank-and-file House members, said he will create a sixth standing committee, to be called Commerce and Government Matters. He named Del. Gerald J. Curran (D-Baltimore) chairman of the committee and Del. John F. Wood Jr. (D-St. Mary's-Charles) vice chairman. Both men have had relatively low profiles in the General Assembly until now.

The House's number two job, speaker pro-tem, will remain in the hands of Del. Gary R. Alexander (D-Prince George's).

A Montgomery County delegate, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described Taylor's leadership team as somewhat lackluster and not deeply ideological. "Whether it's a step to the right or a step to the left, it's hard to say," the delegate said. With the creation of a new committee, he said, "the power is more diffuse," which makes most House members happy.

In a letter to delegates, Taylor said, "I hope you will share with me my excitement and enthusiasm for the creation of the new standing committee and for the new voices and regional balance we will achieve in our leadership."