

Taylor 8-19-97 passes up bid for governor

Md. House speaker faults leadership in Glendening era

By WILLIAM F. ZORZI JR.
SUN STAFF

Maryland House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. is abandoning the idea of running for governor next year, but he is hardly jumping on the re-election bandwagon of fellow Democrat Gov. Parris N. Glendening.

In a letter to members of the House of Delegates circulated yesterday, Taylor said he will run only for re-election as a delegate from Allegany County next year and as speaker of the House.

Without naming Glendening, Taylor was openly critical of the governor's performance, raising questions about where he is leading the state — questions that set the stage for a potentially contentious legislative session this winter.

"After 23 years in the legislature, I have seen what a strong, engaged, committed governor can accomplish in a genuine partnership with a strong, engaged, committed legislature," Taylor wrote. "Much of what is good in Maryland came about because governors and legislatures shared a vision, a sense of deep commitment and strong mutual trust.

"I miss this sense of partnership," he wrote. "I think the public misses it."

While some gubernatorial aides privately termed the Taylor letter "grandstanding" and "a bitter parting shot," a Glendening spokeswoman said the governor was undisturbed by the speaker's assessment.

"With the natural tension surrounding his potential gubernatorial candidacy behind us I look ; [See Taylor, 5A]

Taylor faults leadership but won't run for governor

[Taylor, from Page 1A]

forward to a stronger partnership in future years." Glendening said through the spokeswoman. "Our achievements are a direct result of a good working partnership between the executive and legislative branches."

As for Taylor's abandoning the notion of running for governor, the spokeswoman, Judi Scioli, said: "His decision to run again for his seat in the House of Delegates is good for his district and good for Maryland."

Field narrows

By keeping out of the race, Taylor narrows the field of Glendening's potential Democratic challengers in the September 1998 primary. For now that list includes Harford County Executive Eileen M. Rehrmann, who has announced she is running, and Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin, the Baltimore-area congressman who is weighing a bid.

Two Taylor associates said there was no strategic reason for the timing of his decision. It was not intended as an encouraging signal to Cardin that there will be one fewer Democrat to compete for the anti-Glendening vote, they said.

Cardin was unavailable for comment yesterday, but Rehrmann said she would ask Taylor to support her candidacy.

Whether or not Taylor backs her, Rehrmann said she was pressing ahead with her bid. "Clearly the candidates are coming more into focus," she said.

Taylor, 63 — who in the last year had gone so far as to hire a political director, pollster and media consultant for a possible gubernatorial bid — was viewed as a

long-shot primary challenger to Glendening because of his low name recognition outside of Annapolis, a small political base, and his votes against abortion rights and gun control.

The support of the speaker, who was vacationing yesterday and unavailable for comment, could help a challenger to Glendening. While Taylor would not bring great numbers of votes to the table, he is held in high regard by Maryland's business community.

Big plans

In his six-page letter, Taylor unveiled an ambitious legislative agenda for where he believes the state should be headed. That could be at odds with the governor's as-yet-unannounced legislative plans — a potential clash that could emerge as the General Assembly convenes in January.

Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, a Prince George's County Democrat who already has endorsed Glendening for reelection, called Taylor's message "a wise and prudent letter."

"It's much easier to be re-elected by your home folks in an area that includes 30,000 people than it is to put your fate in hands of 4.7 million people," he said.

When asked about Taylor's criticism of Glendening, Miller said he believes the speaker's and governor's agendas "can dovetail" in the legislative session.

"Now that the speaker has bit the bullet and said, 'Look, I'm not a candidate for statewide office,' he can concentrate on doing the best job possible ... as speaker of the House — and that means working together with the Senate



SUN FILE

House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. unveiled an ambitious legislative agenda in his letter.

president and governor," Miller said.

"I have no reason to think the speaker will do otherwise," he said.

In his letter, Taylor laid out a variety of issues he wants the legislature to tackle, including education reforms and possibly a new *education funding plan*, *additional prison capacity*, *health care reforms* and a comprehensive look at projected future deficits in the state's *Transportation Trust Fund*.

Accomplishments

Taylor also detailed a list of recent legislative accomplishments — *personal income tax relief*, *welfare and health care reforms*, *state personnel and campaign finance reforms*, *education and environmental legislation* — *giving little credit to the Senate and less to the governor.*

The tone of that section of the letter sparked criticism from Miller. "He had to say nothing more than 'I'm not running for governor,'" Miller said. "He took credit for everything that the governor and the Senate were also responsible for.

"But that's politics," he said. "That's called puffery."