

Recount of ballots requested by Taylor

House speaker upset
by Republican after
court's redistricting

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House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. is calling for a recount of the ballots cast in the House of Delegates race he lost this week by just 71 votes, saying he wants to bring "complete closure to the issue."

Meanwhile, speculation continued yesterday about the impact on Legislative District 1C if he loses and about the reasons his 28-year career in the legislature may be coming to an abrupt end.

"It's a tremendous loss for Western Maryland," said Secretary of State John T. Willis. "The voters there will suffer greatly both in the short term and the long term. They'll suffer economically. They'll suffer politically."

Taylor's lawyer, Ralph S. Tyler III, said he expects to file the formal petitions next week for the recount. Taylor is first asking the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court to waive a bond required with the recount request sent to the State Board of Elections.

"Given the importance of the speaker's position in state government and given the closeness of the count, we believe it is advisable to put complete closure to the issue," Taylor said.

In Tuesday's election, Republican LeRoy E. Myers Jr., running for elected office for the first time, upset Taylor in the district.

Few expected Myers to defeat one of the state's top Demo-

crats, who has been described as the man who "put Western Maryland on the map."

Taylor, House speaker since 1994, is seen as a well-respected consensus builder within the Democratic Party.

Some Democrats blame the Maryland Court of Appeals for endangering Taylor's re-election chances when it ruled Gov. Parris N. Glendening's redistricting plan unconstitutional and drew its own legislative district map.

The court's map increased the number of Republicans and moved Myers into Taylor's district.

Taylor's defeat is "a direct result of the Court of Appeals' decision," said Willis, the lead architect of

Glendening's redistricting plan. "The changes they made did not have to be made."

John H. Josselyn, legislative vice president of the Associated Gun Clubs of Baltimore, said the changes in Taylor's district opened an opportunity for gun enthusiasts who were looking to unseat the speaker because he did not strongly support their agenda.

Josselyn said his organization, which represents 26 gun clubs, backed Myers and campaigned against Taylor.

In particular, Taylor angered gun enthusiasts by voting for a Glendening administration gun-control law in 2000 that contains some of the nation's toughest provisions, including a requirement that manufacturers equip handguns with built-in trigger locks.

It also requires firearms makers to provide ballistic information about each handgun to state police to help them solve crimes.

"We decided, just to make a point, to support the challenger, no matter what his position was," Josselyn said.

Once Taylor files his petitions for the recount, the State Board of Elections will determine how the local elections boards in Allegany and Washington counties should conduct the review.

Catherine O. Davis, administrator for the Allegany County Board of Elections, said her office conducted a routine, random examination of 10 percent of the voting machines yesterday and found "there were no variances whatsoever" in the vote count.

A full recount could include reviewing all the ballots on each

computerized voting machine that pertain to the Taylor and Myers race, as well as hand counting all of the almost 500 absentee ballots, Davis said.

Taylor would pay the cost of the recount unless there is a significant change in the vote count or he is determined to be the winner.

No matter what the final outcome of the election, Taylor said he does not plan to leave state government.

"I want to continue working and playing some kind of role," said the 67-year-old Taylor. "I'm too young to quit."

Republican leaders have said Gov.-elect Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. is considering Taylor for a position in his administration.

In an interview with the *Cumberland Times*, Taylor expressed an interest in a position on the Board of Public Works.

The board, which approves major state contracts and purchases, is made up of the governor, the state comptroller and the state treasurer.

The only route to a board seat would be to challenge current Maryland State Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp when the General Assembly fills the office in January.

Kopp said yesterday that she has no intention of stepping aside.

"I'm planning on being treasurer, running for re-election in January," she said. "I have been talking to a number of legislators, and that seems to be their expectation, too."

Kopp, a former Montgomery County delegate, was elected treasurer in February to finish the term of Richard N. Dixon, who resigned because of poor health.

Kopp said after Dixon quit, she was surprised when Taylor told her he was not interested in becoming treasurer — a position he had been widely expected to seek.

When the speaker asked her to seek the position, she said he asked for her assurance that she would run for a full four-year term next year.

"So I made that commitment and resigned my seat in the House," Kopp said.