

Lawmakers praise endorsement of Taylor as speaker

MICHAEL GARLITZ
Times-News Staff Writer

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ANNAPOLIS — Members of the Western Maryland Delegation praised Tuesday's endorsement of Del. Casper R. Taylor Jr. (D-Allegany, Washington) to become the next speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates.

Delegates George Edwards (R-Garrett, Allegany), Kevin Kelly (D-Allegany) and Betty Workman (D-Allegany) said the apparent selection of Mr. Taylor, 58, to replace Del. R. Clayton Mitchell as speaker is a definite plus for the area.

"This is one of the greatest political events ever to benefit this county," Mr. Kelly said from his Cumberland law office. "It's a tremendous event."

"I think it's great for him and great for this area," said Mr. Edwards from his Grantsville home. "He's someone we can work with and he gives us a little bit of an 'in.'"

"I think it's very exciting for Western Maryland to have the Speaker of the House," said Mrs. Workman from her Annapolis legislative office. "It's going to mean Western Maryland will be in the spotlight. We should be very proud to have him as an Allegany County resident."

Mr. Taylor serves as the chairman of the Western Maryland Delegation. He is poised to become one of the state's most powerful elected officials if elected by his political party as speaker.

Mrs. Workman was in Annapolis Tuesday afternoon attending routine committee meetings when events connected to Mr. Taylor's endorsement unfolded. She sat in a state house committee room with fellow members of the House Ways and Means Committee when Mr. Taylor and Speaker Pro Tem Gary Alexander (D-Prince George's)

entered the room to inform the committee of the endorsement.

"Gary went to great lengths to explain what was going on and said all of the committee chairmen were endorsing Cas," she said. "(Mr. Alexander) was very happy and very pleased with the situation."

Mr. Alexander had been mentioned Monday as the front-runner to replace the retiring Mr. Mitchell as speaker. That plan had fallen by the wayside Tuesday.

Mrs. Workman said she then followed Mr. Taylor and Mr. Alexander to the committee room in which the House Economic Matters Committee, the committee Mr. Taylor had chaired since 1987, was meeting.

"When he came into the committee room, the whole committee stood up and cheered. They really enjoyed the moment with Cas."

"Cas was really on Cloud Nine," she said. "This is something Del. Taylor has aspired for a long time. He really knows his way around the legislature. He's very well-liked down here."

Mr. Kelly calls Mr. Taylor "a tremendous asset" to both the citizens of Allegany County and of the state.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic about the selection," said Mr. Kelly. "The Speaker of the House is an extremely powerful position, and Cas Taylor is one of the most qualified delegates to serve as speaker. He's paid his dues and he deserves it."

Mr. Kelly and Mrs. Workman will be in Annapolis next Tuesday voting at the House's Democratic caucus to make Mr. Taylor's selection official.

Mrs. Workman said she does not expect Mr. Taylor to have any competition in the vote.

"It's highly unlikely there will be any candidates against him. The endorsement usually carries the weight."

The Democratic caucus will make the decision on the new speaker because Democrats control the house.

Mr. Edwards said Mr. Taylor's influence as speaker will help the area.

"Even though he has to have an open mind in his position, but it's good to have someone to go to if we need something for this area."

Mr. Taylor did not return telephone calls from the Times-News to his Annapolis office Tuesday afternoon.