

# Delegate Cane makes Eastern Shore history

*Washington Times*

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CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

4/15/99

ANNAPOLIS — Rudolph C. Cane made history Wednesday when he was sworn in as the first black member of the Maryland House of Delegates from the Eastern Shore.

Surrounded by his wife, children, siblings and friends from across the nation, Mr. Cane, 64, a Democrat from Wicomico County, said he credits his new job as delegate with his hard work in the community.

"I think I'm here on my merits," he said.

While race had little to do with his election, being the first black is a point of pride for him.

Mr. Cane followed the footsteps of his father, H. Webster Cane Sr., who ran for the House of Delegates in 1944. His father won the primary but lost the general election — a loss his family suspects involved underhanded tactics designed to keep a black from office.

With Mr. Cane's election, blacks on the Eastern Shore are gaining some political clout.

"Organizations came together with a lot of young people willing to help. The community knew what it wanted," he said. "We're getting representation with our taxation."

Mr. Cane said he is looking forward to his new role as delegate.

"It was exciting when we took the Statehouse tour and had orientation. Now it's reality. There's no delegate-elect. Now it's delegate."

Mr. Cane said he hopes that

he will be a role model for younger blacks.

"It's a tremendous thing setting an example in my community. If you're dedicated, you can do or be what you want to be," he said. "I hope the young people behind me will be motivated to get involved in politics."

Mr. Cane represents District 37A, which includes parts of Dorchester and Wicomico counties. He will serve on the Environmental Matters Committee, where he said he wants to help find answers to one of the most pressing problems of his constituency of farmers and watermen: pfiesteria.

Pfiesteria is a toxic organism that has been associated with fish lesions and fish kills in the Chesapeake Bay and other waters.

Mr. Cane said he is also concerned about any increased gas tax.

"We have enough money to handle the roads. If we separate the budget, we should not use gas tax money for mass transit," he said.

Education is another of his priorities.

Mr. Cane served on the Wicomico County Commission from 1990 to 1994 and was a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals in Wicomico County from 1980 to 1990.

After working for the State Highway Administration for 31 years until his 1984 retirement, he was the administrator of housing and community development at Shore Up, a nonprofit organization that provides housing services to lower-income families.