

The Sun

Trying to build city's GOP

Courthouse races: Next time around, Republicans should try to mount challenges in these races.

October 4, 1998 Page(s): 2C

Edition: 4F

Section: EDITORIAL

Length: 348 words

Article Type: EDITORIAL

Record Number: BSUN10040100

AMERICA MAY be a two-party country, but in Baltimore one would never know it. The last time a Republican was elected in the city was in 1954, when **Harry Cole** (now a retired judge) was elected to the Maryland Senate. (The City Council lost its last Republican in 1931.)

The **Cole** victory heralded the end of white machine control of west side politics. But Democrats regrouped and four years later **Mr. Cole** was defeated. Today, registered Democrats outnumber Republicans nearly 9-1.

Nowhere is this Democratic hegemony more evident than at the city courthouse. The Republican Party did not bother to file symbolic challengers against the winners of last month's Democratic primary. David Blumberg, GOP chairman in the city, explains, "There wasn't much interest in these races. They certainly weren't our first priority."

This means a free ride to Frank M. Conaway, a one-time state delegate who won a hotly contested Democratic primary for clerk of Circuit Court; his wife, Mary Conaway, who won renomination for register of wills; and incumbent Sheriff John W. Anderson.

State's Attorney Patricia Coats Jessamy had no opposition in the primary; neither did Orphans' Court Judges Joyce M. Taylor-Thompson, Lewyn Scott Garrett and Howard I. Golden. The sitting judges, who ran on a nonpartisan basis in the Democratic and Republican primaries and defeated one challenger, also will coast to victory on Nov. 3.

Under Mr. Blumberg's chairmanship, city Republicans have made strides in reviving themselves as a minority party. For the GOP to be truly viable, it has to offer voters alternatives for all offices.

The party should spare no effort during the next four years in trying to find credible candidates for courthouse offices. Who knows, somewhere another **Harry Cole** might be waiting to take on Democratic pols.

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