

Curran's district split on his action

Constituents 2/28/98
applaud, decry
his resignation

By KATE SHATZKIN
SUN STAFF

In watering holes and community centers of the Northeast Baltimore neighborhoods known for years as Curran political country, there was applause and profound disappointment as longtime legislator Gerald J. Curran resigned from the House of Delegates yesterday.

"I think that Gerry probably did the wisest thing," said Judith Fritsche, executive director of the HARBEL Community Organization, a nonprofit center that houses community and business associations. "I think it's sad for Gerry, because he did put a lot of years in. I know he didn't mean to do any harm."

Curran resigned yesterday after 32 years in the legislature, saying he wanted to spare his family and his health the pain of facing an ethics probe into his business dealings. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Curran is a cousin of J. Joseph Curran Jr., the state attorney general, and the nephew of J. Joseph Curran Sr., who was a 3rd District city councilman and leader of a powerful Northeast Baltimore political organization when Gerald Curran first ran for the House of Delegates 32 years ago.

Mildred Bradin, a longtime friend and political ally of the Curran family, said, "I really believe he was part of the system, that he wasn't the only one. He is a very good man. I think this is killing him."

At Swallow at the Hollow, a small Govans pub where members of the Curran political organization sometimes gathered, owner Linda Clarke wondered why the legislator's business dealings had gener- [See District, 3B]



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Curran's constituents express mixed emotions on resignation

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ated so much fuss. "What's the big deal?" she asked, saying that all sorts of politicians have had conflicts of interest for years.

But to Polly Connor, eating lunch a few feet away, it was a big deal. "How could he not know he was benefiting?" she said. "It's not ethical."

Govans architect Harry C. Hess III said he hopes the cloud over the delegate's departure won't stain the family name. "They've certainly been part of the public service," Hess said. "It would only be fair that we judge the individuals as individuals."

A group of bridge players at the Harford Senior Citizens Center on Harford Road had mixed reaction to the news.

Ike English, a retired railroad clerk, said Curran's resignation should not have ended the ethics investigation. "I don't think anything should have been done to give him any advantage over any

insurance agent on the street," English said. "Just letting him resign and doing nothing is too easy."

Charles Seluzicki, a retired engineering lab technician at the Goddard Space Flight Center, said Curran might have been singled out for harsher treatment than usual because of the recent expulsion from the Senate of former Sen. Larry Young, who had been accused of numerous ethics violations involving use of his public office for private gain.

"This happened to be a special occasion for them to make this more sensitive than it might have been," Seluzicki said.

At Curran's Delly on Belair Road, Carol Curran, the delegate's niece, was hard at work running the kitchen. Her father, Thomas G. Curran, who owns the delicatessen, had gone to Annapolis to be with his brother, she said.

"They stick together in tough times," Carol Curran said. "We're a proud Irish family."