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Five challenge Kach for House seat

Education, preservation are among issues in race for new District 5B post

By Maria Blackburn
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Two Republicans, two Democrats and one independent are seeking to defeat incumbent Del. A. Wade Kach and win the seat in the Maryland House of Delegates that Kach has held since 1975.

Kach, 55, a Republican who lives in Cockeysville, represents the newly created 5B Legislative District, which has one delegate. The district extends north from Hunt Valley to the Pennsylvania line and west to Carroll County, and encompasses the northern and most rural section of Baltimore County. The primary is Sept. 10.

A retired math teacher and former auditor of the Baltimore County school system, Kach said he considers legislation to license homebuilders, enforce payment of child support and allow alternative sentencing for first-time nonviolent offenders among his greatest achievements in office.

"I've been an effective legislator and I've been able to help my constituents," said Kach, who has been endorsed by gubernatorial candidate Rep. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. and Ellen R. Sauerbrey, a former GOP gubernatorial nominee and state delegate.

"I believe by being re-elected I'll be able to continue to do a good job. When it comes to a single-member district you need somebody with experience and know-how."

Among Kach's Republican challengers are Chris Cavey of Upperco and Leslie Sipes of Parkton.

Cavey, 46, owns an insurance agency in Hampstead in Carroll County and is a native of Upperco. Now finishing his second term on the Republican Central Committee, he ran unsuccessfully for the House of Delegates in 1994 and 1998.

He said his roots in his family's farm and experience as owner of a small business in the rural area give him a unique perspective on land preservation - a key issue in the district.

"There is a need to have a preservation of that land and that open space, especially with the Pretty Boy [Reservoir] right up here," Cavey said. "It all goes into quality of life."

Sipes, 42, has worked for 20 years in five Maryland agencies including the comptroller's office, the health department and the Department of the Environment. Although she has never before run for elected office, she is certain her experience in state government makes her qualified for the job.

"For the last 20 years I've lived, eaten and breathed state government," Sipes said. "I know state government from the inside out. I know what's right, what's wrong and what needs to be fixed."

Sipes, who has been endorsed by the AFL-CIO and the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, said the key issues in the district include land preservation, enhancing education and reducing taxes.

Stephen C. Kirsch, a Democrat from Jacksonville, is running because he says he is tired of politicians looking out only for themselves.

"There's a lack of integrity in government," said Kirsch, 51, a lawyer. "There's just been a lack of good, honest leadership willing to stand up and say what the issues are."

Kirsch, who ran for the House in 1998 and won the primary but lost the general election, said the main issues in this conservative

district include increased traffic, water shortages and development. He has been endorsed by the Baltimore County teachers union and by the county firefighters.

Kirsch faces off against William Harding Davis in the Democratic primary.

Davis, who works as a driver for Giant Food, is 38 and has never run for public office. He decided to run, he said, partly because of redistricting and partly "because no one seems to be interested in the issues I'm interested in."

In addition to increasing funding for schools and adding recreational fields to the northern part of the county, Davis said he wants to offset the skyrocketing costs of college tuition with a program that guarantees eligible Maryland students free tuition at state schools.

"The current system [is] you have to do all the paperwork to find the money," he said. "This would make guarantees for all children so that if you have certain grades you can achieve a college education free from the state. All you have to do is ask."

Davis has been endorsed by the Maryland affiliate of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League and Marylanders for Better Transportation.

Also running is William T. Newton, a Reisterstown carpenter and independent. Newton, 49, said he considers himself a "perennial candidate" and "the common man."

"Most of our politicians don't have a clue what's going on in the hearts and minds of men and women," said Newton, who unsuccessfully ran for the House in 1998 in what was then the 10th District.

- He said the key issues in the district are development and education, and he advocates tougher standards in schools and a return to a more traditional curriculum.

Newton won't accept endorsements. "The most important endorsement I can get is a person's single vote," he said.

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