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HEADLINE: 4 incumbent delegates competing for 3 seats in revised 46th District;
Longtime area senator shares ticket with 2

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BODY:

Redistricting has brought a painful state delegate race to the city's waterfront neighborhoods, with two legislative districts squeezed into one and four incumbents - all friends - fighting an awkward battle for three seats.

They know that at least one of them will be out of a job after the Democratic primary Sept. 10.

The revised 46th District, created June 21 as part of a statewide redrawing of political jurisdictions, extends west from Canton in Southeast Baltimore along the waterfront, through downtown to the South Baltimore neighborhoods of Federal Hill, Locust Point, Brooklyn and Cherry Hill (which used to be in the 47th District).

Sen. George W. Della Jr., who represented the 47th District for almost two decades, is running unopposed because his longtime ally, Sen. Perry Sfikas from the former 46th District, announced in July that he would rather step down than fight a man who helped launch his political career.

Before Sfikas dropped out, he asked Della whether he would campaign on behalf of Dels. Peter A. Hammen and Carolyn J. Krysiak, both of whom worked with Sfikas to represent Southeast Baltimore.

Della put Hammen on his ticket, but turned down Krysiak, an 11-year veteran delegate and former city accounting supervisor who has fought against predatory real estate practices and sponsored legislation to make it easier for ill people to enroll in clinical trials.

Della instead picked a political newcomer, Darren Petty, a United Auto Workers Union lobbyist. Della denied Krysiak's accusation that he was pressured by unions to select Petty, who has no legislative experience.

Della said he picked Petty in part because he was impressed by his activism in Southeast Baltimore and his volunteer work in helping to raise money for a new boxing gym.

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"I don't want to be just labeled as someone who's carrying the water for the unions - there's a lot more to me than that," said Petty, 35, who owns a bar in Canton. "I'm also trying to get more affordable prescription health care for seniors ... and bring more manufacturing jobs back to Maryland."

Also on Della's ticket is Del. Brian K. McHale, 47, a longshoreman and Locust Point resident who has pushed to help expand Medicaid insurance coverage for the poor.

The other candidates in the Democratic primary are:

Del. William H. Cole IV, 29, an aide to Rep. Elijah E. Cummings who lives in Otterbein and has worked to help reform the state's juvenile justice system.

Loretta P. Johnson, 62, president of the Cherry Hill Tenants' Council and a grandmother of 38 who says she'll advocate for better services for her fellow public-housing residents.

Bill Marker, 51, a lawyer who lives in Pigtown and wants to reform the state's tax system so that all jurisdictions would pay the same real estate tax rate, meaning that city residents would see their taxes fall by about half.

The sole Republican candidate is Patrick Dail, 35, director of a job training program at the Community College of Baltimore County. He lives in Canton and wants to make budget cuts to cope with a looming state budget deficit.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO(S) / MAP(S), 1. Sen. George W. Della Jr. did not add Del. Carolyn J. Krysiak to his ticket.; 2. 46TH DISTRICT; 1. SUN STAFF : 1993; 2. SUN STAFF

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