

# Rawlings and Schaefer Spar, Point Fingers

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**B**attling cancer hasn't spoiled Del. Howard P. Rawlings's appetite for a political fight. And Comptroller William Donald Schaefer is always willing to fire back with both barrels.

The two prominent Democrats—Rawlings (Baltimore) is the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and Schaefer is the notoriously crabby member of the Board of Public Works—have been in a verbal brawl since Rawlings wrote a letter, published in the Aug. 16 Baltimore Sun, that bluntly took Schaefer to task for remarks he made blaming the state's budget crisis on the General Assembly and then-Gov. Parris N. Glendening (D).

It started last month, when Schaefer said that Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R) was "dealt a dirty hand" and that it was Glendening's "reckless overspending" that created a budget shortfall and forced Ehrlich to cut \$208 million from Maryland's budget.

"If we were talking about any other Democratic politician in Maryland, I would say I am shocked at Mr. Schaefer's proclivity to blame the Assembly and defend Mr. Ehrlich," Rawlings wrote. "However, since we are talking about former Gov. Schaefer, who has demonstrated an intense dislike for former Gov. Glendening, . . . I am not so much shocked as disappointed in his twisting of the facts to fuel his continued animosity toward Mr. Glendening. But enough is enough."

Rawlings went on to blast Schaefer's reign as governor in the early 1990s.

"When Mr. Schaefer was governor, eight rounds of executive cost containment and legislation resulted in budget cuts of more than \$1.6 billion, including layoffs of hundreds of state employees," Rawlings wrote. "Education aid for teachers' benefits and student transportation was slashed and other aid to counties and municipalities was reduced 40 percent. . . . Is that the former governor's prescription for the current crisis too?"

Ehrlich handled the situation delicately. "I'm not going to say an awful lot about it," he said at the opening of the Board of Public Works meeting last week. "It's unfortunate, and

counterproductive."

But Schaefer could not let the letter go unavenged.

"That article by the chairman of the finance committee was, in my mind, outrageous," he began, and went on to make some of the same points that brought on Rawlings's criticism in the first place. "When [Glendening] left, he left a \$500 million deficit."

Schaefer said Rawlings had cornered him at a legislative meeting and asked him to promise to raise taxes as a way to close the deficit. "I absolutely refused to go along with that," Schaefer said. "He got very upset at that."

But Schaefer softened his attack. "He is a good man, he just got off base on this and tried to blame everyone but the legislature," Schaefer said. "I'm sorry he had to write that article. . . . He's a brilliant guy."