

# Rawlings played key role in win

■ **Endorsement:** *The House Appropriations Committee chairman's backing of a white candidate brought legitimacy to O'Malley's campaign.*

By IVAN PENN  
SUN STAFF

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Nine months ago, state Del. Howard P. "Pete" Rawlings set out on a mission to find a replacement for three-term Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke. He looked over the field of candidates and in a sweeping analysis called them "frightening to people."

Then, he tried to pick his own candidate, lobbying NAACP President Kweisi Mfume and other Baltimore County residents to move to the city and run, urging a 70-year-old retired police chief to join the race, and flirting with a mayoral bid himself.

In the end, Rawlings backed City Councilman Martin O'Malley, an unlikely prospect for the influential state leader to support, in particular because O'Malley is white and Rawlings is black, in a predominantly African-American city. His and other black officials' endorsement of O'Malley brought a blistering attack on the delegate by some African-American leaders, who said they should back a black candidate.

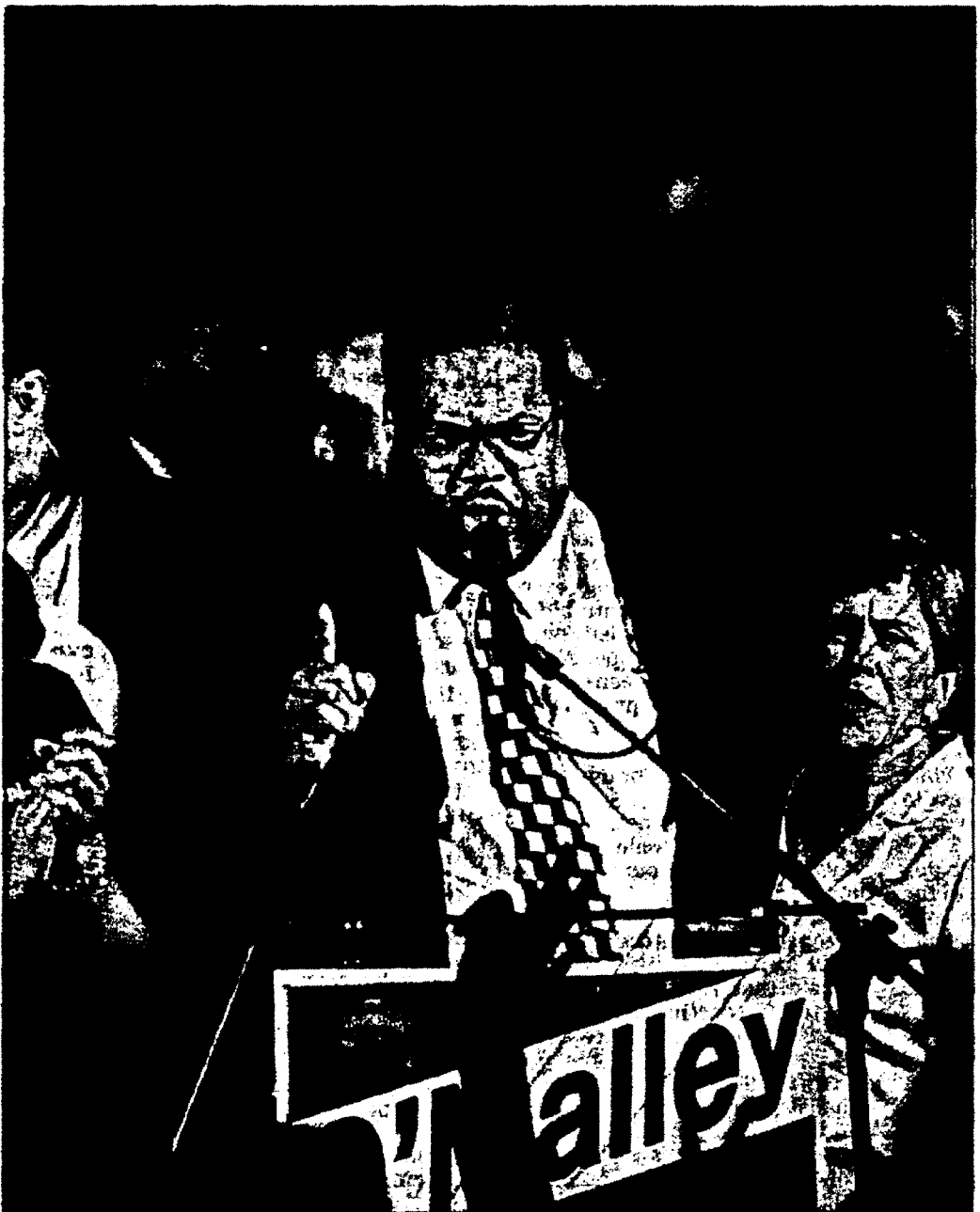
The decision to back O'Malley, who won the Democratic nomination in Tuesday's stunning mayoral primary, helped set the stage for a new era in Baltimore politics. And it appears to have solidified Rawlings — already the influential chairman of the House Appropriations Committee — as one of the city's top political brokers.

"Pete's a fine man," said state Comptroller William Donald Schaefer, a former Baltimore mayor and governor. "It took courage for him to do that [endorse O'Malley]. He was just so interested in doing what was best for the city."

Rawlings wasn't the first black politician to back O'Malley, but his stature brought increasing legitimacy to the candidate. He played a key role in helping to build a racially diverse coalition of O'Malley supporters, teaming with Sen. Joan Carter Conway, Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman, Del. Samuel I. "Sandy" Rosenberg, Del. Kenneth C. Montague Jr. and Del. Anne Marie Doory.

He also helped win the support of the Rev. Frank M. Reid III, pastor of the city's largest African-American congregation, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which has an estimated 14,000 members.

"He stuck his neck out," said Hoff- [See Rawlings, 8B]



GENE SWENNEY JR. / SUN STAFF

*"When you're a leader, you define vision. When you're a leader, you take risks. When you're a leader, you make yourself vulnerable in a democracy."*

**Del. Howard P. Rawlings, shown with Martin O'Malley supporters Tuesday**

# Rawlings' support key to O'Malley's primary win

[Rawlings, from Page 1B]

man, chairwoman of the Senate's Budget and Taxation Committee. "He could have taken a lot less risk, but he's never been afraid."

Some critics said Rawlings and other black officials were backing O'Malley for political gain. They say Rawlings wants to become speaker of the House of Delegates and that he hopes to bolster the political career of his daughter, 5th District City Councilwoman Stephanie Rawlings.

Julius Henson, a former consultant for City Council President Lawrence A. Bell III's mayoral campaign, called black politicians

who supported O'Malley "pseudo-Negro" leaders. "I don't understand you," Henson said to Rawlings as he worked to disrupt the delegate's endorsement of O'Malley about a month before the election. "First, it was Mfume. Second, it was Stokes. If O'Malley gets out, it will be Donald Duck. What's wrong with Lawrence Bell?"

Rawlings' response echoed for weeks throughout the city. "He's a child. He behaves like a child. He thinks like a child."

Rawlings said he sought the best leadership to offer voters, despite race.

"When you're a leader, you define vision," Rawlings said. "When

you're a leader, you take risks. When you're a leader, you make yourself vulnerable in a democracy.

"My motives were to have the best candidate for the citizens of Baltimore," Rawlings said. "My underlying motive is good government. If I'm interested in being speaker, this doesn't add to it or detract from it. People always want to attribute motives to you."

As for his daughter's political career, Rawlings said she prodded him to support O'Malley. "In fact, she took a great risk," he said. "I think more importantly that Stephanie Rawlings made her decision independent of her father."

Former Del. Kenneth L. Webster, a political strategist for Conway, downplayed Rawlings' role in O'Malley's win. He and Conway pointed out that Rawlings supported O'Malley only after he had joined the race.

"He's no king-maker," Webster said. "He's a reasonable facsimile of a king-maker. He's a team-maker."

O'Malley is quick to note that his friend Conway, who brought campaign workers to his staff, was the first African-American official to endorse his campaign. He said Rawlings then helped build coalitions in support of the campaign that will benefit the city in the long term.

"I will be forever grateful to him," O'Malley said of Rawlings. "People are so excited that the next mayor has the potential to have a relationship with Pete Rawlings, Barbara Hoffman and the governor at the same time."

From humble beginnings, the 62-year-old Baltimore native grew up in the Edgar Allan Poe housing project. A postal worker's son, he graduated from Douglass High School and Morgan State University and received his master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. He undertook doctoral studies at the University of Maryland.

He's now an assistant to the president of Baltimore City Community College. He has been a member of the House of Dele-

gates, representing West Baltimore's 40th District, since 1979 and chairman of the Appropriations Committee since 1992.

Always outspoken, Rawlings first stepped into the mayoral fray last year when he publicly stated he was out to find a strong leader to replace Schموke, who announced in December that he would not seek a fourth term. Rawlings began immediately to press Mfume to run for mayor — even though he lived in Baltimore County.

Rawlings led the effort to change the city's residency requirement so that Mfume could run; and, if not Mfume, maybe another. His list included Freeman A. Hrabowski III, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Bill Jews, the chief executive officer of CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, and Theo Rodgers, a politically connected developer.

All declined.

Rawlings turned to former city police chief Bishop L. Robinson, who also refused.

Ultimately, 27 mayoral hopefuls filed, led by Bell, O'Malley and Carl Stokes, a former city councilman and school board member.

Bell was considered the front-runner, but he and Stokes — whom Rawlings, Hoffman and others were poised to support — stumbled.

"In the beginning, I thought I liked Bell, but as time went on, he did some stupid things ..." Schaefer said. "Stokes put that he graduated from Loyola. Those were two bad mistakes."

That left O'Malley, a former prosecutor, two-term councilman and defense lawyer. At 36, O'Malley seemed young to many, but Rawlings said Bell and Stokes' personal problems left him little choice.

"We as a people should not seek the best black candidate or the best white candidate," Rawlings said. "We ought to seek the best candidate."

"O'Malley is ... going to make a lot of mistakes, but the voters have given him an extraordinary opportunity."