

Democrats get new chief DEP's Callaghan to replace Maroney

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fanny@wvgazette.com Democratic state chairman Pat Maroney announced his resignation Friday, effective March 15, and **Mike Callaghan** resigned as secretary of environmental protection to take a position with the Democratic state party to transition to the chairmanship.

Maroney said he was going to call a meeting of the Democratic State Executive Committee on Feb. 1, but hasn't decided yet on a time or a location. Maroney will remain on the committee.

Maroney said Gov. Bob Wise had designated "who he'd like to be his chairman. **Mike Callaghan** is a fine young man." The committee has to officially elect the chairman.

Callaghan will become operations and communications director at the Democratic state headquarters, Maroney said, and will be working the next two months with the chairman for a smooth transition. He will assume the party position next week without pay. His resignation was effective Friday.

Stephanie Timmermeyer, director of the Division of Air Quality Protection and a lawyer, was named acting secretary.

DEP chief communications officer Jessica Greathouse said she suspected Callaghan would work for a law firm since his training is as a lawyer, but she didn't know that.

Steve White, the Democratic Party's lawyer and a member of the executive committee, said Callaghan wouldn't be working for the firm of Goodwin & Goodwin, where White practices. He didn't know what firm Callaghan would join.

White was co-chairman with Maroney for five years. White said as the party chair, Maroney "has truly been inspirational in his fight for issues important to the working families of West Virginia.

"He is a tireless campaigner and political strategist with unquestionable integrity. Pat has national stature in the Democratic Party and will continue to be one of the most highly admired and effective leaders." Maroney has been state chairman for seven years, one of the longest tenures of any chairman. His current term will be up next June.

He said people called him, wanting him to stay on as chairman. He said being chairman was a great opportunity that he enjoyed and wouldn't trade for anything.

"I have been thinking for some time about resigning as chairman," Maroney said. But he said he didn't make a final decision until Friday morning.

His decision came on the heels of Republican state chairman Kris Warner announcing Thursday night that Maroney had resigned and Callaghan had been handpicked by Wise to replace him as chairman.

Maroney said he had a discussion with Wise just before Christmas. "I think he preferred that I stay on," Maroney added.

This was an opportunity for Warner to try to cause a stir, he said.

Maroney said Warner ought to be addressing issues like the Martin Luther King holiday on

Monday, and said it was "tragic" that the Republican chairman wasn't critical of President Bush for his stand on the affirmative action case at the University of Michigan.

Bush asserted earlier this week that a program of racial preferences for minority applicants at the school was "divisive, unfair and impossible to square with the Constitution," based on Associated Press articles. Bush is filing a brief in the case that is before the Supreme Court.

"It's evident that Bush takes the same position as [U.S. Sen.] Trent Lott," Maroney said, referring to the racial segregation comments that brought Lott down as Senate majority leader.

Maroney said Warner ought to also be focusing his attention on the economy and the high rate of unemployment.

In a news release, Warner said Wise was overheard on election night last November telling his closest associates, "We got caught flat-footed." The GOP chairman said, "In fact, they got caught in the arrogance of power that comes with unchallenged, one-party rule. The growth of the two-party system is already yielding results, and we're well on our way to fielding a full slate of good, qualified and visionary candidates for 2004," the press release quoted him as saying.

Attacks on the Democratic Party by the Republican Party, Maroney said were "like a hummingbird attacking an eagle." The Republican Party picked up 11 seats in the Legislature and Rep.

Shelley Moore Capito was re-elected to Congress.

Maroney said he is vice chairman of the southern region for the Democratic National Committee, and he may have a role with the DNC, or he may "hook up with one of the presidential candidates." The DNC will meet in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 22, he said.

He and the state chairmen from Washington, Missouri and Michigan have the longest service as chairmen in the country, Maroney said. The late J.C. Dillon is the only former state chairman who had served for a longer period of time in West Virginia, he added.

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