

O'Malley outlasts his 'favorit' scribe

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By Len Lazarick

Examiner Staff Writer 2/15/09

My run with The Baltimore Examiner ends as it began almost three years ago, with an exclusive interview of Maryland's governor.

It was just a different governor, and certainly a different economy.

Gov.

Martin O'Malley told me the other day he thought I'd outlast him. For selfish reasons, I had hoped I would be around at least until his second term, which is what he will likely get unless there's a major screw-up or scandal. The anti-O'Malley forces may think that has already occurred with the huge tax increases and spending spikes, but polls indicate otherwise.

So do the demographic and partisan shifts in the state.

Shifting landscape

When

I started writing about politics and government in Maryland 35 years ago, there were two Republican senators (both moderates) and half of the congressional delegation were Republican. The legislature was heavily Democratic, as it is today, but many of those were fiscally and socially conservative Democrats, now an endangered species.

Maryland has a growing minority population that votes overwhelmingly Democratic, boosted by an influx of immigrants.

These are the political realities facing ex-Gov. Bob Ehrlich, as he often notes on his Saturday radio show. Many Marylanders, including the bulk of the radio audience for the Bob and Kendel show, would like him back at the State House. After all, Ehrlich did not lose in a landslide. He carried 18 of the 23 counties. If only 4 percent of the 2006 voters had flipped, Ehrlich could have won re-election, as most incumbent governors do.

Ehrlich knows the numbers are increasingly against him or any Republican. O'Malley's re-election drive already is revving up for next year's campaign, as evidenced in this month's town hall meetings.

Unless the governor, President Obama or Congress royally screw up by the fall of 2010, O'Malley is in charge for the next six years.

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Peace and blessings to all.