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State News

Gov. nominates Turner as Arkansas Dem. Party chief

By ANDREW DeMILLO
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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - Gov. Mike Beebe nominated Arkadelphia lawyer Todd Turner on Wednesday to be the new chairman of the Arkansas Democratic Party.

Beebe announced Turner as his choice during a luncheon with the Political Animals Club at the Governor's Mansion.

Turner was a lawyer in the lawsuit that successfully challenged the state's payday lending law. The party's state committee must still approve Turner for him to be able to step into the job.

The position became vacant when former legislator Bill Gwatney was fatally shot at the party office in downtown Little Rock in August. Former U.S. Sen. David Pryor has been acting as party chairman since then. Beebe said he was grateful to Pryor for his leadership.

Beebe said he chose Turner because of his communication skills and his work with the party, adding that Turner's work on the payday lending case did not factor into his decision.

"I see him as someone who can respond to questions or to the normal rhetoric that you see in a partisan campaign, whether it's a local legislative race or U.S. senate race or any other race for that matter," Beebe told reporters. "I also think he's got experience in party building, in recruiting good candidates and helping them and educating them."

Turner has more than 15 years' experience as a member of the Clark County Democratic Party Executive Committee, and has been county chairman since 2007.

A native of De Queen, he graduated from Ouachita Baptist University and received his law degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law. He served as an officer in the Arkansas Army National Guard and has served as a deputy prosecutor.

He currently is on the board and executive committee of the Arkansas Better Business Bureau, and has written several articles on consumer law issues.

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