

Warren's Window

February 6, 2007 Issue #1

A View of Annapolis

Greetings from Annapolis!

Welcome to the first edition of *Warren's Window*. I've started this weekly newsletter to keep you updated on the work of the Maryland General Assembly. I hope that you will find *Warren's Window* both useful and informative.

As always, I love hearing from constituents on issues facing Howard County and the state of Maryland. Please feel free to contact me to share your views on critical issues or whenever I can be of assistance to you. You can reach me by phone at (410) 841-3582 or by email at warren.miller@house.state.md.us.

Your friend and Delegate,
Warren Miller

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

In his first State of the State address Wednesday, Governor Martin O'Malley touched on a wide range of state issues. Overall, he urged the General Assembly to work together in order to "make progress on the priorities of the people who have elected us."

Sadly, his tone was neither conciliatory nor humble. Several cheap shots were taken at the previous administration, which is beneath the dignity of the office of Governor of Maryland. He referred to a "drift of recent years" in the context of the strength of our state. O'Malley went on to say, "We cannot resolve every unsettled issue in just 90 days; nor can we heal in 90 days the divisions that were four years in the making." It seems that although the Ehrlichs and most of their appointees have left the State House, they are still within punching range of our new Governor.

Issues of priority to the new Governor were:

- State budget
- Transportation, including a combination of mass transit and roads
- Implementation of State Stat, billed as "a system of open and transparent administration that sets goals and measures progress towards achieving those goals with relentless follow-up".
- The creation of additional Cabinet level positions and other departments, including the Department of Information Technology, the Maryland Security Council, the Office of Smart Growth, and the Life Sciences Board. No cost estimate was given for this new layer of government jobs.

Additionally, the Governor also requested:

- Passing the Maryland Health Care Act (HB132).

- Increasing spending for stem cell research by 66% to \$25,000,000 annually.
- Tightening vehicle emissions standards by passing the Clean Cars Act.
- Funding the Geographic Cost of Education Index.
- Earmarking \$400,000,000 for local schools systems and community colleges.

Overall, I heard a lot of opportunities for spending without funding. After listening to our new Governor, I am truly concerned about the direction he is taking Maryland.

PROTECTING THE TAXPAYERS

I'm proud to have been chosen to lead the House of Delegates Taxpayer Protection Caucus. As the new Chair of the caucus, I'll be working closely with the Maryland Taxpayers Association (www.mdtaxes.org) and Americans for Tax Reform in Washington, DC. Our mission is to fight for Maryland families and businesses who deserve to keep more of their hard-earned money. I am humbled and motivated by this challenge and I look forward to making a difference for the people of Maryland.

I also plan to introduce several important tax reduction bills this session, including the Maryland Taxpayers' Bill of Rights. This legislation gives Maryland taxpayers a voice by requiring that voters approve all new taxes and any increases to existing taxes.

THE GOOD

My seatmate Delegate Gail Bates has introduced legislation to construct the much-needed Ellicott City parking garage. The passage of Delegate Bates'

proposal will open up the Ellicott City marketplace to a whole group of consumers who currently avoid the parking nightmare of Ellicott City. Located in the historic area, a multi-level parking facility will also be the new home for many new businesses. A location has not yet been determined.

THE BAD

Is the extra bang worth the extra bucks? The proposed "Clean Cars Act" (HB44) would require Maryland automobiles to be equipped with emissions devices which exceed federal standards, effectively increasing the price of a new car by as much as \$2,000. Many lawmakers question the minimal benefit this offers over the federal standards already in place.

The overall impact of this bill will be felt by thousands of consumers who live near our state's borders and hundreds of dealerships who will be priced out of the market of neighboring states, since Maryland automobiles will be more expensive than comparable autos in surrounding states that do not require these expensive upgrades. Under this bill, Maryland would most likely come under the authority of a commission based in California empowered to oversee Maryland's program. I have a multitude of unanswered questions about this and I deem it to be a bad bill.

THE UGLY

The Living Wage bill is being promoted by labor unions to make the government use of contractors too expensive to justify. Under this proposal, county and state government would require contractors to pay their

employees a minimum of \$11.00 per hour.

So why is this bad? It forces government to staff up because they can create positions that pay less than the \$11.00 an hour for a short time, but over time the unions will add these workers to their rolls and ultimately the government will pay far more than the \$11.00 per hour in benefits and salaries. Additionally, it eliminates the ability of government to replace contractors that perform shoddy work. This is a horrible precedent. Maintaining flexibility is necessary to leverage contractors in order to save money and cut down on the numbers of state employees. As government grows, so does our tax bill.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

I am again offering several Maryland House of Delegates college scholarships. Scholarship awards are available for both full-time students and part-time students who are attending at least 6 credit hours. The applicant must be a resident of district 9A and must attend an in-state school.

Completed applications are due back in the office no later than April 9, 2007 and winners are notified by the end of May. The number of recipients and the award amounts vary, depending upon the number of qualified applicants. For an application, please contact my office at (410) 841-3582 and ask for my Legislative Assistant, Ellen Townsend.

YOU'RE INVITED

Please join us on Monday, February 19th from 6PM-8PM for the District 9A Reception in the Miller Senate Office Building, room West II. Senator Allan Kittleman, Delegate Gail Bates and I are

hosting this event for our constituents. Come share your thoughts and concerns with us as we enjoy a light buffet of dinner, desserts, and beverages.

Please RSVP to Ellen Townsend or Rick Bowers at (410) 841-3582 if you plan to attend.

DID YOU KNOW...

You can track all bills flowing through the Maryland General Assembly by logging on to the Maryland Legislative Information Services website at <http://mlis.state.md.us>.

Special thanks to my Legislative Aide Ellen Townsend and my Policy Analyst Rick Bowers who assisted me in researching and writing this newsletter.