

NEIL C. PARROTT, P. E.
Legislative District 2A
Washington County

ASSISTANT MINORITY WHIP

Judiciary Committee

Juvenile Law Subcommittee

Chair

Washington County House Delegation



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April 15, 2016

Dear Friend,

Thank you for visiting my website and looking at my update regarding the outcome of several key pieces of legislation this session. I believe that your input and interest in the legislative session is the mechanism that keeps government in check.

Thomas Jefferson once said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. If we are to guard against ignorance and remain free, it is the responsibility of every American to be informed."

In that spirit, I am hopeful that the following summary is helpful to you regarding what happened in Annapolis over the last 90 days. Please do not feel the need to read the whole letter, but go to the section(s) that most interest you and pass along the information to others who might benefit from the letter.

In the 436th session of the Maryland General Assembly, 2,817 bills were introduced and 834 passed both houses. Four of my bills were passed this year. In addition, four of my other bills that did not pass made positive changes in the state. Two bills resulted in summer studies to solve the issues the bill brought up, and two other bills resulted in actions that made the changes my bills were seeking, without needing to be enacted.

Please note that the starred bills (*) are bills that I introduced. You can learn more about those bills and other bills that I introduced by visiting <http://delegateneilparrott.org/legislation/> where you can find PowerPoint presentations that provide greater detail regarding many of my bills.

It is an honor to serve you in the Maryland General Assembly. If you have any questions, or if I can be of service to you in the future, please contact me by email at neil.parrott@house.state.md.us or by phone at (301)660-4263.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil C. Parrott".

Neil C. Parrott
Maryland House of Delegates, District 2A

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THE BUDGETS:

SB150 - Maryland's Fiscal Year 2017 Operating Budget

For the first time in my six years serving as a Delegate, I voted for Maryland's Operating Budget. The budget doesn't include any tax hikes, is balanced, and doesn't rely on gimmicks. One big difference this year from all other years was the absence of a separate bill, the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA), used as a tool to move money around and to “balance” the budget. By Governor Hogan not introducing a BRFA, all of the money that would be allocated was plain to see, and money will not be traded to categories where it doesn't belong through fund transfers, revenues, and reductions, typically provided in the BRFA.

This year's budget is the most responsible budget introduced by the Governor and passed by the legislature that I have seen while serving as Delegate. While the budget increases by an unacceptably high 4.49% over last years' budget, a closer look shows that \$1 billion is saved in the rainy day fund, and \$400 million is unspent as a surplus for next year. Given the \$1.4 billion savings, the budget increases just 1.24%, which would be the lowest increase in spending since Governor Ehrlich's first term. The \$42.3 billion operating budget not only increases the rainy day fund, but fully funds k-12 education at the highest level in Maryland's history at \$6.3 billion.



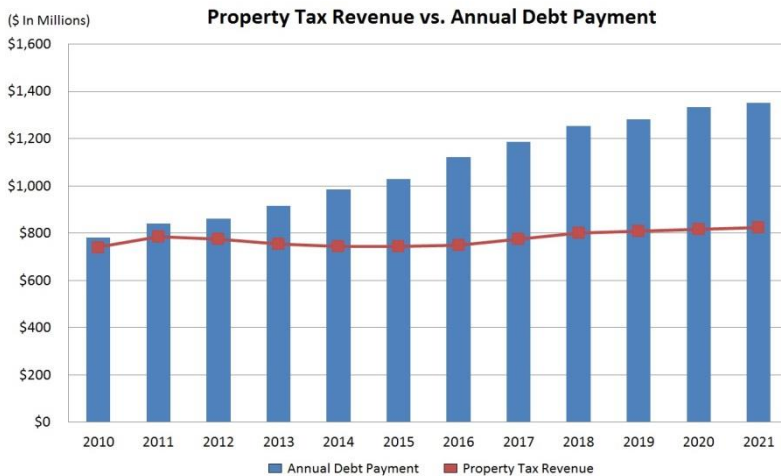
The budget provides enough money for Maryland’s colleges so that the tuition increases will be no more than 2%. In addition, for the first time in Maryland, the budget also includes \$5 million in scholarships for low-income children to attend private schools. This is the first school-choice type initiative in the state’s history, and hopefully will be the start of a program that can help students go to schools that will best serve their needs.

The Governor’s budget also includes over \$50 million for workforce development programs. More than \$27 million will go toward providing job seekers occupational skills, entrepreneurial training, and job search assistance in Maryland’s 12 “Workforce Investment Areas.” With the unemployed in mind, the Governor’s budget includes approximately \$17 million to be provided to job centers across the state to aid in providing assistance to job seekers through referrals, career counseling, and job training.

Environmentally, the budget will provide the historic amount of \$53 million toward the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fund, which happens to be the highest amount of funding provided since the trust’s establishment. In addition, the budget will retain \$60 million for Program Open Space, as well as additional land preservation programs over the next two years.

SB151 - Maryland’s Fiscal Year 2017 Capital Budget (Debt)

Did you know that Maryland owes \$47.69 Billion, and that each Maryland citizen currently owes \$7,947 according to the Maryland Debt Clock? In Governor O’Malley’s last year, Fiscal Year 2015, Maryland borrowed \$1.18 Billion in new debt. Governor Hogan has reduced the borrowing so that in Fiscal Year 2016 Maryland borrowed \$1.045 Billion. For Fiscal Year 2017, the Capital Budget will borrow an additional \$1.005 Billion.



While Governor Hogan’s capital budgets borrow over \$100 million less than in years past, Maryland must stop borrowing so much money. Maryland’s property tax is supposed to be the primary agent used to pay for the principle and interest payment on the state debt, but the funds collected from property taxes don’t come close to the yearly principle and interest payments. In order for the property taxes to actually cover the cost of debt payments, Legislative Services indicated that Maryland would have to forego all new debt for the next 7-8 years, and then we should be able to pay the minimum payments.

Since the property tax cannot pay the debt service, each year the General Fund makes up the difference. In fiscal year 2017, Maryland is projected to receive \$776 Million from property taxes but is required to pay almost \$1.2 Billion in debt service. The amount depleting the General Fund to pay the debt keeps increasing, and with continued spending, it is only a matter of time until the state will have to significantly increase our property taxes.

While not in Governor Hogan’s original proposal, the General Assembly Funded pet projects known as “Bond Bills”, but more appropriately called “Debt Bills.” This year’s projects include \$125,000 to make ADA improvements at a boy choir facility in the City of Baltimore, \$100,000 for a Filipino -American Multicultural Center in Prince Georges County, \$100,000 for an art center in Prince Georges County, and \$100,000 to repair the locker rooms at the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center. Borrowing money that we do not have, and cannot pay for with property taxes, to pay for local projects just doesn’t make sense.

In many ways, what we do in the Capital Budget is like using our children’s credit cards. We run up debt in their names, reap the benefit of all the projects, and then we leave the responsibility of paying to future generations.

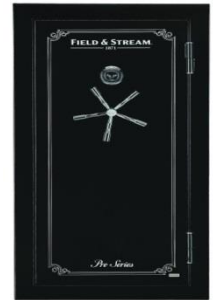
This is not responsible government, and I worked and voted against this irresponsible bill. I joined Senators Hough and Ready to oppose the bill, and joined with 15 Delegates to vote against the legislation.

TAXES AND FEES:

HB 1271 - Sales and Use Tax - Exemption - Firearm Safety Device*

This year I introduced HB 1271, a bill that would provide a tax exemption from the sales tax for firearm safety devices. This would include firearm safes, lock boxes, trigger and barrel locks, or other devices designed to protect and safely secure firearms.

Senator JB Jennings introduced a cross file of the bill in the Senate. While the bill did not pass this year, other states have adopted this legislation, and I am hopeful to re-introduce next year so that Marylanders can receive an economic incentive to store their firearms safely and effectively.



HB 459 - Birth and Death Certificates - Fee Reduction Passed

Good news this year! The fee increases that were passed under Governor O'Malley's Administration for birth and death certificates have been rolled back through this bill to a more reasonable amount.

HB1014 – the College “Affordability” Act

While this bill sounds good, the effect of the bill is to reward irresponsible behavior. For people who have accumulated at least \$20,000 in student loan debt, a \$5,000 per year tax credit/refund will be given to an individual, so long as they promise to use it to pay back their student loans “as soon as practicable.” In other words, taxpayers give them free money, and there is no way to force them to apply the free money to their college debt.

These adults will be able to claim the credit every year while they still have at least \$20,000 in student loan debt. As part of the bill, the Maryland Higher Education Commission will be hiring a consultant and putting together a “marketing and outreach plan” to make sure that all “qualified taxpayers” (which doesn't actually require that you pay taxes), who haven't paid their student loans, know about the program. This bill is irresponsible and rewards those who have continued, substantial student debt by paying them with our tax dollars.

TRANSPORTATION:

HB 1013 - Maryland Open Transportation Investment Decision Act of 2016

A bill that received a lot of attention this year was HB 1013 – Maryland Open Transportation Investment Decision Act of 2016. This bill completely changes the way Maryland funds its transportation projects, a process that has been in place since the creation of the State Highway Administration over 40 years ago.

While the current Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) Process will still occur, this adds a layer to the transportation selection process where each project is scored using a set of criteria. The scoring will almost certainly favor road and transit projects in urban areas over rural area project due to the numbers of crashes or congestion.

The legislature quickly passed this bill so that they could override a possible veto this session. As expected, Governor Hogan vetoed, and then on a party line vote, the Democrats overrode the veto.

The bill goes into effect for the 2018 budget process, which happens to be the Gubernatorial election year. Unfortunately, this new transportation scoring scheme seems designed to be a political, election-year trap where if the Department of Transportation funds local priorities, based on the CTP process, Democrats can cry foul because they didn't fund all of the top-scoring, primarily urban projects. If, on the other hand, they fund the top-scoring projects, the Democrats will express their frustration that local project requests were not funded. This type of “gotcha” politics should not be occurring with transportation money, especially when lives are at stake based on these decisions.

SB 907- Transportation-Harry W. Nice Memorial Potomac River Bridge Replacement

Another troubling example of the legislature trampling over the responsibilities of the Governor and Department of Transportation is SB 907. This bill mandates the replacement of the Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge. The replacement of the bridge is estimated to cost \$1 billion. The steep price tag will require significant increases in tolls, and eliminate the ability of the Maryland Transportation Authority to finance any other projects. A vote for this bill was a vote to increase tolls across the state of Maryland by \$750 million over the next ten years. I voted NO.

EVERYONE IN THE STATE
RELIES ON MARYLAND'S ROADS.
WE HAVE A **RESPONSIBILITY**
TO THE STATE AS A WHOLE.
THE PROJECTS WE ARE INVESTING
IN ARE GOING TO
TOUCH THE **DAILY LIVES** OF
CITIZENS ACROSS OUR STATE
— GOVERNOR LARRY HOGAN



HB 1388 – Highway User Revenue*

I reintroduced HB 1388 this year to work to restore the share of highway user revenues (HURs) to local governments to pre-2007 levels. In 2007 Governor O’Malley robbed the funds in order to try to balance the budget, and the funds have never been returned to our local governments. The chart at the right shows a picture of the reduction of funds, but for Washington County and our municipalities the cut was more severe. We only maintained 10% of the regular funding we received.

Prior to 2007, local roadway funding was completely predictable and relied on a formula that was used for over 60 years based on roadway lane miles. Like the Transportation Trust Fund Constitutional Amendment that passed in 2014, HB 1388 would create a Constitutional Amendment to guarantee full funding of local road projects in the future, based on a set formula, except in fiscal emergencies.

While the bill did not pass, it did lead to an encouraging first step. The Environment and Transportation Committee plans to form a summer study of this issue so that they can develop a bill that the committee could approve during next years’ session.

I-81 Update

Good news regarding I-81 in Maryland. This summer, I-81 will be widened from 4 to 6 lanes beginning where the 6-lane section currently ends in West Virginia, continuing north over the Potomac River Bridge to Exit 1 in Williamsport, where the widening will stop.

The Washington County Delegation has emphatically expressed our request to continue the 6-lane section north to the Pennsylvania Line to the Secretary of Transportation. On April 4th, I spoke with Gregory Slater, Director at the Office of Planning and Preliminary Engineering for the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), about an update for the I-81 project. He indicated that the SHA is seriously considering what they can do to get design work started on the remaining section. I am expecting to hear an update soon, and hope to be able to share more good news.

ELECTIONS:

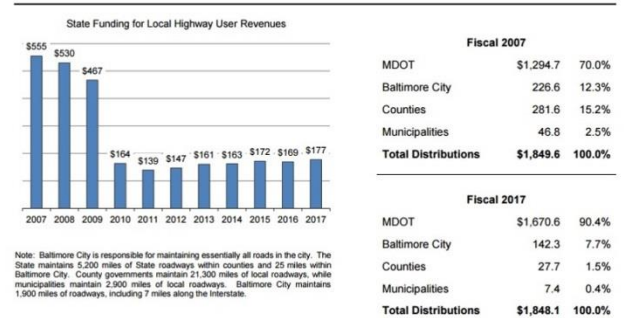
HB 458 – Congressional Legislative Redistricting and Apportionment Commission

In 2015 Governor Hogan formed the bipartisan Maryland Redistricting Reform Commission. The Commission traveled across the state to receive input regarding how to create more appropriate districts and to determine a non-partisan way to draw the lines. Most of the Commission’s recommendations were compiled into HB 458, Governor Hogan’s proposed bill to help draw the lines fairly and to better establish the rules for drawing the boundaries.

Unfortunately, the bill did not pass, but it did draw considerable support from Common Cause and other groups who care about fair elections. One may ask why you should care about drawing lines. The impact is substantial since with more meaningful lines, Maryland residents can be represented fairly having representatives who understand and will stand up for the values in the district. This means that you won’t have your vote drowned out by far-away, populous cities, or by communities who share nothing in common with you.

For Western Maryland, having fairly-drawn congressional lines would mean that we would no longer be silenced by the extremely-liberal, large voting bloc in Montgomery County. For Frederick County, they could be combined with similarly rural areas, rather than being forced to fight against a highly-urban slice of Montgomery County. Communities all across Maryland could finally be combined in a common-sense manner, correctly representing the people of Maryland.

Counties and Municipalities Receive Small Share of Highway User Revenues (\$ in Millions)



HB 1270 - House Legislative Districts - Single Member*

This year I reintroduced a bill I had filed previously to change the number of delegates per legislative district. Maryland is only one of two states (West Virginia being the other) that can have more than two delegates per district. In Maryland Delegate Districts can be single, double, or triple districts inside of a Senatorial District. Single member districts would promote direct representation for the constituents, as well as closer ties and easier communication. Unfortunately it did not pass out of committee. I will continue working towards this goal, as I believe it would greatly benefit the Maryland election system, as well as my local constituents.

BILL #1 HB1389 - Show an ID when you vote*

Elections have consequences, and we need to make sure that each Maryland citizen gets one, and only one, vote. Every fraudulent vote counteracts one honest vote and restricts your voice in your government.

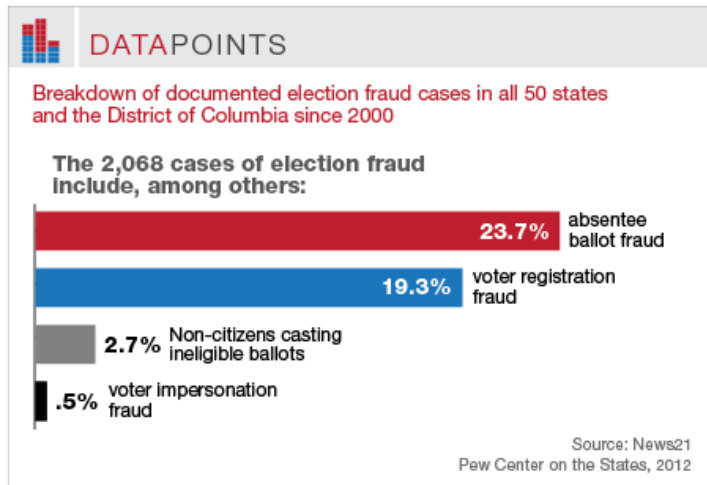
Several state legislatures have adopted laws requiring voters to show identification at the polls. The bill I introduced this year would require every voter to show a photo ID when voting. For those who do not have a photo ID, the law provides that the MVA will provide an ID free-of-charge when needed for voting.

The bill made the point it needed to make. Even though every Democrat rejected this bill, this bill started the discussion. Along with many others, I will continue to try to help Maryland have more secure, fraud-free elections.

HB1390 - for new voter registrations, US Citizenship should be checked*

Right now, the only check in Maryland as to whether someone is a legal citizen or not is that the person registering to vote checks a box which says, 'I attest that I am a legal citizen.' The election board is not allowed to try to verify this citizenship claim, even though that would be very easy to do.

In Maryland, there were reports that several illegal aliens, people knowingly breaking our laws, were registered to vote. Election Integrity Maryland compiled actual data showing that many illegal aliens were registered to vote in Maryland, and dispersed that information to the public. They approached me with this information, and asked me to help by introducing a bill. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass, but I plan to work with the election board and the Hogan Administration to see if there are other ways to accomplish this common-sense goal.



HB1007 -Freedom to Vote Act

This bill requires many new state agencies to implement electronic voter registration processes on or before July 1, 2017. I voted against the bill because it costs too much money to implement.

This bill is, though, a much better bill than was originally proposed. The original bill would have automatically registered all drivers' license holders, welfare recipients, and other people interacting with Maryland Government to be automatically registered to vote. Now the bill requires many agencies to ask people if they would like to vote and helps them register quickly, but does not register them without their knowledge or against their will unless they somehow knew to opt out of the program.

SB 340 - Election Law - Felons Voting

This bill allows a person convicted of a felony to register to vote before finishing their sentence. They cannot vote from jail, but are not allowed to vote while still serving parole and probation. Under current law, once a convicted felon has served their court-ordered sentence, including any terms of parole and probation, their voting rights are restored. Current law makes sense, but his law goes too far.

This bill was passed in 2015 and was then vetoed by Governor Hogan. Unfortunately, the Maryland General Assembly overturned the Governor's veto this session, and felons still serving time will be voting in this years' presidential election.

SOCIAL:

HB 1449 -Food Stamps*

Currently, there are millions of "Able -Bodied- Adults- Without- Dependents" (ABAWD) receiving food stamps in the United States. I'm not sure about you, but I would hope that our government would institute laws to encourage people to become self-sufficient.

Previously in the United States, in order to get food stamps, you had to give evidence of working, being in a work project, or volunteering 20 hours/week. HOWEVER, since 2009, when President Obama issued the work requirement waivers for ABAWD's, the requests for food stamps increased nearly 150%, from nearly 2 Million to almost 5 Million.

My bill, HB 1449, mandates that Washington County residents may not apply for a Federal waiver of the 3-month time limit on the receipt of benefits under the Food Stamp Program.

We cannot control the National Food Stamp policy, but we can try to help encourage Washington County Residents become self-sufficient. This bill received support from the Commissioners and the Washington County Delegation.

While the bill did not pass, the goal of the bill is now in effect. Right before the hearing, we received notice that Washington County no longer qualifies for the waived work/volunteer requirements which my bill would have put back in place. As of April 1, those requirements are back in effect. Any ABAWD food stamp recipient who does not meet the requirements stated above will no longer qualify for food stamps after a period of 3 months.

SB 418/HB 404 –End-of-Life Options (Dr. Assisted Suicide)

Last year, the so-called "Death with Dignity" bill did not make it out of committee for a vote. The Bill was re-filed this year – pretty much unchanged – but with a new title: "The End of Life Options Bill."

This was still a very bad bill, and a dangerous one for Maryland citizens. My objection to the bill is that we should be focusing on how we can better care for those in pain, and to help ease their pain – not by killing them, but by the use of cutting-edge medical and palliative options. Beyond the cost of the actual life, this concept also poses a significant risk to our most vulnerable populations: the disadvantaged, the disabled, those suffering from mental disease or depression, and the elderly.

The good news is that the Senate version of the Bill was withdrawn, after a contentious hearing, which demonstrated significant opposition to the Bill. On the House side, the Bill again did not make it out of the Joint Committee.

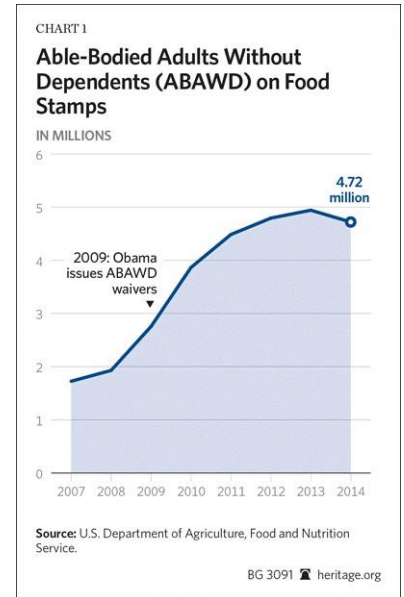
HB 1003 – Equal Pay for Equal Work

This bill mandates the formation of a brand new commission and a new level of regulatory oversight for Maryland employers. The law says that gender – or gender identity – may not form the basis for discrimination in pay. The title "equal pay for equal work" is a splendid idea – and one that we can support! Unfortunately, that is not all this bill does.

The bill is terrible for business, and will mean that more businesses would rather operate in West Virginia or Pennsylvania. Data has been used to show that women earn less than men, but the reasons why are in dispute. Even so, this bill sets up a state wage-dispute arbitrator, where anything less than wage uniformity can count as evidence of the prohibited discrimination. No longer may Employers offer increased wages as incentives to the most promising employees without fear of answering to a brand new Commission – The Equal Pay Commission. This commission adds yet another level of bureaucratic oversight to wage decisions, pressuring employers towards uniform wages for all – regardless of the local wage rates, costs of living, or individual merit. This doesn't make sense and will hurt Maryland's employers, employees, and Maryland jobs. I voted against this bill.

HB 580 - Labor and Employment - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act

This bill would have required almost all of Maryland's employers to provide up to 56 hours of paid sick leave for any employee - even those employees who work part-time. The bill also applied to seasonal workers who are employed for only 120 days during the year. If the employee does not use the time in a given year, employers would have to allow them to



carry over all of their annual unused leave into the next calendar year. The bill also requires a cumbersome amount of documentation for employers and employees.

While the bill has good intentions, in its current form it would have been devastating to Maryland's small businesses and would hurt the very employees it is trying to protect. With so many businesses operating under the narrowest of margins, particularly with the skyrocketing cost of health insurance, forcing yet another mandate on them would only lead to reductions in work hours, reductions in benefits, reduced compensation, and even layoffs. As they adapt their business models to survive under this law, employers who currently offer vacation or other leave time are very likely to replace that time with this paid sick leave that is being forced upon them - so many workers will actually lose time, rather than gain it.

I voted against this bill in the House, and thankfully the bill was stopped in the Senate this year.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL:

HB 779 - Alcoholic Beverages - Washington County - Local Penalties

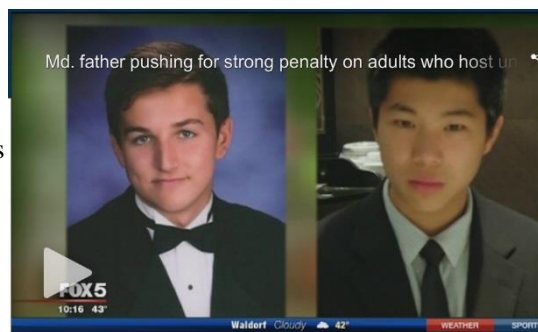
I introduced this bill that allows the Board of License Commissioners of Washington County to impose a fine not exceeding \$200 on an employee of a holder of an alcoholic beverages license in the County if the employee violates a specified provision of law. Current law only allows fees to be imposed on the business owner, but this bill would create a larger incentive for employees not to serve to minors. This bill has passed into legislation this session.

SB 564/HB 409 – Providing Alcohol to Underage Drinkers

When going to a party as a teen, did your parents ever ask you if your friend's parents would be there? This year in the Judiciary Committee, I heard some of the most jarring testimony I have heard while serving in the House of Delegates from parents of teens who asked that very question.

On the night of June 25th, 2015, Alex Murk and Calvin Li both received permission from their parents to attend a party hosted by another parent, Mr. Saltzman. At the party, alcohol was served. In an effort to "help" the students get home before a midnight driving curfew, Mr. Saltzman had the students leave at approximately 11:30 PM. About 15 minutes later, a car driven by a student crashed into a tree taking the life of both Alex and Calvin.

Currently, the adult who serves minors in their home gets a slap on the wrist - up to a \$2,500 fine is possible for cases which result in death. Thankfully this bill passed and changes that. Now an adult can be sentenced up to a \$5,000 fine and up to a year in jail when they serve alcohol to minors, should have known they would be driving, and a serious injury occurs. I would have made the bill more stringent than the one that finally passed, but it is a good start and serves as warning that jail time for parents could occur by serving minors alcohol.



SB 945/HB 1342 – Noah's Law

Noah's Law is named after Police Officer Noah Leotta. He had pulled over a drunk driver and was then hit and killed by another drunk driver. The bill passed, and in one of the most satisfying votes on the House floor, I voted "yes" to make Maryland the state with the toughest ignition interlock law.

Now, for a first drunk-driving offense, when someone blows 0.08 Blood Alcohol Level (BAC) or higher, or where they refuse to take a breathalyzer test, ignition interlock will be required for the driver, or they can surrender their license. Ignition interlock systems require the driver to test their BAC each time they start their car, and has proven to modify behavior by helping drivers to be more aware of their condition.

HB 183/ HB 777 - Marijuana Laws

As a result of the General Assembly overriding Governor Hogan's veto of SB 517 in the early days of session, smoking marijuana in a vehicle and in public places were decriminalized. During the debate on the veto override, the Democratic leadership acknowledged the problems the override created, but said they would address those issues. It was a classic "trust us, we'll fix it". The "fix" came as two bills that passed the House. These bills made both the public use of marijuana and the use of marijuana in a vehicle criminal violations.

As originally introduced, **House Bill 183 - Vehicle Laws - Smoking Marijuana in Vehicles - Prohibition**, would have dealt with both of these issues. Unfortunately, by the time that legislation reached the full House for debate, the House Judiciary Committee had removed the language from the bill that made smoking marijuana in a public place a misdemeanor, subject to a civil penalty. The bill passed the House making only the use of marijuana in a vehicle a criminal offense.

House Bill 777 - Criminal Law - Smoking Marijuana in a Public Place - Prohibition, introduced by Delegate Brett Wilson, and I co-sponsored, criminalized the use of marijuana in public places like the Ocean City Boardwalk, Camden Yards, Six Flags, and other locations where families gather.

Both of these bills passed the House, but unfortunately were not passed by the Senate. So, all of the murky legalities that the General Assembly created by overriding Governor Hogan's veto still exist. So much for "trust us, we'll fix it".

HB 1312 – Justice Reinvestment Act

In a move heralded as a major reform of Maryland's criminal justice system, one of the major pieces of legislation to pass the General Assembly this year was HB1312/SB1005, the "Justice Reinvestment Act." The basic idea behind the legislation is that we could save money if we incarcerated fewer people.



The bill reduces sentencing of criminals, it provides easier ways for criminals to reduce their jail sentence, and then it refuses to enforce parole and probation laws. The bill eliminates Maryland's mandatory minimum sentences for drug dealers unless they are "kingpins" with verified possession of over \$350,000 worth of crack cocaine. The dollar amount for various drugs varies, but we are only talking about excessive amounts of drugs.

There are a few good parts to the bill, which were add-ons, really having nothing to do with the intent of the bill. These are, however, good changes to Maryland law and are as follows: 1) The penalty for second degree murder was increased from 30 years to 40 years. 2) The penalty for child abuse that results in the death of the child increases from 40 years to life. 3) Maryland adopted "RICO" (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) language to target high-level drug traffickers. 4) The prosecutor can double the maximum sentence for a drug felony if the defendant has a prior conviction for a violent crime.

Unfortunately, the good doesn't come close to overcoming the bad in this bill. In my opinion, the end result will be a less-safe Maryland for law-abiding citizens. For the vast majority of crimes, including some violent crimes, sentencing is reduced. Violations of parole do not subject the offender to the re-imposition of the original sentence. Instead, warnings are issued and minimal amounts of jail time are issued that increases with each violation. Drug-possession penalties are capped at no more than a year for a 1st offense; up to 18 months for a 2nd or 3rd offense; and up to 2 years for 4th and all subsequent offenses. On the House floor a prominent Prince Georges County Democrat indicated how appalled he was that we would treat drug dealers so lightly.

To make matters worse, several member added intentional language to the bill to reduce the likelihood that illegal aliens, who commit crimes, would be deported. The bill reduced the sentence for misdemeanor theft in the amounts of \$100 to \$1,500 to no more than 6 months jail time. The bill had originally been amended to 360 days, rather than 365 days, expressly for the purpose of enabling illegal aliens, or someone on a green card, to escape deportation. Sentences of one year or more trigger deportation proceedings. In the final bill they reduced the 360 days to 6 months in an apparent effort to make the non-deportation goal less obvious, while keeping the harmful impact.

2ND AMENDMENT RIGHTS:

Thankfully, two bills that would have significantly reduced Marylanders 2nd Amendment rights were stopped. The first, HB 1000, involved not allowing a Marylander to purchase a handgun if their name was on the terrorist watch list. This might sound reasonable except for the fact that anyone could be put on that list without due process of law, it is hard to get off the list, and officials couldn't even tell you why you weren't cleared to be able to purchase a firearm.

The second bill, HB 1002, looked like it was going to pass, but thankfully on the last day of session was stalled in the Senate. HB 1002 would have made all public institutes of higher learning, "firearm-free zones." Although this may also sound like a good idea at first, individuals who plan illegal shooting rampages on college campuses rarely pay attention to applicable gun laws or weapon-free zones. Therefore, this effectively means that no law-abiding citizen will have a firearm on a Maryland college campus with which to defend themselves and others.

Thankfully, the Maryland General Assembly did not pass this law to set up zones where crimes will be easy to commit. Perhaps they heard from the NRA which has indicated that, “The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” The nation of Israel knows this and trains all young citizens with firearm training to fight against terrorism. While we won this battle, I will continue working in the General Assembly to defend our 2nd Amendment Rights.

OTHER BILLS:

HB 0878 –MHEC – Religious Educational Institutions – Authority to Operate*

This fall, a Washington County college, Antietam Bible College (ABC), approached Senator Andrew Serafini and myself about how their enrollment has been significantly hurt by the restrictions of a bill passed in 2013. They indicated that they couldn’t continue to operate well without offering basic, important classes.



Senator Serafini introduced a bill in the Senate to correct the problem. To help get the bill passed quickly, I then introduced the cross-filed bill in the House. The bill would take away the restrictions on general education classes for institutions like ABC. Thankfully, both bills passed in their respective Houses. The change will help ABC, and others like them, to fulfill their mission to fully equip ministers to positively impact and affect our communities in the state of Maryland and around the world.

HB 0871 - Duty to Defend*

For the third year in a row, I introduced a bill outlawing duty-to-defend provisions in construction contracts, unless the defense arises out of a claim alleging that the one defending the claim was actually at fault. This year, the bill passed and thankfully this unfair business practice has been corrected.

HB 870 – Establish Black Fly Program*

Introducing this bill for the second year, the bill passed and, contingent on funding in next years’ budget, the Department of Natural Resources will establish a program to control the spread of black flies in the State beginning with a pilot program in Washington County.



Thankfully this bill passed this year and residents of Southern Washington County may soon see relief.

HB1377 – Real Property - Vacant and Abandoned Property - Expedited Foreclosure*

If you are like many Marylanders, you may have a foreclosed sign on one or more houses in your neighborhoods. HB 1377 provides for expedited foreclosure of vacant and abandoned properties, establishing that it is the Secured Party’s responsibility for general upkeep of that property, pending foreclosure. Essentially, this bill would force the banks, who hold the loan, to take care of the foreclosed property. Currently, many foreclosed properties have fallen into disrepair, bringing down the value of neighboring homes. Since the properties are owned by the bank, it seems reasonable that they should be held responsible for maintaining the property in an appropriate manner.



The banking industry, as expected, opposed this bill, and it did not come out of committee. Even so, the bill had a positive effect since the Environment and Transportation Committee has ordered an interim study to be done to evaluate the property sales problem. Having gotten their attention, hopefully the committee and I can work toward solutions that can help ease this troublesome situation.

HB1376 - Health Insurance - Coverage of Air Ambulance Transport Services*

Many Washington County residents have been billed over \$40,000 to take a critical care life-flight from Meritus Hospital to other, more urgent care centers. The patients had no choice and had no idea that insurance would not cover the costs of the flight.



HB 1376 proposed the requirement of insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations that provide specified health insurance benefits under specified insurance policies or contracts to provide coverage for specified air ambulance transport services.

Thankfully, just minutes before my hearing the MD Insurance Commission announced a significant agreement between private helicopters and Meritus to provide the vast majority of flights with insurance now covering the cost. While the bill itself did not pass, the legislation helped make an impact that will help Washington County residents for years to come.