

February 2015 Newsletter

Hello all. Well, I have completed a full month here at the State House and, I have to say, this is one exciting place to be; both, because of the great atmosphere here and because I feel like some real good can be done. For me, it has been not only a great time; but also learning experience. Over 1000 bills have been introduced this session, several of which I will highlight below. Of course, I am still focused on issues concerning District 12 and I have been doing my best to make it to community meetings and events as often as I can. There are several upcoming events in our community, which I will also highlight below.

LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

I am the primary sponsor of two bills. They will soon be scheduled for hearing in the Ways and Means Committee, of which I am a member:

HB 452 will create a task force to examine the impact of testing on instruction in public schools. As a teacher, I feel it is critical that we take a careful look at how much time and effort is taken from instruction in order to test the effectiveness of that very instruction. I also think we need to make sure the testing we do is focused on improving and informing instruction, not merely on creating numbers for the media to trumpet.

HB1088 is an election law bill that will create a definition on contributions that will help to prevent the hiding of money used in helping a candidate get elected from campaign expenditure reports. As a candidate that ran a mom and pop campaign that used modest funds collected mostly locally, I feel that big money needs to be controlled in elections and be used transparently.

Meanwhile, the Governor's proposed budget has put several positive initiatives in our state at risk. First, the unnecessary cuts to the education budget of over \$144 million will cripple programs around the state leading to larger class sizes and diminished facilities for our students. Maryland is ranked among the top states in education, and business leaders agree that it is the strong and educated workforce we produce that makes our state attractive. We can't risk the quality of our education or our economy. Check out this website for an in depth look at what these budget cuts will do to our state's education: dontshortchangemaryland.com

Aside from the budget cuts, the Governor has enacted rollbacks on Chesapeake Bay preservation measures. These rollbacks, coupled with his push for fracking, are counter to Maryland's commitment to maintaining its natural resources. Our environment must be kept healthy for our health, quality of life, and economic interests. I have co-sponsored a bill that will create a moratorium on fracking, as well as a bill that will keep the phosphorus monitoring tool in place.

AROUND THE DISTRICT

There are several projects and programs of interest in District 12. Among them are two Beltway improvements: one is the widening of the stretch between Route 40 and Frederick Rd. While this may cause some disruption, it also includes construction of badly needed sound walls for this community. There is a public hearing:

Tuesday, February 24, 2015
Western School of Technology – Cafeteria
100 Kenwood Avenue, Baltimore MD 21228
Time: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Formal Presentation at 7 p.m.

The proposed improvement to expand the interchange at Southwestern Blvd. will make life easier for commuters, by directing traffic out of downtown Arbutus. I am a proponent of this plan and I will push to make sure that it's funding remains in the budget.

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Clarence Lam, Terri Hill, and I, the three musketeers of District 12, have missed the routine of attending community meetings since the start of Session. To that end, we have scheduled two town hall meetings to inform you about what's going on in Annapolis and to address your questions and concerns.

- 1) Thursday February 26, 2015 at 7:30 pm**
Kahler Hall,
5440 Old Tucker Row, Columbia, MD 21044

- 2) Tuesday March 10, 2015 at 7 pm**
Arbutus Branch of the Baltimore County Public Library,
855 Sulphur Spring Road, Arbutus, MD 21227,

Best,



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