



DELEGATE ERIC EBERSOLE
DISTRICT 12

THE CONNECTION:
LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER -
Mid-Session 2017

**PERIODIC NEWSLETTER TO KEEP YOU INFORMED AND UP
TO DATE WITH POLITICAL HAPPENINGS IN
ANNAPOLIS AND IN HOWARD AND BALTIMORE COUNTIES**



**OVERCOMING
OPPOSITION:
FRACKING BAN &
CLEAN ENERGY JOBS**

THE TRUST ACT

**A FEW OTHER
CONCERNS -
THREE E'S**

**SOME OF MY SESSION
LEGISLATION**



OVERCOMING OPPOSITION:

Fracking – This year, we have legislation pending to BAN horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing (aka fracking) as a means to extract natural gas from the Earth. The arguments against fracking are clear. The dangers to drinking water and the surface environment are well documented. The mail I receive, both from our district and from the potentially impacted areas of Western Maryland, are uniformly against allowing this practice here in our state. The long term value of beauty and tourism far outweigh the perceived short term benefits of this gas extraction. The only mail I receive in favor comes from fossil fuel business interests. There is some debate as to whether we should pass another moratorium or an outright ban. In the short term, they are the same, but in the long run, a moratorium requires action for continuance while a ban would take much more deliberate and supported action to overturn. I support the ban. We need to make our future safe from this environmental danger. This legislation is moving along nicely. Here is a link to the legislation and to its progress.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb1325&stab=01&ys=2017RS>

Clean Energy Jobs – We did it! More clean energy for Maryland. Despite Governor Hogan’s veto of this legislation, we felt clean energy and the jobs that will last for generations that come with it were worth the fight. The legislature overrode his veto of this forward looking legislation in the early weeks of the 2017 session. I voted for the override. This new Maryland law will require 25% of our energy to come from clean energy sources by 2020, increasing from this year’s 13%. I have introduced my own legislation as a complement to this which would add tax incentives for individuals and businesses that invest in clean energy production (more on this in the “my legislation” section below). This law not only moves Maryland to the front of the line for preventing climate change, it will bring in many new jobs in the clean energy industry. Here is a link to the 2016 legislation that is now law.



<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=hb1106&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2016RS>

THE TRUST ACT

I am a co-sponsor of Maryland Law Enforcement and Governmental Trust Act, an act that will help all Marylanders to feel safe and unhindered in their daily lives. This bill seeks to restore community trust in Maryland Law Enforcement by clarifying the parameters of local participation in federal immigration enforcement efforts. It will keep the law enforcers in our state focused on the important jobs they have been given by us, while leaving the enforcement jobs of the federal government to the resources of that body.



Let me be clear, this bill is not a "sanctuary" bill. This bill would not protect and harbor fugitives. It will not make Maryland a more dangerous place to live. It will do the opposite, by helping productive, tax paying individuals to live with less fear of our own law enforcement, and to safely be able to call on them to help keep our communities



stay safe. It clarifies the role of Maryland law enforcement officers and helps them better serve our communities. This bill will keep their resources from being stretched too thin. I am in support of this legislation. Here is the link--

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb1362&stab=01&ys=2017RS>

A FEW OTHER CONCERNS (ELECTIONS, EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENT)

Voter Registration - Registration is obviously the first and most critical step to getting people to vote. And in a democracy, we want to get as many people to the polls as we can. I am in support of two very good pieces of legislation that find ways to make sure people have the opportunity to vote by being registered. One gives the ability of an individual to register at the polls. We already have registration at early voting and no serious problems have been encountered. In fact, over 20,000 Marylanders registered and voted during early voting last November. This kind of access to the polls is what we need to encourage voters. Link to this bill:

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=hb0345&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2017RS>



I am also supporting automatic voter registration, which automates the registration process when residents use various state agencies, such as the MVA. This would register citizens at time of service unless they specifically opt out. Again, the first step to encouraging voters is to get them registered and informed as to where they can vote. Here is the link:

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb0741&stab=01&ys=2017RS>

Education - Testing and Vouchers (aka BOOST) –

I have co-sponsored HB461 to reduce the impact of **testing** in our schools. I fully support the bill to limit testing hours to 2% of instructional time. It is also important to note that measuring the impact of tests merely by the number of hours a particular student might test each year is not a fully sufficient measure. To that end, I have suggested an amendment to the bill that makes the Social Studies assessment a performance based assessment, allowing for less recall and short answer and encouraging in-class evaluation. I will support this and, down the road, other necessary legislation to make sure we have as much instructional time as possible to do the job of educating our students.



I continue to advocate against the BOOST program, which amounts to a voucher system. Scholarships, using public taxpayer dollars, were awarded to students last year to attend private schools. In the 2016 session, the Maryland budget included \$5 million for these vouchers. This appropriation was slipped into the budget at the eleventh hour in a manner that made it nearly

impossible to stop and was done in the face of the failure of such legislation in my committee, Ways and Means. Any program that pulls children out of their community will leave many more disenfranchised students behind. This bill was created to “boost” students away from underperforming schools - but 78% of the funds went to students who had already been enrolled in private schools in the previous year. And now, emboldened by the new presidential administration, the governor wants to double this commitment of public tax dollars to send students to private schools. I have advocated with the leadership in the House of Delegates to not only stop any increase on this misuse of taxpayer money, but to reverse this program and use this money where it should be used-- to improve our public schools.

Environmental Concerns – There has been an effort by the governor to claw back on some of the protections for oysters. Oysters are essential to the work of cleaning and preserving the Chesapeake Bay and thus, we have taken serious measures to protect this population. A Department of Natural



Resources survey, conducted recently, revealed higher levels of oyster reproduction and a lower mortality rate. Given that each adult oyster filters and cleans up to 50 gallons of water per day—gobbling up algae, and removing dirt and nitrogen pollution—that's good news for the health of the Chesapeake Bay *and* for us. We had seen the population decrease to single digit percentages of the historic population and our programs are responsible for beginning a

fledgling recovery. It is too early to dial back our efforts. House Bill 924 would prohibit the Department of Natural Resources from reducing or altering specified oyster sanctuaries until the Department develops a fisheries management plan for the scientific management of the oyster stock following completion of a specified study and reports. This is common sense information gathering before we stop or slow down a successful program.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?id=hb0924&stab=01&pid=billpage&tab=subject3&ys=2017RS>

SOME OF MY LEGISLATION:

Pre-Kindergarten - Good news on the Pre-K front. I have, in a team effort with Delegate Atterbeary, crafted and submitted legislation that will help guide the Kirwan Commission on the expansion of Pre-K across the state. The return on investment of one more year of schooling for 4 year olds is 400% (including 100% by the end of 12th grade). Our bill to gather more information about how successful we currently are in offering Pre-K to 4 year olds and about how well Maryland school systems could logistically handle an expansion of availability is proceeding smoothly through the legislature. I am pleased to report this bill has passed the House of Delegates, and is headed to the Senate.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&stab=01&id=hb0516&tab=subject3&ys=2017RS>

Campaign Finance – I have re-introduced a bill that seeks to limit the effect of the Citizens United decision on Maryland elections. This bill will reduce the ways that secret, corporate donors can affect our elections and limit big money in our campaign process. This bill will prevent



candidates from coordinating with “SuperPACS,” which are committees that can collect unlimited donations. The bill is getting some real traction and I think I have a good chance of success.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb0898&stab=01&ys=2017RS>

State Board of Education – Addition of Teachers and Parents – Another piece of legislation I have introduced would expand the State Board of Education by adding teachers (selected by an election among teachers) and parents (selected by the state PTA) as full members. In my 35 years of teaching, I saw many well intentioned policies that had very little chance of manifesting themselves in the intended way once they filtered down to the classroom. In many cases, I knew that teachers and parents could have predicted and informed the leaders of education of these differences as the policy was made. I would like to see these critical stakeholders, those who deliver the curriculum and those who receive it, represented on the board of education. We have had the public hearing, and now I will try to help it through the education subcommittee.

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb0590&stab=01&ys=2017RS>

Two Local Liquor Initiatives – Guinness and the Catonsville Gourmet

The former Seagrams plant on Route 1 in Halethorpe is getting ready for a facelift. The makers of



Guinness would like to turn the plant into the USA brewer of Guinness

Blonde and have a tour destination and brew pub there. We are enthused about the prospect of the physical improvement of the area, the tourism attraction to the area, and, of course, the JOBS that come with the

construction and the subsequent daily operation. We have to make a change in local liquor laws to pave the way for this. I am working closely on this

with my colleague, Delegate Brooks. We want to make sure this project goes forward while ensuring that long standing, existing local businesses are not negatively impacted and can remain viable. I believe we can do both and have offered several amendments to refine the effort appropriately

Catonsville has a rich restaurant row. Many years ago, the **Catonsville Gourmet** was one of the initiators of the restaurant renaissance when they created their upscale eatery in the old Muir’s Hardware building. They could, however, never serve liquor due to their proximity to the Salem Lutheran Church. With the blessing and encouragement of that church, I have been able to produce legislation that would help to put them on equal footing with the other fine establishments further down Frederick Road. The legislation has cleared several major hurdles and I am hopeful that you will soon be able to order a glass of wine at your table there.

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU:

As always, I love hearing from my constituents- whether you have opinions on any legislation, have an idea for a bill that should be introduced, or need help with any government agency, please feel free to contact my office any time.

Best,

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