DELEGATE ERIC EBERSOLE

DISTRICT 12

THE CONNECTION: LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER - END OF SESSION 2016

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

SECOND SESSION INSIGHTS

NEW INTIATIVES AND WORK

CAPITOL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DISTRICT

KEY LEGISLATION OF INTEREST

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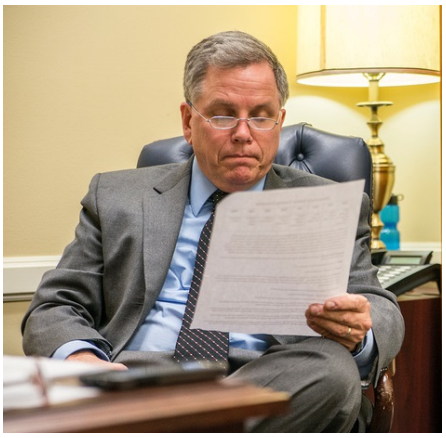
DIGGING DEEPER IN MY SECOND SESSION:



Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you as your State Delegate and representative in Annapolis. The 2016 legislative session concluded on April 11th, 2016, and it was a very productive session in many ways. A special thank you to everyone who emailed, called, wrote letters, attended town halls, or came to Annapolis to speak to me about legislation that mattered to you. This year, my office was contacted by more than 2,000 people on more than 50 different topics, and my staff makes sure that I am aware of the opinions and thoughts of my constituents. Your input is incredibly valuable to me as I make decisions on laws that will impact our lives.

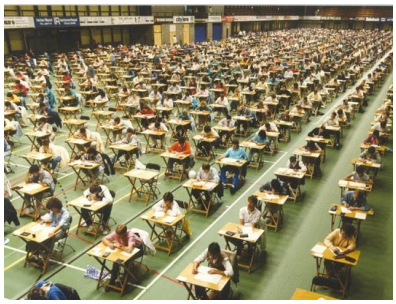
In my second year, I found that I was able to contribute to the workings of the general assembly not just through legislation that I wrote, but by assisting other delegates with their bills. I was appointed the chair of the conference committee to work out the differences between the House and the Senate on a bill legalizing what's known as "home games." This bill means that it is no longer illegal for friends to play a card game or mah jong for a small pool of money in their homes or in senior living centers. I was glad to have the opportunity to help this bill become law. Additionally, I offered some key amendments to a bill establishing the Maryland Education Development Collaborative that I believe make the final law much stronger.

NEW FOCUSES AND FUTURE CONCERNS:

While a few of the smaller pieces of legislation that I authored this year passed, there were several key bills that were not successful and I am committed to trying again next year. One bill would make a small change in liquor license laws to help a restaurant in my district obtain a license to sell alcohol and remain competitive with neighboring establishments.

Another is very important campaign finance reform that would help to limit the effects of the Citizens United decision on state elections.

Finally, I will also re-introduce a bill next year that will reduce the role of standardized testing scores on teacher evaluations.



Standardized testing remains a very important issue for me; last year I created the Commission on Assessments and Testing through

legislation, and was then appointed as a member. We are continuing to meet and discuss the impact of standardized testing in Maryland schools. I anticipate that there once the commission has finished its work, I will be submitting additional legislation based on the commission's recommendations.

CAPITOL PROJECT MONEY FOR OUR COUNTIES:

I was very pleased with the outcomes of the bond bills that I sponsored with Senator Kasemeyer and Delegates Hill and Lam. Together, we helped the Good Shepard Services center earn $100,000 in capital funding. Good Shepherd Services is a residential, non-profit center for adolescents with severe behavioral and emotional problems, and the bond money will help them with the construction of a simulated life skills setting. Their patients will have more opportunity to gain real-world life skills and develop college or career readiness upon discharge. The Arbutus Volunteer Fire Department was awarded $130,000 in bond funds to improve their facility for their members while on duty. These improvements will include kitchen, fitness center, and bathroom upgrades, as well as operational area improvements. In Howard County, the Community Action Council, a provider of programs and services to low-income residents of Howard County, received $100,000 to help expand their food bank facility. The Vantage House Retirement Community also received $69,000 for renovations and improvements.

KEY LEGISLATION AND INITIATIVES BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

There were several other key pieces of legislation this year that were very important to my constituents. I was thrilled to help pass "Noah's Law," which dramatically strengthens Maryland's drunk-driving laws. Named after Montgomery County Police Officer Noah Leotta, who was fatally injured by a drunk driver, the law will increase Maryland's use of Ignition Interlock devices to prevent repeat offenses of drunk driving.It will also increase the length of license suspensions for alcohol-related offenses.

Another bill that I was glad to see become law is the Justice Reinvestment Act. This is a comprehensive package aimed at reforming our prison and parole system. This bill has many

offenders. The bill will accomplish this by reducing sentences for lower-level drug dealers while strengthening laws for repeat offenders and high-level drug kingpins. The bill also encourages treatment over incarceration for drug users, and increases and improves supervision of those on parole and probation. It also contains significant oversight language to continually monitor this program and track the reforms started.

There were several very important environmental protection bills passed. One, The Pollinator Protection Act, will help protect our fragile bee population by banning the residential use of pesticides that are known to harm bee colonies. The Sustainable Oyster Harvest Act will study our oyster population and determine what threshold it must remain at for the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act sets our state on track to reduce our emissions from 2006 levels by 40% by 2030. Maryland is at significant risk from sea level rise, and this bill is essential to protect our ports.

The General Assembly also made significant efforts to protect middle-class Marylanders. The College Affordability Act, Maryland Small Business Retirement Savings Program and Trust, and a 2% cap on college tuition increases are all important new laws that will help Maryland families. We also passed Equal Pay for Equal Work, which will ensure that employers cannot discriminate in pay based on the employee's gender or gender identity.

There were two additional bills that did not succeed this year that would also have helped our middle class, and I hope that we will be successful in the near future. One of these bills, the Earned Income Tax Credit, would have been a $200 million tax cut for Maryland small businesses, the middle class, retirees, and working families, and you can count on me to continue to fight for this tax relief. The Earned Sick and Safe Leave Act would have helped the 700,000 working Marylanders who have no access to safe time away from their jobs without the risk of being fired. This bill would have prevented a single illness from devastating someone's economic future, and I believe that it is essential for the stability of our working families. Both of these bills are sure to appear again in our next legislative session, and I am confident they will pass soon.

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU:

Thanks again for your support and participation over the last 90 days. I am already eagerly looking forward to the next session. 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.
Please, stay in touch.
Best,

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