DELEGATE ERIC EBERSOLE
DISTRICT 12

THE CONNECTION: LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER - END OF SESSION 2017

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

THIRD SESSION REFLECTIONS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DISTRICT 12 INITIATIVES

STATEWIDE INITIATIVES

JUST BE GLAD YOU LIVE IN MD

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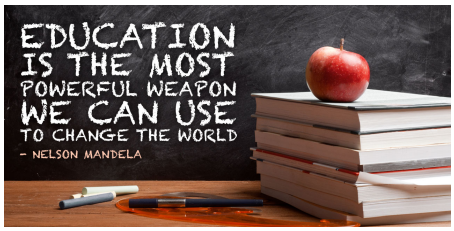
Reflections and Personal Legislative Accomplishments -

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your State Delegate and representative in Annapolis. The 2017 legislative session concluded on April 10th, 2017, and it was a very productive session. 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, we received 2,325 emails on 63 different topics, in addition to dozens of faxes and letters and hundreds of phone calls, 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.

I had a very successful third session of my term here. First, a bill that I have worked on for three years, House Bill 898, was passed by both chambers. This is a **campaign finance reform** measure that will help fight back against the Citizens United decision. This new law will give the State Board of Elections the ability to enforce the restrictions on SuperPACs, or independent expenditure only committees, when they coordinate illegally with candidates. I am very proud of this legislation and believe that it will have a significantly positive effect on the integrity of Maryland elections.

Additionally, I introduced three new **educational initiatives** that will become law this year. One of them, which I co-sponsored with my Howard County colleague Delegate Atterbeary, will direct the Kirwan Commission to study the implementation of **universal Pre-K** here in Maryland. This is a vital first step towards making a high-quality early education available to every child in Maryland, and I look forward to the results of the commission. I also worked with the Maryland **Developmental Disabilities** Council on the James W. Hubbard **Inclusive Higher Education Grant Program**. This wonderful program will award grant money to our local colleges and universities that create inclusive learning programs for Marylanders with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Finally, I was successful in teaming up with State Senator Nancy King on a bill that will align **fire drill requirements** in schools with the recommendations of the Fire Marshal. While this is a small change, my years of experience as a teacher have shown me what a disruption excessive drills can be for students and teachers and I am grateful that this will become law.



I also worked on legislation that will specifically impact our district. I sponsored a bill that made a small change in local laws to help a **restaurant in district 12 obtain a liquor license** and remain competitive with neighboring establishments. I am grateful for the support of my colleagues in the Baltimore County Delegation in assisting this small business in Catonsville.

District 12 Initiatives

I was very pleased with the outcomes of the bond bills for **capital improvements** that I sponsored with Senator Kasemeyer and Delegates Hill and Lam. Together, we helped the Community College of Baltimore County earn $250,000 in capital funding. CCBC will use these funds in the creation of turf fields. These fields will not only serve the CCBC campus, they will be used as home fields for the Western School of Technology and will be available to our local high schools for playoff events. Additionally, they will be made accessible to local recreational teams. In Howard County, the delegation worked together to secure bond funding for the following projects: The Harriet Tubman Community Center and Museum received $500,000; the Arc received a $300,000 grant to renovate their environmental education center; the Chrysalis Pavilion received $250,000 for construction; and Howard County Uplift received $25,000.

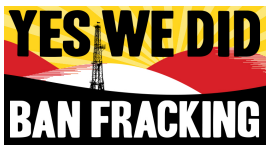
Additionally, I worked closely with my colleague Delegate Hill on a local bill that will reduce the sound levels in the area around **Merriweather Post Pavilion**. Many constituents have reached out to our offices about this issue, and I believe that this will be a very positive change for area residents.

Another major local issue in my district was that of brewery licenses, after Diageo announced that they would like to build a **Guinness brewery in Relay**. This exciting development required alterations of our liquor laws, and I am pleased that a compromise measure has been passed that will allow for this new project to be successful while protecting our existing small craft breweries. I worked hard negotiating between the parties, and I look forward to visiting the new brewery in District 12 soon!

Statewide Initiatives

On the statewide level, we saw significant progress this session on major legislation that has been in the works for years. First, the **Earned Sick Leave** bill passed and is on the governor's desk. This bill will allow employees to earn paid sick time from their jobs if they work at a company that employs at least fifteen people and they work at least twelve hours a week. This legislation will have a significant beneficial impact on the hundreds of thousands of Marylanders who currently have no access to paid time off of work. Workers will now be able to take time off to recover from illness or care for a sick child without fear that they will be unable to pay their bills if they miss a day of work.

Another bill that passed after years of discussion was a **permanent prohibition on "fracking,"** or hydraulic fracturing, that the governor has already signed into law. The fracking process has significant safety concerns for the environment and people's health, and I am proud that Maryland is the first state with proven natural gas reserves to ban this dangerous extraction process. This law will make our state safer and healthier, and I was proud to support it.



In addition to the fracking ban, other significant environmental bills that passed this session include continued protection for our oyster sanctuaries, a prohibition on the brutal hunting of **cownose rays**, and most significantly, an override of the governor's veto of the **Clean Energy Jobs Act**. The Act will increase the state's use of solar energy and increase in the total amount of clean energy required under the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard. I supported all of these measures.

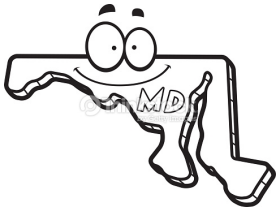
As always, I am very invested in education policy here in our state. As a teacher, I know how important our schools are and the many ways that policy influences student outcomes. I was pleased to support the **Protect Our Schools Act** and very grateful that the General Assembly was able to override the governor's veto of this essential legislation. The Protect Our Schools Act does two things: it changes how we measure a school's progress and performance by incorporating more factors than just test scores, and it protects struggling schools from forced privatization. Betsy DeVos is a strong proponent of school privatization, and I believe her agenda is the wrong path for our schools and students. I am proud of the school protections we created in this bill. We also passed a **testing cap**, that will limit the amount of time allowed for the administration of standardized tests to 2.2% of total instructional time, minimizing the disruption to the school day that testing causes.

The legislature also faced the growing **opioid crisis** with a package of bills designed to curb the impacts of drug addiction. New laws were passed that are designed to increase public awareness, encourage doctors to use best practices when prescribing painkillers, fund crisis care providers, and crack down on those who distribute fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that has led to many of the overdose-related deaths. I was glad to vote in support of these bills and grateful for the work of my colleagues in tackling this issue.

I was also very grateful for the work in the General Assembly towards **bail-bond reforms**. Last year, Maryland's highest court and the Attorney General decided that our cash bail system was unconstitutional, because it often meant that poorer people ended up with more jail time than the wealthy for the same crimes.

The bail-bond industry lobbied hard for legislation that would preserve their role in cash bond, and thankfully the legislature resisted their efforts and let the judicial opinion stand.

Just Be Glad You Live in Maryland



The General Assembly also dealt extensively this session with the effects of the recent presidential elections, and the policies of President Trump. We worked quickly to **remediate the adverse impacts that the President's decisions** could have on our state. The General Assembly passed a law that will protect funding for Planned Parenthood, no matter what happens at the federal level. We also authorized our state's Attorney General to protect Maryland citizens from damaging federal policies through The Maryland Defense Act. We passed resolutions affirming our state's opposition to the repeal of the Affordable Care Act and the significant loss of funding to clean and preserve the Chesapeake Bay. I will continue to fight back against any federal policy that will hurt our state and its citizens, schools, and environment.

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 hope that you will share your concerns and ideas with me. Please, stay in touch.

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