

# **GRASSROOTS** **BEAT**



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## **Legislative Session Wrap-Up** **April 2007**

**Dear Friends,**

I am writing to you as my first session as a member of the House of Delegates, representing District 21, comes to a close. I am very honored to serve you. The 2007 session was extremely rewarding. We managed to pass a lot of legislation this session. In this newsletter I will summarize some of the initiatives that passed this session. I appreciate all of the feedback I received from you in the form of emails, phone calls, and visits. I hope you will continue to contact me and provide me with ideas for legislation for the next legislative session. During the interim, you can reach me at my District office by phone at (301)-935-2580, or by fax at (301)-935-2625.

We managed to close a deficit of approximately \$444 million to balance the FY2008 budget, in part because we limit spending growth to just 2.1 percent this year, well below the inflation rate and the Spending Affordability Guidelines.

There were many important laws passed this session, particularly dealing with education, our environment, and public safety. Highlights include:

- Investing \$400 million in school construction
- Freezing college tuition
- Reducing Vehicle Emissions and combating global Warming with the new Clean Cars Act
- Taking measures to restore the Chesapeake Bay and native oysters

- Passing a living-wage law to full-time workers on state contracts
- Ending parole for child sex offenders with Jessica's law

## **JOSELINE'S INITIATIVES**

During this session, I worked hard to provide the best for our 21<sup>st</sup> District. I testified and voted in my Health and Government Operations Committee and on the House floor. I sponsored seven pieces of legislation and cosponsored nearly two hundred others. To make things easier to summarize, I have broken down some of this legislation into categories:

- Sponsored Bills Passed
- Health
- Senior's Issues
- Children's Issues
- Environment
- Public Safety
- Education
- Job/Economic

None of what I do would be possible without your voice, and I took it very seriously when considering this legislation.

### **SPONSORED BILLS PASSED**

#### **HB 250/276- Panhandling in Anne Arundel County**

During my campaign, the number one issue for voters in Anne Arundel County dealt with roadside solicitors, which were a distraction and presented safety problems for themselves and drivers. This bipartisan piece of legislation mandates a total ban on roadside solicitation and sign-waving in the County and is supported by County Executive John Leopold. The Bill passed the House and the Senate on April 4.

#### **HPV 1049- Establishing a HPV Vaccine Subcommittee**

This bill establishes, under the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Services' Cervical Cancer Committee, a subcommittee to specifically study the recently discovered HPV vaccine – including whether it should be made mandatory, its cost, and how it can best be integrated into our healthcare system. Cervical cancer, which can be caused by HPV, is a leading killer among women. This bill ensures that the HPV vaccine be thoroughly studied and focused upon. It passed the House unanimously on March 21 and the Senate on April 3.

### **HB 1137- Safe Patient Lifting**

This bill mandates that all hospitals establish a safe patient lifting policy. Injuries caused by the manual lifting, transferring, and repositioning of patients is the leading cause of disabling injuries for nurses. In fact, a nurse lifts an average of 1.8 tons per day, and as a result, suffers from cumulative musculoskeletal injuries and disorders. My bill, passed by the House and Senate and signed into law by the Governor on April 10, requires hospitals to establish a safe patient lifting committee, as well as a policy. These policies would include the use of mechanical equipment to facilitate the lifting and transfer of patients.

### **HB 1080- Maryland Education Fund\*\*\***

\*\*\*Though this bill did not pass this legislative session, it will be reviewed and studied by Economic Matters during the interim. In the State of Maryland, gift cards expire after four years. About 10% of the gift cards purchased goes unredeemed by customers. The retailers are keeping the monies. The proposed legislation is a reasonable and appropriate solution. This bill establishes the Maryland Education Fund and requires the retailers to turn the monies to the fund. It turns the retailers unjust windfall profit into a windfall for educational opportunity for Maryland Children. The fund may only be used to finance public

education. The fiscal note states that in the year 2012 we would get \$99.2 million dollars from expired gift cards.

### **CO-SPONSORED BILLS PASSED**

There were many important pieces of legislation which passed the 2007 session that I co-sponsored. Here are some highlights:

### **HEALTH INITIATIVES**

**HB 30-** Establishes an Oral Health Program within the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). In this program, DHMH's Office of Oral Health is required to award grants to local health departments, providing increased dental care for the underserved.

**HB 359-** Establishes the Clean Indoor Air Act of 2007, which imposes fines for smoking in non-smoking areas, including restaurants and other public indoor areas.

**HB 401-** Requires a Carbon Monoxide Alarm to be installed in a central location outside of each sleeping area within specified dwellings (i.e. family dwelling, hotel, motel, dormitory), constructed after Jan. 1, 2008

**HB 505- Gretchen's Law.** This bill replaces references to "service dogs" with references to "service animals" to conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The bill repeals the requirement of a disabled

person to carry identification under certain circumstances.

**HB 594-** Requires the DHMH to conduct a study and analysis of options available to increase access to long-term care services for individuals who are at a high risk of institutionalization and meet financial eligibility criteria.

**HB 1004-** Authorizing funds remaining from the Senior Prescription Drug Program to be transferred and appropriated to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for fiscal year 2008, in turn providing a grant up to \$425,000 to the Maryland Medbank Program.

**HB 1009-** Requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to establish the Task Force to Study the Developmental Disabilities Administration Rate Payment Systems.

**HB 1030-** Requires a wholesale distributor to hold a 2 year permit issued by the State Board of Pharmacy before he/she distributes prescription drugs or devices in the State.

**HB 1033-** Prohibits insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations that provide coverage for prescription drugs from imposing a coinsurance that exceeds the retail price of the prescription **drug**.

**HB 1046-** Requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in collaboration with the

DHMH, to provide awareness and training on self-mutilation for directors of student services in local schools.

**HB 1057- The Family Coverage Expansion Act.** Among other things, requires insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and HMOs (carriers) to allow a child dependent to remain on an insured's plan until age 25.

### **SENIORS' INITIATIVES**

**HB 599- The Baby Boomer Initiative Act.** Establishes a Baby Boomer Initiative Council to initiate a study documenting the economic and social impact of older workers' roles in the economy and in the community.

**HB 605-** Establishes the Statewide Empowerment Zone for Seniors Commission to recommend a plan to develop this type of program for Maryland.

### **CHILDREN'S INITIATIVES**

**HB 536-** Provides that a proceeding to establish the paternity of a dependent, disabled child may commence at any time before the child's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. The current law stipulated that this paternity test must commence before the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**HB 968-** Establishes a Post Adoption Services Pilot Program within the

Dept. of Human Resources to provide such services to adopted children and their families.

**HB1370-** I was honored to vote in favor of this bill to extend Maryland's Senior Prescription Drug Assistance Program and to improve its administration of a premium subsidy for its beneficiaries.

**HB 1372-** Requires the State Superintendent of Schools, in collaboration with DHMH, to establish and promote in schools a public information, awareness, and education campaign on inhalant abuse.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES**

**HB 131- The Maryland Clean Cars Act of 2007** requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), to establish a Low Emissions Vehicle Program applicable to vehicles in the 2011 model year. This legislation will curb auto emissions that contribute to global warming.

**HB 942-** Codifies the Maryland Green Building Council to advise the Governor and the Gen. Assembly on strategies on using green building technologies in State construction projects.

**HB 1016-** Requires that the Public Services Commission take steps to improve the state's use of solar energy.

#### **PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES**

**HB 611-** The State Aid for Police Protection Fund. Increases the finances available for states to ensure they have adequate police protection.

**HB 713-** The Maryland Gang Prosecution Act of 2007. Increases enforcement measures to prevent gang activity. Such measures can be taken by the Attorney General and activity in, or assistance to, gangs will result in harsher punishments.

#### **HB 785- The Cigarette Fire Safety Performance Standard Act.**

Prohibits cigarettes that do not adhere to certain self-extinguishing performance standards from being sold in the state of Maryland.

**HB 930- Jessica's Law.** Denies parole eligibility for a person at least 18 years old convicted of a first or second degree rape or sexual offense of a minor.

#### **EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

**HB 204-** Establishes a Task Force to Study the Cost of Textbooks for Higher Education, with the goal of reducing the financial burden of textbook costs upon students and their families.

**HB 275-** Enhances the State and Local Aid Program for Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Among other things,

increases from 750 to 1,000 the number of teachers who can participate in the program.

**HB 538-** Establishes a Dual Enrollment Grant Program to provide financial assistance to MD residents enrolled in high school and college and demonstrates financial need.

**HB 962-** Expands the conditions under which retired teachers and principals can be rehired without triggering a reduction of their pension payments.

**HB 1017-** Establishes a Parent-Teacher Association Matching Fund Pilot Program to encourage PTAs to raise funds for public high schools. Money raised by PTAs in Baltimore and Prince George's County, through either fundraising or private donations, will receive a dollar-for-dollar match from the State of up to \$125,000.

**HB 1325-** Authorizes the establishment of a Truancy Reduction Pilot Program in the juvenile court in Hartford and Prince George's Counties.

### **JOB AND ECONOMIC INITIATIVES**

**HB 136-** Establishes the Base Realignment and Closure Sub-cabinet for the State of Maryland to work with local governments and military installations to coordinate planning for the base realignment.

The Department of Business and Economic Development will provide staff support for the Sub-cabinet.

**HB 314-** Expands relief for discriminatory employment practices under the Maryland Human Relations Commission (MHRC). Such relief includes reinstatement, back pay, or compensatory damages, as determined by an MHRC law judge.

**HB 430- Living Wage.** It requires the State Contractors to pay their employees a "living wage" at \$11.30 in Montgomery, Prince George's, Howard, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Baltimore City Counties, and \$8.50 for rural regions. This bill has already been signed into law by Governor O'Malley.

**HB 1180- Unemployment Insurance – Schedule of Benefits.** This bill alters the unemployment insurance schedule of benefits to increase the maximum weekly benefit amount from \$340 to \$380.

**HB 1181-** Extends the termination date of the Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans from Dec. 1, 2007 to May 31, 2009. The task force must compile a final interim report by Dec. 1, 2008

**HB 1336- The 2007 Darfur Protection Act** mandates that business companies that hold actively traded accounts in their portfolios avoid actions that lead to human rights violations in Sudan.

This bill will be monitored by the Board of Trustees of the State Retirement and Pension System (SRPS).

*While we have officially adjourned, I have already begun preparing for the next legislative session. In the coming nine months, I dedicate myself to listening to your concerns and finding creative solutions to the problems facing our communities. Please contact me if you are interested in scheduling a meeting, sending an invitation to a community gathering, or want to share how you feel on any issue facing our state. Together, we can continue to make progress for our communities and for our state.*

*Thank you once again for the trust you have placed in me to represent you; please stay in touch about your priorities.*

*Joseline*