

# AnnapolisReport



Senator  
Norman R. Stone



Delegate  
Joseph J. Minnick



Delegate  
John A. Olszewski, Jr.



Delegate  
Michael H. Weir, Jr.

This year's General Assembly passed legislation affecting many areas of importance to Maryland's citizens. Our top priorities this session were to balance the State's budget while improving public safety, investing in education, protecting the environment, and creating jobs.

Although the economy is beginning to show signs of recovery, State revenues have not yet rebounded, forcing the General Assembly to again cut the State's budget. Overall, this year's budget is 2% lower than last year's budget and State General Fund spending is below 2006 levels. We continued to prioritize funding for education and not shift significant cost burdens to local counties, and we took prudent steps to ensure that Maryland is well-positioned, once the economy rebounds.

## TIGHTENING OUR BELTS IN STATE GOVERNMENT

The State does not deficit spend—the General Assembly must ensure that the State's budget is balanced every year. Over the last four years, \$5.8 billion in budget reductions were made, and it is the first time in 40 years that General Fund spending declined. The General Assembly made some tough decisions over the last legislative term while continuing to fund education, health care, and environmental programs for Marylanders. Here are some highlights from this year's budget:

- We maintained our commitment to K-12 education, one of the only areas in the budget to increase. Next year, the State will provide \$5.7 billion in education aid for teachers, textbooks, and other important education needs. This budget supports 849,000 public school children in Maryland. The General Assembly also provided \$250 million for school construction (\$1.25 billion over the last four years) to modernize facilities and provide the best learning environment possible for our students.
- We continued our commitment to higher education as well, providing \$1.2 billion in funding to our colleges, universities, and community colleges.
- We left **nearly \$830 million in cash reserves**, including the State's Rainy Day Fund. Maryland continues to be **one of only seven states in the country to retain the coveted triple-A bond rating**.

We are committed to continuing Maryland's record of fiscal prudence while working towards a full economic recovery. That's part of the reason why legislators rejected a pay raise, recommended by a citizen commission, for the next term. By 2014, legislative salaries will not have increased in 8 years.

## CRACKING DOWN ON CHILD PREDATORS

After the tragic death of 11-year old Sarah Foxwell on the Eastern Shore, lawmakers from both political parties came together to protect our children from the senseless acts of sexual predators. This year, we passed the most comprehensive package of sex offender laws ever.

New laws bring Maryland into compliance with the federal Adam Walsh Act and require homeless sex offenders and sex offenders convicted of indecent exposure and possession of child pornography to register with the Maryland Sex Offender Registry. The Registry will now include information on places of employment, other residences, and explain the crime in plain language. Maryland will also require lifetime supervision, including GPS monitoring, of serious and repeat sex offenders; increase mandatory minimum sentences from 5 to 15 years for second degree child rapists; and eliminate good time credits to reduce prison sentences for the most serious and repeat sex offenders. These laws are an important step forward in trying to prevent another child from being victimized.

## KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE FROM GANGS

Last year, Maryland residents were shaken by several horrific incidents of gang violence in schools across our State. The State Department of Juvenile Services reports that children as young as 10 years old are being recruited to participate in gangs in Maryland.

The Safe Schools Act of 2010 will improve communication between schools and law enforcement to keep our children safe, expand the types of crimes that law enforcement must report to school personnel if a child is arrested, prohibit a student convicted of a sex offense against another student from attending or riding the bus with the victim, and require the creation of a statewide model gang policy for school systems.

Other passed legislation will tighten up the State's gang laws to bring down gang kingpins in the State. Building on the Gang Prosecution Act in 2007, a gang member is now eligible to receive an additional sentence if convicted of other crimes in support of gang activity, and there are stiffer penalties for gang members convicted twice under this law or if death results in the commission of a gang crime.

### STIMULATING JOBS & THE ECONOMY

Building private sector confidence in the State's economy is a cornerstone to Maryland being one of the first states out of this global recession. The Job Creation Recovery Tax Credit program, which became law in March, offers a **\$5,000 tax credit to any Maryland business that hires a qualified unemployed Marylander**. The one-year program is capped at \$20 million, and \$250,000 per employer. This legislation may directly create 4,000 jobs.

Another successful bill supports an **income tax credit** for businesses and private citizens to create and sustain construction and design jobs in redeveloping historic structures and to support environmentally-friendly building standards.

An additional effort to support businesses during these tough economic times comes from a new Maryland Small Business Credit Recovery Program to **streamline the loan approval process for small businesses and expand access to credit**. This \$5 million program offers small businesses a loan guaranty through the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development to help stimulate small business growth and allow banks to provide much-needed capital for our small businesses. The General Assembly also unanimously passed legislation to allow small businesses to pay their property taxes in two installments instead of one lump sum payment, if the property tax assessment is under \$50,000.

The State continues to have a robust capital budget, focused on shovel-ready projects that put people back to work. **The State's capital budget this year and next year will support a total of 44,913 jobs in the construction industry.**

Under the **Maryland False Claims Act**, the State will now be able to recover the damages and penalties from individuals who defraud the State by filing false claims against State health plans and programs including Medicaid. This legislation is expected to recover million of dollars by cracking down on waste, fraud, and abuse in these public health programs.

In order to assist in the prevention of foreclosures, new law is designed to ensure that lenders and loan servicers comply with federal law that requires them to consider whether the terms of a loan can be modified in ways that avoid a foreclosure. Also, a

homeowner whose loan has not been modified must be given an opportunity to meet with their lender in front of a neutral third party familiar with foreclosure issues to try to work out a solution that avoids foreclosure or reduces its impact on the homeowner. The bill goes into effect July 1, 2010.

### YOUR HOME IS YOUR CASTLE

Maryland's "castle doctrine" law provides that in a criminal context, a person facing the danger of an attack upon his/her dwelling does not have to retreat from their home to escape danger, but instead is allowed to stand his/her ground and may kill the attacker if it is necessary to repel the attack.

**New law strengthens the castle doctrine by providing that a person is not liable for damages for a personal injury or death of an individual who enters the person's dwelling or place of business if the person reasonably believes that force or deadly force is necessary to repel an attack by the individual, and the amount and nature of the force used by the person is reasonable under the circumstances.**

### PROTECTING THE BAY & OUR WATERWAYS

Over the past several years, new laws have worked to clean up the Chesapeake Bay including passing legislation to create the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund, enhance

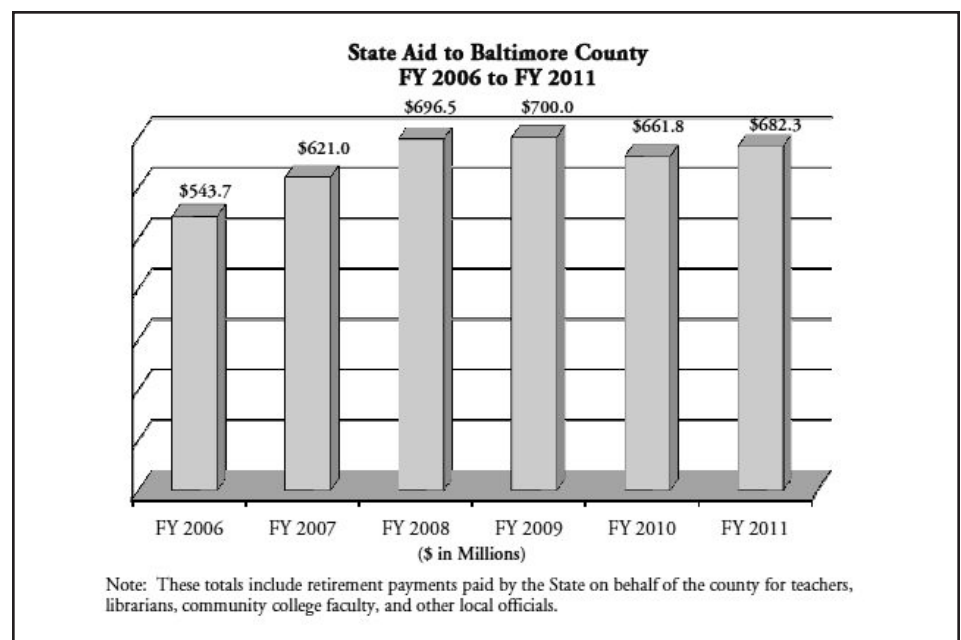
the Bay's natural oyster population, strengthen the Critical Areas law, and establish aquaculture enterprise zones to restore the Bay.

This session, the legislature **funded the Trust Fund at \$20 million** for the coming fiscal year, as well as retained a balance in the Fund for existing projects. We also fully funded assistance to homeowners in Critical Areas who must replace failing septic systems with modern, nitrogen-removing septic systems.

### INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

The best investment that we can make in our children is a quality education. That is why we continue to prioritize funding our schools in Maryland, even in the face of cutting and eliminating other programs. In addition to **providing a record \$5.7 billion in funding for public schools**, we passed legislation to accelerate reforms to the State education system.

**For the second year in a row, Maryland's public school system was ranked #1 in the nation by Education Week magazine.** The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) was ranked the #1 provider of undergraduate education, workforce development, personal development, technology training, and personal enrichment in the Baltimore metropolitan area by the Maryland Association of Community Colleges. Additionally, CCBC is nationally recognized as a leader in innovative learning strategies.





For four straight years, we have frozen tuition at Maryland public colleges and universities. After this record investment to make college more accessible and affordable, we passed the Tuition Stabilization Act this year and provided funding sufficient to cap in-state tuition growth at 3% for the 2010-2011 school year. This means that **tuition for Maryland universities will rise only 3% in five years** at a time when many states are seeing double-digit increases over the same period of time.

#### BALTIMORE COUNTY – DISTRICT 6

Local programs and services will continue to receive considerable State support with Baltimore County receiving \$682.3 million in State aid in fiscal 2011. This sum includes \$582.5 million in direct aid and \$99.7 million in retirement payments for county teachers, librarians, and community college faculty. Over the last five years, State funding for Baltimore County has increased by \$138.6 million or 25.5%, even though the State government was confronted with major fiscal challenges during most of this period.

**Education:** Since the General Assembly places a high commitment on adequately funding public schools and providing a quality educational program for all children, a large portion of State aid is targeted to public schools. In fiscal 2011, county public schools will receive \$525.8 million for

operations and \$29.0 million for school construction, including \$1.7 million for construction at Dundalk and Sollers Point High Schools.

The county library system will receive \$5.2 million in operating funds and \$500,000 for construction of the Sollers Point Library. The Community College of Baltimore County will receive \$36.3 million in operational grants. Towson University will receive \$52.7 million in State capital funds for various projects and the University of Maryland Baltimore County will receive \$50.1 million.

**Public Safety:** Police protection, fire, and rescue aid in the county will receive \$7.5 million in State funding to provide services for county residents. Funding is an important component in reducing crime whether it is on a local, State, or federal level.

According to data compiled and recently released by the Maryland State Police, Maryland's violent crime rate is at its lowest level since modern crime-tracking began in 1975. Similarly, total crime has declined to its lowest level since 1975. Maryland law enforcement agencies have also made great strides in the use of DNA analysis, and the State's backlog of over 24,000 DNA samples has been cleared, and the results have been used to make over 200 arrests.

**Quality of Life:** Local highway grants for the county will total \$1.2 million in fiscal 2011 and local Program Open Space grants

will total \$1.7 million. An additional \$19.8 million will aid enhanced nutrient removal at the Back River waste water treatment plant.

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**Senator Norman R. Stone, Jr.** is Senate President Pro Tem Emeritus, Chair of the Senate Baltimore County Delegation, and Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics. In addition to these leadership posts, he is a member of the Judicial Proceedings and the Legislative Policy Committees, and of the Veterans, Labor, and Taxpayer Protection Caucuses. In 2009, he was recognized by his colleagues with the prestigious First Citizen Award, given to Marylanders who have been dedicated and effective in making government work for the benefit of all. Senator Stone's community memberships include the Beth Council Knights of Columbus, Edgemere Moose, and he is also an active member of many other clubs and civic organizations. He is a lifetime member of the International Ironworkers & Local 16. He attends St. Luke's with his wife, JoAnne, and has four children and ten grandchildren.

**Delegate Joseph J. "Sonny" Minnick**, a lifelong resident of Dundalk, is a member of the Economic Matters Committee and its Subcommittees on Alcoholic Beverages; Banking, Economic Development, Science and Technology; and Workers' Compensation. He also serves on the Workers' Compensation Benefit and Insurance Oversight Committee and is Co-Chair of the Maryland Veterans Caucus. He is currently Chair of the Maryland Correctional Enterprises Management Council and a member of the Maryland Advisory Commission on Manufacturing Competitiveness. Delegate Minnick, a former Chair of the Baltimore County Delegation and a former Deputy Majority Whip, is a small business owner. He and his wife, Barbara, have three children and five grandchildren.

**Delegate John A. Olszewski, Jr.** serves on the Ways and Means Committee and on its Education and Election Law Subcommittees. He is currently Co-Chair of the Maryland Youth Advisory Council and a member of the State Plan for Postsecondary Education Work Group with previous memberships on the Task Force to Study Raising the Compulsory Public School Attendance Age to 18 and the Commission to Develop the Maryland Model for Funding Higher Education. Delegate Olszewski, a former high school history and government teacher at Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts and current resource teacher for the Baltimore County School System, remains active in many community and civic organizations. He and his wife, Marisa, are members of the Lovely Lane United Methodist Church, and live in Dundalk with their dog, Indy.

**Delegate Michael H. Weir, Jr.** serves on the House Environmental Matters Committee and its Subcommittees on Agriculture, Agriculture Preservation and Open Space; Environment; and Natural Resources. He is also a member of the Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area and Fire, Rescue and EMS, Sportsmen's, and Veterans Caucuses. He retired recently from Mike Weir and Sons Masonry, a family business. Delegate Weir is a retired Fire Captain, Baltimore County Fire Department, and continues to be an active member and officer of many local Democratic clubs, game and fishing organizations, as well as a member of the National Rifle Association, Elks Lodge 1866, and American Legion Post 148. He is married with two children and one grandchild.

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Your Legislators from District 6 • Baltimore County



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