

February 26, 2010

Greetings from Annapolis,

Week 7

One of last week's highlights was the presentation by _____ leadership of our budget proposal designed to make tough choices to limit spending this year, and for the next four years to eliminate our structural deficit (overspending by more than \$2 billion per year). We also want to roll back the massive tax increases of the 2007 special session. Those tax increases have contributed to Maryland's placement in the top 10 of states losing population, contrasted with Virginia being in the top 12 states gaining population. We have the 45th worst business climate in the country, a severe hurdle to overcome in attracting businesses to Maryland. Our proposal includes some reductions to the budget we believe can _____ made without severe cuts in actual services. Our major reductions included the following:

- Reducing University of Maryland travel by \$27 million (out of \$64 million)
- Eliminating 1,000 of the 2,800 new positions in the University of Maryland system - \$17.5 million
- Eliminating the Geographic Cost of Education Index - \$126 million (new program, only funded for one year)
- Instituting Average Daily Attendance for determining education funding, instead of the one day count—saves \$167 million—which eliminates paying for students not attending school
- Realizing savings from Medicaid audits of duplication _____ payment, etc. - \$195 million

If we do not reduce our budget in significant amounts this year and into the future, we will be setting ourselves up for massive tax increases following the election. Even the Democrats complimented us on the quality of the work we did and _____ ok note of the suggested reductions we made. We shall see if it carries forward in votes on the budget.

As it turned out, our presentation was overshadowed in the media by the various sexual predator bills being heard the same day. The recent death of a young child on the Eastern shore has heightened awareness of the problem. According to recent reports, the _____ on the books have not been enforced, which begs the question as to why we need more.

A third event was the release of the long-awaited Attorney General's opinion as to whether Maryland can or will recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. In his lengthy opinion, he lays out the ways such marriages may be recognized:

- 1) The General Assembly could enact such a law. Currently, Maryland law has established that "a marriage is between one man and one woman."
- 2) In the absence of such legislation, the Court of Appeals could decide that such marriages will be recognized in Maryland.
- 3) A State agency may also address the recognition of out-of-state marriages on particular matters within that agency's jurisdiction.

This opinion gives focus to how the Court of Appeals would apply various aspects of the law to recognize same-sex marriage. The question arises as to whether the Attorney General is usurping the people's body – the legislature – by giving advice as to how to avoid the legislative process. I am interested in your opinions on this issue.

Serving you in Annapolis,
Gail Bates