



Dear Neighbors,

The start of the new legislative session has arrived and we are excited to share with you what we hope to accomplish in the upcoming months. Our state faces a steep budget shortfall and an ever worsening economy, two big problems the legislature must address along with Governor O'Malley. Even in these tough times we are optimistic that we will have a successful session that will improve the lives of Prince George's County residents.

Please feel free to contact my office throughout the session if an issue is concerning you or if you would like additional information on our progress. I can be reached by calling 301-858-3652, by email at [justin.ross@house.state.md.us](mailto:justin.ross@house.state.md.us) , or via my website, <http://www.justinross.us>

Thank you for your support. We look forward to working hard for you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Justin Ross

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### **Fiscal 2010 Budget**

With a national economic crisis slowing revenues at the federal, state, and local levels, 2009 and 2010 are extremely lean for Maryland. We are currently facing a \$2 billion deficit for fiscal year 2010. Last week Governor O'Malley proposed a painfully tight budget of \$14.4 billion, or 1.3% less than fiscal year 2009. This is the first negative growth rate budget ever proposed in the state of Maryland.

While there are sure to be changes to the budget, the Governor's overall approach to our fiscal crisis continues to focus on preserving our priorities: education, healthcare, and public safety, while making tough decisions necessary to balance our budget.

### **Budget Highlights**

Education aid increases to a total of \$5.4 billion by fully funding teacher's retirement costs, a crucial component to attract Maryland's best and brightest to teach our children. While the budget contains just \$71 million in decreases in various programs, we have put over \$932 million of additional funding into K-12 education since 2007 along with \$1 billion in public school construction. It is this investment along with the dedication of our educators that led Education Week to rank our public school system #1 in America.

Medicaid funding totals \$5.7 billion in 2010 and we continue to fund the first phase expansion of healthcare benefits to low income parents. This means over 700,000 Maryland families will continue to have access to healthcare. The proposed budget includes more than \$22 million for school lunch and other nutritional programs for our children.

The Governor's budget also includes \$2.1 billion for public safety, contributing to a \$160 million increase over the last three years including fully funding police aid with an additional \$66 million. Maryland is one of only seven states in the country that provide a form of local police aid. As a result in 2008 we had the second largest drop in homicides since 1985.

We have asked state employees to make significant sacrifices including mandatory 2-5 day furloughs. They will not receive cost of living wage increases and may take cuts to benefits packages. In addition many have been asked to work longer shifts instead of overtime. Additionally, I have volunteered to furlough five days of my own pay this year.

Much of this year's budget will be about tightening our belts. We hope that everyone gathered in Annapolis will remember we are Marylanders first. Even in these lean times, there are opportunities to continue to make Maryland the best place to live, work and raise a family.

### **Delegate Ross' Proposed Legislation**

#### **Disability History and Awareness Month**

I am working with community leaders and groups that represent individuals with disabilities to bring about awareness of disabilities to students. If successful the legislation I have crafted will dedicate the month of October as a time for students to learn about various disabilities that may affect their friends and neighbors.

#### **Tobacco Tax Electronic Stamping**

In order to reduce the illegal sale of cigarettes from out of state sources, I will introduce a bill during this legislative session that would implement a sophisticated tracking system for tobacco products. This will ensure sales taxes are paid to the State which will increase revenues and help keep your taxes low.

#### **Tax Incentive Financing**

As we continue to see growth in our community we must allow our local businesses the opportunity to take part in the development process. In the coming weeks I will be introducing a bill that would require a 20% stake for local contractors in all development projects in Prince George's County that benefit from county funding. This law, similar to current law in D.C., will ensure members of our community are a part of our continued growth.

#### **Prince George's County Text Amendments**

In an attempt to make sure the text amendment process is as open to the public as possible, I have proposed legislation that would require all amendments be submitted during two open-submission periods per year. This is similar to current law in Howard County. Learn more about Delegate Ross' bills

#### **Scholarship Opportunity**

To apply for a delegate scholarship to help fund your higher education expenses please download the form online and send to our office. The form is available on Delegate Ross' website. Applications are due April 30th, 2009.  
Scholarship Forms

#### **Community News** **Anti-Truancy Initiative**

We'd like to report some positive news in the community! Due to strong efforts on behalf of parents, teachers, and others in our community we can report a significant drop in truancy in Prince George's County Public Schools. School Board District One Member Rosalind Johnson reports daily attendance is up to 91% for the 08-09 school year. We can all be proud of this success. If you see a truant student, please call the anti-truancy hotline at 301-333-4000.

#### Snow Information

If you need help with snow removal on your street, please visit the Prince George's County snow removal website by copying and pasting the following link into your browser:  
<http://egov.co.pg.md.us/snowtrack>

#### School Closings

For information on school closings please visit the Prince George's County Public Schools website.

By Authority Friends of Justin Ross, Jane Ross, Treasurer