



Legislative Update

Death Penalty in Maryland

The spirited debate over a repeal of the death penalty in Maryland came to a conclusion in the House of Delegates this week. Last month, the State Senate passed a bill that would restrict the use of capital punishment by creating a tough set of circumstances under which it would be applied. Yesterday, the House of Delegates voted to approve the legislation without amendments. I voted to restrict the death penalty to extreme circumstances where certain evidence must be presented at trial in order for the death penalty to be imposed.

The final outcome of this legislation is not what my colleagues and I set out to do, however, given the circumstances, I am pleased with the legislation that has passed. Governor O'Malley stated after the vote that Maryland will now have "*one of the strictest death penalty laws in the nation.*" As an opponent of the death penalty, I am pleased with what we were able to accomplish in Annapolis and I look forward to continuing this debate in the future.

Increasing Substance Abuse Services through Medicaid

I am excited to report that HB 739, which I am a co-sponsor and strong supporter of, looks like it is poised to pass the House. HB 739 will allow the state to greatly increase substance abuse services to the childless adults who are covered under the Primary Adult Care (PAC) program of Medicaid. Currently Medicaid, in particular the PAC program, provides very limited substance abuse plans which do not include counseling or other critical drug treatment services.

HB 739 increases substance abuse funding for this population by moving \$6.7 million from the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration (ADAA) to the Medicaid program. This transfer of funds will ultimately result in an increase of \$13.4 million to Medicaid, because state generated Medicaid funds are matched by the federal government. This bill is smart fiscal policy which aims to maximize the full potential of substance abuse funding by effectively doubling the money available to expand much needed services to adults.

DC United Soccer Stadium

Debate continues here in Annapolis over the fate of House Bill 1282, which would allow the Maryland Stadium Authority and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission to conduct an updated feasibility study regarding a possible stadium. The responses I have received thus far are overwhelmingly against the construction of a soccer stadium in the county (see result of last month's poll below.) I have voiced my concerns to my colleagues over how much this project might cost and how it might negatively affect our community. While I am willing to continue to listen to both sides as this debate continues, I must stress my reluctance for this project. For the record, I am not opposed to building a soccer stadium in Prince George's County in theory. I am, however, very skeptical of using taxpayer dollars to finance the project since public financing of stadiums has yielded mixed results nationwide.

Thanks to those of you who participated in the poll in the last Ross Report. I was pleased at how many of you responded. The results are as follows:

37% said you do not support building a soccer stadium in Prince George's County

36% said you support construction of a stadium if no tax dollars are used

12% of you said you want more information, and

15% said you fully support building a new stadium

Update on Homestead Tax Credit Percentage Increase

I want to thank all those who wrote my office with your comments and concerns regarding House Bill 979 / PG 414-09, which would have raised the property tax in Prince George's County. As you may know by now this bill received an unfavorable vote in committee. As a member of the Prince George's County House Delegation, I was glad to have the opportunity to vote against this bill.

Park and Planning Fund – MC/PG 127-09

This legislation, which I introduced last month in an effort to reduce Prince George's County's projected \$132 million deficit, has passed out of the Prince George's County House Delegation and will now be taken up in the full House. The legislation will divert \$60 million over two years from the Maryland Park and Planning Commission reserve fund (money already paid by taxpayers, but not spent) into the County budget with the aim of preventing a tax increase on Prince George's residents. [Click here](#) to read an article explaining how the

legislation will work. For additional information, read the full bill text here: [MC/PG 127-09](#).

Constituent Casework

My office is available to assist you with problems and needs that may arise in your community. Visit my [website](#) and let me know how I can be of service to you.

Scholarships

If you are interested in obtaining a House of Delegates Scholarship through my office, please visit <http://www.justinross.us/scholarship/ross/> and download the application. If you do not have access to the internet, you may call my office at 301-858-3652 to request an application. The deadline for submission is April 30th. Funds will be disbursed for the fall 2009 and spring 2010 semesters.

Community News

Help Keep Hyattsville Clean!

The City of Hyattsville will hold a community-wide trash and debris removal on Saturday, April 18 from 9:00 am – noon. If you wish to participate, please show up at one of the following sites at 9 am on the 18th:

Magruder Park

Melrose Crossing

University Hills Duck Pond/Lane Manor Park

First United Methodist Church of Hyattsville (6201 Belcrest Road)

Corner of Hamilton Street & Queens Chapel Road

Following the event there will be a Thank You Celebration with food, games and music at 12:30 at Watkins Park Ball Field Pavilion. For more information, contact the Office of Volunteer Services at 301-985-5057.

New Carrollton Earth Day Festival

New Carrollton will hold an Earth Day festival on April 18th from noon to 5:00 pm at Beckett Field. Come learn how being green can be easy, cheap and fun!

Tavern Night at Riversdale Mansion

Come join an evening of rousing entertainment on Saturday, March 28th at 8:00 pm at Riversdale Mansion. The Ship's Company Chanteymen will sing chanteys and tell sailor stories of the sea. Admission is \$20 for residents of Prince George's County. Attendees must be at least 21 years old.

Walter Reed Easter Baskets

Donations are requested for Easter baskets to be given out at Walter Reed Army Hospital. They are looking for plastic eggs, grass, and candy for the baskets. If you would like to know more or donate, please contact Milton & Linda McGehee at 301-559-0864.

Temporary Employment Opportunities

The US Census is hiring temporary workers for the 2010 census. For more information, visit www.census.gov or call 240-788-8040.

Additionally, the City of New Carrollton is hiring election clerks to work the polls on Monday, May 4th. This is a paid position. If you are interested, contact the City Clerk at 301-459-6100.

The Family Tree

The Family Tree has begun a public awareness campaign aimed at getting families to sit down together at the dinner table once again. The organization, a leading nonprofit in Maryland, states that 20% of children who eat regular meals with their families are less likely to drink, smoke, or use illegal drugs. Forty percent of those children are more likely to get A's and B's in school. If you would like more information on this organization, please visit www.familytreemd.org.

By Authority, Friends of Justin Ross. Jane Ross, Treasurer