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Dana
Stein
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

March 23, 2015

We're reaching a critical point in this year's session in Annapolis, and I wanted to share some of the latest developments. There's a lot of news to report!

Fracking

Hydraulic fracturing – otherwise known as "fracking" -- has been one of the most hotly-debated issues in recent years. Fracking involves the injection of high-pressured water, together with sand and scores of chemicals, into shale to release natural gas. There has been a de facto moratorium on fracking in Maryland for several years, as a Governor's panel reviewed whether fracking could be done safely.



Despite extensive study of the environmental impact of fracking, there has been a growing concern about the possible public health impact of fracking ([House Bill 449](#)). New York State recently banned fracking because of public health concerns.

In response, the House Environment and Transportation Committee (which I am vice-chair of) approved a three-year moratorium on fracking so that additional studies on the public health impact can be conducted. I strongly support this moratorium, as no drilling process should be conducted if we are not sure that the health of residents will not be compromised. Hopefully the General Assembly will approve this important legislation.

Budget

Last week, the House Appropriations Committee voted unanimously, for the first time in 12 years, on the Fiscal 2016 Operating Budget. The House of Delegates then approved the budget in a bipartisan vote.

As approved, the budget is substantially the same as introduced by Governor Hogan. However, the House did make some important changes. Below is a summary of the amendments made to the budget as voted on by the Appropriations Committee:

- Restores \$132 million of funding for K-12 education
- Erases 75% of our structural deficit without new taxes

- Avoids proposed salary cuts for State employees; and
- Restores funding for critical safety net programs;

Among the funding restored to critical safety net programs was \$4.8 million for community mental health programs and \$4.8 million for the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

Air Pollution from Coal-Fired Power Plants—"Healthy Air for All Act"

One of my bills, [House Bill 1042](#), is about the environment and public health. It reinstates an air pollution rule that Governor Hogan withdrew on his first day in office.

Millions of Marylanders breathe air that fails to meet EPA's air quality standard for smog. Central Maryland's smog pollution is the worst of any area east of the Mississippi River. Smog contributes to asthma and other respiratory ailments and is particularly harmful to children and the elderly. Hundreds of residents die every year from respiratory ailments made worse by smog and the public health care cost is tens of millions of dollars.

We know that Maryland's coal plants are a significant part of the problem. Many of these plants are over 50 years old and emit a large amount of nitrogen oxide pollution, which causes smog.

Because of Maryland's poor air quality, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) was required to develop new rules to limit nitrogen oxide (NOx) pollution from our coal-fired power plants. That plan was due to the EPA in July 2014.

My bill would reinstate the air pollution rule that MDE developed over 15 months of meetings with stakeholders. The rule is widely supported by public health, medical, and environmental groups and one of the affected power plant owners.

Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company Renovations

The Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company (PVFC) is one of the busiest volunteer fire companies in Baltimore County. Last year, it responded to nearly 3,500 fire and EMS calls. PVFC is one of the greatest community resources in my legislative district.

Because of growth in demand for its services and the age of its building, PVFC has a major lack of living space for its members. [House Bill 266](#) will provide assistance to PVFC to expand its facility and enhance its ability to serve the community. Renovations will also include a larger community meeting room that neighborhood organizations will be able to use.

2015 Financial Education and Capability Awards

I am co-chair of the Financial Education and Capability Award Commission, which helped establish an awards program to highlight the financial education achievements of public school teachers and community champions across the state. The four award recipients will be recognized on the House floor on March 30, 2015. One of the four recipients is from Baltimore County: Florence Falatko is a 5th Grade Teacher at Cromwell Valley Elementary School and

received the Elementary School Teacher Award. I want to thank the award winners for their dedicated efforts to teach students and residents the principles of financial readiness and money management.

Legislative Scholarship Reminder

Students living in District 11, who are attending or plan to attend a Maryland College or University, can apply for the H. Allen Lipsitz Memorial Scholarship by going to my website: www.danastein.com.

The deadline for applications is March 27, 2015.

General Assembly Information

If you would like to follow what is going on during legislative session, the General Assembly website is www.mgaleg.maryland.gov. You can track bills, look up legislation, and listen in on floor and committee hearings.

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That's it for now. Please contact me at dana.stein@house.state.md.us or 410-841-3527 if I can be of any assistance or if you would like weigh in on any issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Stein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dana Stein

Delegate

Paid for by Friends of Dana Stein, Charles Spira, Treasurer