



April 9, 2013

Dear Friend:

The 433rd session of the Maryland General Assembly ended at midnight on April 8, after 90 days of whirlwind activity. We grappled this session with a variety of controversial bills on a wide array of topics.

I want to thank everyone who emailed, wrote or called to express their opinion on the bills that we considered this year.

My Legislation

I was pleased that the General Assembly approved three of my bills:

[House Bill 1014](#) - Students who have been diagnosed with a severe allergy that may trigger a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction carry “epipens” with them. However, not all students with severe allergies have been diagnosed. To address this situation in public schools, the legislature passed a bill last year allowing public schools to stock epipens for those situations when a student with an undiagnosed allergy goes into anaphylactic shock. House Bill 1014 will extend this authority to non-public schools, which could potentially save the lives of students who do not know that they have a severe allergy.

[House Bill 1084](#) - Wood and plant-based biomass is sometimes overlooked as a renewable energy source. But it is sustainable and affordable, is a very efficient fuel source for thermal energy, and has low emissions due to technological advances.

HB 1084 sets up the Thermal Renewable Energy Credit Task Force, which will determine the best way to incorporate wood-based and plant-based thermal biomass into the renewable portfolio statute (RPS). The task force will also take a broad look at the appropriate way to include all thermal energy sources into the RPS.

[House Bill 1124](#) - The proposed installation of a natural gas pipeline from Owings Mills to Fallston, combined with recent news stories of pipeline explosions and leaks, has stirred worries about the safety of interstate pipelines. This bill will require the Public Service Commission to consider applying to the U.S. Department of Transportation for authority to enforce federal safety standards for interstate gas pipelines, as nine other States currently do.

I want to commend Senator Bobby Zirkin for his leadership on this issue. Pipeline safety is important not only to residents of our district but to the entire State.

Other Legislation - One of my bills that did not pass was [House Bill 400](#), which would have provided incentives for a sustainable form of grazing, known as management intensive grazing. The bill's introduction led to discussion with the Agriculture Department about ways to implement the bill administratively. In February, Maryland Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance announced that he was including pasture and grazing infrastructure as a best management practice for natural resource conservation, and I withdrew my bill.

Another bill was [House Bill 557](#). This bill aimed to provide transparency to the cost of college education and the financial impact of student loans. House Bill 557 would have required all public four-year colleges and community colleges to provide the information required by the federal Financial Aid Shopping Sheet to incoming freshmen students. The House of Delegates passed the bill but unfortunately the State Senate did not. I will re-introduce the bill next year.

The Budget and Education

The recent budget stresses that the State has experienced eased considerably this year, as Maryland's economy continued to improve. As a result, this year's budget (FY 2014 budget) nearly eliminates the state's structural deficit, increases the fund balance to more than \$1 billion, and increases funding for education and programs that stimulate economic investment.

State support for K-12 education has played a key role in Maryland's schools being recognized for a *fifth straight year* as the best in the country. The FY 2014 budget maintains the State's commitment to public schools – State support for schools will

exceed \$6 billion – and funds expanded school breakfast, early college access, and digital learning programs.

Funding for higher education will enable State colleges to hold in-state undergraduate tuition increases to 3.0% for the fourth consecutive year. During a time of increasing student loan debt, keeping State college tuition affordable is a critical priority.

School safety also receives support. This year's budget includes \$25 million for grants to local school systems for school safety and security improvements. In addition, there are funds to support the Center for School Safety under the auspices of the Maryland State Police.

Public Safety

Gun Control

In response to the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, the legislature passed a sweeping gun control bill. Major components of [Senate Bill 281](#) (which I supported) include:

- Licensure/fingerprinting for new handgun purchasers. This will hopefully reduce “straw purchases” of handguns by criminals.
- Safety training requirements for first time handgun purchasers.
- Limiting large capacity magazines to 10 rounds. Magazines with more rounds have been used by shooters in recent tragedies.
- Ban on military-style assault weapons (including the AR-15) and copycats. Currently-owned weapons are not affected.
- Strengthening law prohibiting gun ownership by those with serious mental illness.

The bill does not criminalize gun ownership, place new burdens on existing Maryland gun owners, or inhibit anyone from seeking mental health care.

Death Penalty

Maryland became the 18th state to ban the death penalty. While I was conflicted on whether to support abolition of the death penalty, I voted in favor of repeal because there is evidence of racial disparities in the application of the death penalty in Maryland. In addition, there is little evidence of any deterrent impact and legal appeals for an inmate on death row are more expensive than life in prison.

Cyberbullying

Del. Jon Cardin was the sponsor of an important measure that will protect against cyberbullying, which has become more prevalent. The bill makes it a crime to use social media to harass or cause someone to fear for his/her safety.

Motor Vehicles and Transportation

Cell Phones and Speed Cameras

One of the subcommittees I am proud to serve on is the motor vehicles and transportation subcommittee. We considered several bills that built upon previous efforts to improve driver safety. Importantly, we passed [HB 753](#) which makes use of a hand-held cell phone while driving a primary offense while a car is in motion. Under current law, use of a hand-held cell phone while driving is only a secondary offense.

Also, in response to news stories about how jurisdictions were not using speed cameras properly, the House approved a substantial reform of the speed camera system. [HB 929](#) would have made several improvements to the speed camera law, including expanding the prohibition against paying a speed camera vendor based on the number of tickets issued (the “bounty system”). Unfortunately, the Senate did not approve the bill.

Gas Tax

The legislature approved an increase in the gasoline tax. The increase will be 3.8 cents per gallon this July and will rise to 20 cents by 2016. For a car owner who drives 12,000 miles per year and gets 24 mpg, that translates to an additional cost of \$100 per year in 2016.

I supported the gas tax increase because in a few years there will not be enough funding to do any highway/bridge work beyond basic maintenance.

As anyone who drives on the Beltway knows, traffic congestion is increasing. The Baltimore and D.C. metropolitan areas are the 5th and 1st most congested in the nation at a cost of \$1,555 and \$1,218 per year, respectively, per commuter (lost productivity and wages, repairs, etc.) .

Increased transportation funding will allow for improvements throughout the State, including projects that benefit northwest and west Baltimore County. The intersection at Painters Mill and Reisterstown Roads is a traffic bottleneck; with new funding, the intersection will be widened. Also, to alleviate congestion on the

Beltway's outer loop, parts of the western section of the outer loop will be widened.

In conjunction with passage of the gas tax, the legislature voted to put on next year's ballot a constitutional provision that would establish a "lock box" for gas tax revenue (a requirement that for transportation trust fund revenue to be used for other purposes, 3/5 of each house of the legislature must approve and the Governor must declare a fiscal emergency).

Health Care

[House Bill 228](#) puts in place policies necessary for the State's health benefit exchange (under the federal Affordable Care Act) to begin operations on January 1, 2014. It also expands Medicaid eligibility to ensure coverage for the State's most financially vulnerable.

I want to congratulate Del. Dan Morhaim for passage of his legislation that will authorize use of medical marijuana. Under the law, doctors and nurses will administer the drug to very ill patients through medical academic centers.

Off-Shore Wind Energy

Increasing Maryland's use of renewable energy resources is an important issue and a priority of mine. The House passed [HB 226](#) which set up the framework for development of off-shore wind, should a wind company apply to the Public Service Commission for authorization. This bill will help Maryland utilize its vast offshore wind resources off of the coast of Ocean City.

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I am proud to be representing you in Annapolis and to be a part of the District 11 legislative team, which includes Senator Bobby Zirkin and Delegates Jon Cardin and Dan Morhaim. Please contact me at 410-841-3527 or dana.stein@house.state.md.us if I can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Dana Stein



Delegate

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

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