



February 14, 2014

Dear Friend:

Happy Valentine's Day! With the legislative session almost at the mid-way point, I wanted to update you on some important legislation.

### **Minimum Wage**

One of the most important (and controversial) issues that we'll be facing this session is increasing the minimum wage. The House Economic Matters Committee heard testimony on this issue this week.

Maryland's minimum wage rate, which tracks the federal minimum wage, is \$7.25 per hour. This equates to roughly \$15,000 a year for a full-time minimum wage worker.

Despite periodic increases to the State and federal minimum wage rates, inflation has caused significant erosion of the purchasing power of the minimum wage. In 1968, when the real value of the minimum wage reached its peak, the purchasing power of the minimum wage was greater than \$10.70 per hour in today's dollars.

I support an increase in the minimum wage because of the low-buying power of today's minimum wage, and because many workers who earn minimum wage are heads of householders. Hundreds of thousands of low-paid workers will benefit from an increase to \$10.10, which is what the Administration has proposed (and which I support).

### **Domestic Violence Legislation**

The Administration has introduced two bills that would increase the scope of protection available under protective orders, both of which I support.

1. [HB307: Peace Orders and Protective Orders – Standard of Proof](#). This bill alters the standard of proof for the issuance of a final protective order from "clear and convincing evidence" to a "preponderance of the evidence" standard. Currently, Maryland is the only state that has the standard of clear and convincing evidence.
2. [HB 309: Family Law – Domestic Violence – Permanent Final Protective Orders](#). This bill requires a court to issue a permanent final protective order against an individual who is convicted and sentenced to serve a prison term of at least 5 years for certain acts of abuse. In addition, the legislation adds the crime of second degree assault to the list of crimes that subjects a person to the issuance of a permanent final protective order.

## **My Bills**

Next week, I will be testifying in support of several of my bills, including the following:

[House Bill 788](#) – This bill would ban cell phone "cramming" without customer authorization. Cramming is the unauthorized placement of charges on cell phone bills by third-party vendors. These charges range from \$2 to \$24.95/month and are billings for such items as horoscopes, trivia, and jokes.

The problem is that in many cases, these charges are unauthorized and are for goods and services that consumers did not request. Cell phone cramming costs consumers anywhere from \$58 million to \$2 billion annually, and the FCC estimates that as many as 20 million people are crammed each year.

Baltimore Sun columnist Dan Rodricks has highlighted this issue in his [columns](#).

[House Bill 931](#) – Maryland has done a good job of promoting the establishment of renewable energy systems, such as solar and wind, that produce electricity only. However, thermal systems (heating and cooling) are the largest source of energy use in Maryland homes and businesses. This bill would amend Maryland's renewable energy law to include incentives for renewable thermal systems, including woody biomass systems.

[House Bill 947](#) -- We take for granted that balconies in apartments or other multifamily dwellings will be safe. When they're not, the results can be tragic. Over the past three years, there have been more than a dozen balcony railing breaks, including three in Maryland. These breaks can be deadly. In 2008, a young man in Massachusetts died when the railings of his balcony gave way. That prompted

Massachusetts to adopt residential balcony inspection requirements. Various cities and counties throughout the country have also enacted laws and ordinances requiring residential balconies to be inspected.


Under HB 947, political subdivisions would be required to have balcony railings in multifamily dwellings inspected at least once every 10 years.

\* \* \* \* \*

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](mailto: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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