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Banking, Economic Development,  
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Joint Committee on Administrative,  
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*The Maryland House of Delegates*  
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April 16, 2009

Dear Friend,

The Maryland General Assembly's 2009 Legislative Session concluded on April 13, 2009. The following is a summary of the most important issues with which I was involved. In the past, I have sent an end of session letter through the United States Postal Service; however this year, in an effort to save the State money and be more environmentally conscientious, I am sending this Report to the majority of my constituents via email. If you would like to receive updates or yearly letters electronically, please contact my office at [Brian.Feldman@house.state.md.us](mailto:Brian.Feldman@house.state.md.us). Otherwise, I will continue to send you my Session Report through the mail to keep you apprised of what is happening in Annapolis. I appreciate your taking the time to read this summary, if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

The difficult financial situation that our Country faces is reflected in the budget situation in Maryland. Mandated by law, the Legislature is required to pass a balanced budget each year. The balanced General Fund Budget was passed for FY 2010 in the amount of \$13.8 billion, 3.3 % smaller than our 2007 General Fund Budget, and we retained the State's AAA bond rating, one of only six states in the nation to have such a rating. To achieve a balanced budget without raising any taxes, the General Assembly had to make tough choices as we cut \$825 million from the Budget. As we made those difficult cuts to the Budget, our funding priorities became clearer. We increased funding for K-12 education by \$132 million statewide and increased aid to community colleges by \$84 million. We are investing our State's scarce financial resources precisely where they need to be, in our children and in our future. These funding commitments have clearly paid off. *Education Week* recently ranked Maryland's public schools first in the Nation based on graduation rates and academic achievements. Additionally, the College Board recently ranked Maryland's high schools first in the Nation in AP test participation and achievement. Montgomery County Public Schools will receive \$625 million, the largest amount they have ever received. An additional bonus for residents of Montgomery County is the fact that the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) which directs additional dollars to our County was fully funded for the first time. This translates into a 9.9% increase over last year in State education aid for Montgomery County. Also, tuition at Maryland colleges and universities will remain frozen for the fourth year in a row, the only State in the Nation to do so.

Understanding that financial constraints on the Maryland Budget made it difficult to move crucial legislative initiatives forward, I looked for ways the State could increase revenues without raising taxes. In that regard, I introduced and gained passage of legislation to create a tax amnesty program which provides incentives to those who have not filed tax returns or paid their taxes to come into compliance. This program will provide the State with a much needed injection of revenue. Historically, when there has been a tax amnesty program implemented, the revenue boost has been significant. In 2001, Maryland captured \$39.2 million from a tax amnesty program. My hope is that we will realize that and more this year.

Environmental initiatives fared well this year in Annapolis. I am keenly aware of the importance of these issues and co-sponsored the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act and the Smart and Sustainable Growth Act. Both bills passed and all Marylanders will now benefit from these valuable green initiatives. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act mandates that, by 2020, Maryland reduce global warming pollutants by at least 25% below 2006 levels. The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act will require local planning commissions to create a specific plan for growth patterns in their jurisdictions. This will bring more accountability as we plan for future growth. Additionally, I am pleased to have collaborated with Delegate Bronrott, District 16, to persuade the State to locate the Maryland Clean Energy Center in my legislative district at the Universities at Shady Grove in Montgomery County. The Maryland Clean Energy Center is the State's first clearinghouse to help drive the future of clean energy and green technologies. The

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Maryland Clean Energy Center will support the State's smart, green growth efforts through assistance to newly developed technologies, the collection, analysis and dissemination of industry data, outreach and technical support to the clean energy industry in Maryland.

As Co-Chair of the Joint House and Senate Technology Oversight Committee, I continue to focus my attention on issues relating to our biotechnology sector. This Session, I introduced and gained passage of legislation to expand the jurisdiction of the Joint Technology Oversight Committee. The Committee will be renamed the Joint Information Technology and Biotechnology Committee and will focus on biotechnology as well as information technology issues. This joint committee will provide a forum to address and promote the development of these sectors in our State. I was also able to stop a proposed budget cut and/or possible elimination of funding for the Biotechnology Investment Tax Credit. This extremely successful tax credit for the biotechnology industry, which I authored in 2005, is important for fostering development of small biotechnology companies in our County. I offered an amendment on the House floor to restore funding and the General Assembly ultimately retained the program's funding.

In the area of corporate law, I introduced and gained passage of legislation to update our corporate laws, allowing Maryland corporations to compete more effectively with businesses incorporated in other states. Additionally, as Chair of the House Banking, Economic Development, Science and Technology Subcommittee, I gained passage of legislation which brings Maryland's mortgage lending laws into compliance with newly established federal law, thus providing additional consumer protections and enabling our regulators to more easily combat mortgage fraud.

In 2008, The Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment, chaired by former U.S. Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, recommended the repeal of the death penalty in Maryland. The Governor made the repeal of the death penalty a priority for the 2009 Session and legislation was introduced in both Chambers to reflect the Commission's recommendation. Though support for a full repeal did not exist, the Legislature did establish some of the strictest standards in the nation for applying the death penalty. There must be biological or DNA evidence, a video recording linking the defendant to the murder, or a videotaped voluntary confession. The new law also prohibits capital punishment in cases where the State relies solely on eyewitness evidence. This compromise will be signed into law by the Governor.

The future of the Preakness, part of the famed Triple Crown, was in question during the final days of the 2009 Session. Because of its long history in Maryland and the financial and economic support that the race brings to the State's thoroughbred industry, emergency legislation was introduced to retain the Preakness. Governor O'Malley asked me to participate in a small workgroup which reviewed the legislation and made recommendations to the General Assembly. The legislation passed both the House and the Senate and has been signed by the Governor.

As the Chair of the Montgomery County House Delegation for the past two years, I have enjoyed the challenge of leading the State's largest delegation. The Delegation was successful again this year in obtaining a significant amount of capital funds. To date, we have secured \$26 million in school construction money, with \$26 million in statewide school construction money yet to be allocated by the State. An additional \$17 million for capital projects is earmarked for Montgomery College and another \$11 million has been awarded for a variety of other capital projects in our County. In total, approximately \$58 million in capital projects for the County are included in the State's Capital Budget.

In closing, thank you for putting your trust in me by allowing me to represent you in Annapolis. I am always interested in hearing your thoughts and perspectives on the issues. Do not forget to contact my office at [Brian.Feldman@house.state.md.us](mailto:Brian.Feldman@house.state.md.us) if you would like to be added to my email list of contacts.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Feldman