



# REPORT FROM STATE CIRCLE 2010



League of Women Voters of Maryland, Inc.

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## BUDGET AND REVENUES

The Senate passed **SB 140** the Budget Bill on March 24. At \$31.9 billion, the bill reduced the Governor's proposed budget by \$583.3 million and eliminated 577 positions. It is \$361 million less than for the current year. Aid to education of \$5.7 billion is essentially the same as in the Governor's bill. Aid to state colleges and universities would allow a 3% increase in tuition. Highway user revenues were reduced by \$236.2 million to \$142.6 million. The Chesapeake Bay Trust fund was halved to \$10 million as was the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund to \$6.2 million. State aid for police protection was reduced by \$18.9 million. Reductions in Open Space and Rural Legacy Funds and Agricultural land preservation funds will be replaced by bond funds. **SB 141** The Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) reduces General Fund expenditures for FY 2011 by \$405.1 million and reduces mandated appropriations in the future including state aid for community colleges, freezing local police aid for FY 2011 and 2012, among other items. Funds for the Inter-County Connector to be transferred to the Maryland Transportation Authority were reduced by half to \$81.9 million.

Probably the most controversial provision in BRFA is language that would transfer some of the responsibility for teachers' pensions to local government starting July 1, 2011. Currently local government pays the employer's share of Social Security for local school systems, libraries and community colleges. If this provision passes, by FY 2016, the state and local governments would split the combined costs – 50% to each. (Currently Social Security payments are about 35% of the combined total).

The House begins debate on the Budget Bill and BRFA on Wednesday, March 31.

**HB 832** (Bronrott et al) crossfiled with **SB 717** (Jones et al), **the Lorraine Sheehan Health and Community Services Act of 2010** would substantially increase state taxes on alcoholic beverages sold in Maryland. The estimated \$214 million in additional state revenues would be allocated among several funds devoted to developmental disabilities, addiction treatment and prevention and mental health as well as the Medicaid Trust Fund.

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## **Budget & Revenues** continued from page 1

Taxes on spirits have not been increased since 1955 and on beer and wine since 1972. The League testified in support of both bills - in B&T on March 10 and W&M on March 11. Although we have reservations about dedication of taxes, these increases are long overdue and the funds will support badly needed programs. Neither committee has acted on the bills.

We also testified in support of **HB 1177 (Ivey et al)**, the so called “millionaires tax” at W&M on March 11. This bill would make permanent the income tax rate of 6.25% on Maryland taxable incomes of individuals which exceed \$1 million and on **SB 913 (Jones et al)** which would extend the 6.25% tax rate until 2014, on March 23 at B&T. We have long supported a more equitable tax structure and believe that the current budget crisis provides more ammunition for maintaining the tax. Neither bill has been acted upon by the committees.

**HB 584** Combined Reporting was heard on March 25 at W&M. We testified in support of this bill. We also testified in favor of **SB 354** on March 24 at B&T on the same subject No action has been taken on either bill. **HB 395** which would move up the final report of the Maryland Business Tax Reform Commission to December 2010 was voted out favorably by the House as was **SB 336** on the same subject by the Senate. They are currently being reconciled. One of the charges to the Committee is to examine the whole issue of combined reporting.

**SB 106** which establishes a tax credit of \$5000 per new employee hired by Maryland businesses was signed in to law by Governor O’Malley on March 25. There is a maximum credit of \$250,000 per taxpayer and a cap of \$20 million on the entire program.

*Barbara Hankins*

## **DEATH PENALTY**

The four bills filed this year concerning the Maryland Death Penalty have all died in committee. Bills which would have increased the types of evidence allowed for a capital prosecution, **HB 994** and **HB 306** received unfavorable reports from the Judiciary Committee; while **SB 404** received an unfavorable from the Judicial Proceedings Committee. **HB 1078**, the so-called “Personhood Amendment” which would have eliminated capital punishment but also the right to an abortion, died in the Health and Government Operations Committee. The League, which favors repeal of the death penalty, opposed all four bills.

No repeal effort was made this year by the coalition which seeks to do away with capital punishment because there has been no change in the composition of the General Assembly. Although a repeal effort failed last year, by slim margins, legislators did narrow the evidence needed by prosecutors to bring a capital case. A de factor moratorium on executions now exists for the five men on death row until a new method is approved for lethal injections.

*Marcia Reinke*

## EDUCATION

Maintenance of Effort bills remain alive and active as the General Assembly approaches the final days of this legislative session. **SB 476** (RSC 2), which would waive a penalty for the current fiscal year in any local jurisdiction, has passed the Senate. In the House, **HB 223 - Maintenance of Effort - Penalty**, which was originally a local Montgomery County bill, has been amended to be a cross file of SB 476 and has passed both houses. **SB 310** (RSC 2), which would establish additional factors for the State Board of Education (SBE) to consider when a county requests a waiver, has passed the Senate unamended. Its House companion, **HB 304**, has passed the House with amendments that give the responsibility for determining if a waiver should be given to a county to the state superintendent of schools rather than the SBE. If the waiver is denied, the county could appeal to the SBE, which must decide by June 1. Their decision is final. A sunset date of June 30, 2013 is also added to the bill.

**HB 1263 - Education Reform Act of 2010**, (RSC 3) which was requested by the Governor and State Superintendent of Schools in order to improve the likelihood that Maryland would receive a federal grant in the competition for the Race to the Top program, has passed the House rather heavily amended. A requirement for a mentor to assist a non-certificated teacher who is not on track to qualify for tenure has been added, as has a requirement that a tenured teacher who moves to another local school system must continue to be certified under specified conditions. The requirement that a teacher's or principal's evaluation must include data on student growth is defined more specifically, including that no single criterion can account for more than 35% of the total performance evaluation criteria. The provision that a highly effective teacher who works in the lowest achieving Title I schools must get a stipend has also been modified to require the SBE to support locally negotiated incentives for these teachers. The companion Senate bill - SB 899 has passed second reader with some identical, and some different, amendments. Mentoring requirements are more specific in SB 899, and local performance evaluation criteria must be agreed to by both the local school system and the union. In addition, the process for determining stipends for teachers and principals in Title I schools is spelled out in greater detail. Concern has been expressed that these amendments weaken the school system's ability to remove ineffective teachers.

Two other companion bills, filed also, at the request of the Governor, to enhance the state's application for the federal Race to the Top application, **SB 275/HB 467 - Education - Maryland Longitudinal Data System**, are very technical. As filed the bills would require the Maryland State Department of Education, the university system of Maryland, the other public colleges, the Higher Education Commission and the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation to establish a data system that would enable the exchange of student and workforce data among these agencies and would provide information about student achievement that could be used to improve the education system. The Center that will be the repository of the data system must comply with federal and state privacy laws and meet many other procedural standards. Maryland already is developing a statewide data system financed with federal grants, but it includes only four of ten essential components of an effective system and does not link the K-12 system to higher education. SB 275 has passed the Senate with amendments that define student data in detail, add essential functions to the Center's responsibilities, and further protect the privacy of individual student data.

The other major public education bill that has moved, **HB 1160 - Safe Schools Act of 2010**, (RSC 3) has also passed the House amended and is already scheduled for a Senate hearing in EHEA on 3/31. A complicated provision has been added requiring the Court to notify the school system if it rescinds the order that had committed a child in need of assistance to local government custody and requiring this information to remain confidential. Additional violations have been added to the meaning of a reportable offense; the definition of a school security officer has been clarified; and a requirement has been added that all middle and high schools must have a school security officer designated.

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**Education** continued from page 3

Updates on other bills:

RSC 1

**SB 128** - GED Options - Unfavorable

RSC 2

**SB 239** - Higher age for compulsory attendance passed Senate with caveat that bill will be null and void if specified funding is not included in future budgets.- Hrg. 3/31 in W&M

**SB 264** - Financial literacy - Passed Senate with amendments deleting the requirement for a semester long course and requiring that the SBE develop content standards for personal financial literacy to be taught in each local school system.

**SB 385** - BOAST - passed Senate on 30-17 vote; LWVMD action alert has been sent urging immediate contact with Delegates to oppose this bill. Hrg 4/1 in W&M.

**SB 452** - Innovative Schedules - Passed Senate

**HB 276** - Veteran's Day holiday - Unfavorable

**HB 413** - Sets more standards for instruction of blind and visually handicapped - Passed House amended by adding more sponsors

RSC 3

**HB 932** - requiring an environmental plan for new school construction - Unfavorable

**HB 1371** - defining student gang members - Unfavorable

*Lois Stoner*

## **MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

In response to the issuance of Attorney General Gansler's opinion that Maryland should recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states, House Minority Leader Anthony O'Donnell introduced **HB 1532** crossfiled with **SB 1120** - Recognition of Out-of State Same-Sex Marriages – Changes in Governmental Policies – Moratorium. This act prohibits the recognition by this State of same-sex marriages legally performed in other jurisdictions until it is decided by the Court of Appeals of Maryland or addressed by the General Assembly of Maryland through the enactment of a law. A unit of State or local government may not, on the basis of legal advice rendered in the opinion of the Attorney General dated February 23, 2010 alter any policy, procedure, rule or regulation in effect on February 22, 2010. This act is an emergency measure.

**HB 1272 Family Medical Leave** (RSC 3) had an unfavorable report in the Economic Matters Committee and **HB 1241 Family Law – De Facto Parents** was withdrawn in the Judiciary Committee. No action has been taken on the other bills being followed.

*Sherry Hyman*

## **AIR QUALITY**

Update:

RSC 3:

**SB 234/HB 1044** requires high performance buildings at community colleges passed the Senate 41 – 6, the House 127 – 11.

**SB479** adds use of the Green Globe rating to high performance building standards passed the Senate 47 – 0.

RSC 4:

**SB 287/HB 464** extends tax credits for renewable source energy facilities passed the Senate 47 – 0, favorable committee report in the House.

*Carol Filipczak*

## ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

**SB 684/HB 1556 - Veteran's Treatment Court Pilot Program Establishments** (Peters plus 11)/ (Hubbard, Holmes & Levi) Pilot Program for Wicomico, Frederick & Prince George's counties for veterans who exhibit substance abuse or mental health problems and defendants charged with non violent crimes diversion to Veteran's Treatment Court. (JPR 3/9 & JUD3/25)

Update from RSC 4:

**HB 106 & SB 248** Maryland Legal Services Fund - Surcharges. Senate passed SB 248 on 3/5 no amendments vote 36-11, JUD hearing 3/31. House passed HB 106 on 3/18 93-45 with amendments changing amounts & requiring annual budget info to General Assembly including performance measurement data & Reserve fund balances, JPR 3/19

**HB 769** Orphan's Courts Minors Guardianship. Passed the House 2/5 136-1 assigned (JPR 3/31 hearing)

**SB118 & SB 119** Civil Jury Trials Amount in Controversy assigned to House (JUD 3/31 hearing).

**HB 436** Jury Trials in Civil Actions Amount in Controversy. Passed House 3/24 120-18, amendment changed amount from \$20,000 to \$15,000, current amount is \$10,000.

**HB 208** County Administrative Judge Responsibility Passed House 2/18 134-2 sent to (JPR 2/19). No hearing scheduled.

**HB332** Orphans Judges Qualifications. Unfavorable JUD 3/24. Withdrawn.

**SB 220** Circuit Court Real Property Records Improvement. (B&T 2/19 hearing). No action.

**SB 874** Circuit Courts and District Court-Creation in Areas of Greatest Need hearing. 3/23 JPR hearing. No action.

**SB 833** (Request of Attorney General and 15 Senators) & **HB 1385** (Cardin) Circuit Court Judges- Election, Qualifications, and Terms of Office. Amends the Constitution to alter the method of election of Circuit Court Judges to be retention elections. (JPR 3/9 hearing) (JUD hearing 3/17). No action.

**HJR4 & SJR 4** Judicial Compensation Commission Recommendations Bills passed both Houses amended no increases.

*Grace Kubofcik*

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING/BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

Status of bills previously reported:

RSC 1:

**HB 103** Real property – mobile home park – plans for dislocated residents – passed the House and awaits a hearing in JPR.

RSC 2:

**HB 746/SB 845** Procurement – Living Wage – Repeal was voted down in both houses.

**HB 472** Real property – residential property foreclosure procedures – foreclosure mediation was passed by the House.

*Ruth Crystal*

## TRANSPORTATION

An interesting bill on the use of road salt is on its way to passage. **SB 775/HB 903** (Kramer, et al; Kramer, et al) **Transportation – Road Salt Management – Best Practice Guidelines** requires the State Highway Administration, in consultation with the Department of the Environment, to develop guidance on best practices in road salt management for use by local jurisdictions and the state. A report is due by October 2011. It has passed the Senate 47 – 0 with a favorable House committee report.

### Update

#### RSC 1:

**SB 229/HB 710** Commission on Transportation Funding, passed the Senate 47-0, the House 117 – 23.

#### RSC 2:

**SB 725/HB 732** priority funding for BRAC projects were withdrawn after - unfavorable committee reports  
**HB 282** requiring a balance in funding between bicycle and pedestrian facilities and highway projects received a favorable committee report.

**SB 624** bicycle and motor scooter right to use road shoulders and crosswalks passed the Senate 47 – 0.

#### RSC 3:

**SB 760/HB 1155** Consolidated Transportation Program received a favorable committee report in the House.

#### RSC 4:

**SB 979/HB 1370** General Assembly committee oversight of public-private partnerships passed the House 141-0.

*Carol Filipczak*

## CHILDREN'S ISSUES

**Local Management Boards - (LMBs)** Following recommendations that the Governor's Office for Children (GOC) funding for Local Management Boards (LMBs) be severely cut - the outcry from all over has been loud and clear - do not decimate these very effective and badly needed funds for the local jurisdictions located across the state. They provide a multitude of services for children and families, and do it well. Funding was recommended to be badly cut. However some good news notes that the cuts to LMBs have been reduced, allowing some of the basic programs that assist children with developmental disabilities to continue to receive assistance.

### **Bills to watch--**

**SB 284/HB 465 - Collective Bargaining negotiations by Child Care providers**, under discussion last year also, was passed by the Senate/w amendments, and the House bill, HB465, also passed, w/amendments. This has been an issue of contention for some time, but can now be instituted.

**SB 252, Sen Frosh - Child Support Guidelines** - revises basic Child Support Obligations used to calculate amount of child support awards - passed Senate 3rd reading, 43-2.

*Pat Plunkett*

## JUVENILE JUSTICE

At this point in the session, few bills in the area of juvenile delinquency have received final action.

Of the bills followed this session, **HB 75** which deals with escape from privately operated secure facilities seems to have a possibility of passage. This bill requested by DJS, but not supported by LWV positions, was passed by the Judiciary Committee and unanimously by the House, and will be heard by the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee on 3/30. Another bill, **SB 330**, which prohibits private detention facilities from having more than 48 beds, has been reported favorably from the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and the Senate but there has been no House action. **SB 575**, requiring volunteer mentors for any juvenile committed to DJS, received an unfavorable committee report and has been withdrawn.

**HB 394** (Dumais) – **Programming and Services for Females** which requires facilities for females to be equal to those for males, has been heard in the Judiciary Committee but no votes have been taken. According to the ACLU of Maryland, female juvenile delinquents do not have the same access to vocational training programs, alternatives to detention, and therapeutic treatments that are available to boys.

**HB 609** (Love et al)/**SB 365** (Astle et al) – **Gang Activity – Jurisdiction over Juvenile Offenders** excludes from Juvenile Court jurisdiction, any youth 16 and older who is alleged to have committed an act that would be a crime if committed by an adult, while a member of a criminal gang. In 1997, the League tried to prevent an increase in the number of juvenile offenses that could be transferred to adult court. This bill has been passed by the House Judiciary Committee but no action has been taken in the Senate. The bill does not define criminal gang, making easy the misuse of its provisions if the bill is passed.

Despite the bad budget situation, DJS has increased from 383 to 427, the number of slots for delinquent youth to receive intensive evidenced-based services while remaining in their own homes. These services are based on treatment plans that have been intensively researched in Missouri and other states, and provide delinquent youth and their families help in resolving problems that resulted in delinquent behavior. By avoiding incarceration, this method of treatment results in lowered recidivism and less cost to the State.

DJS has also decided to delay funding of a new juvenile treatment center until it can ensure public safety. Unfortunately the budget also includes a reduction of 5 million dollars in funds for local management boards which help fund community services that prevent juvenile delinquency.

*Debbie Ehrenstein*

## ELECTIONS

A few election bills are winding their way through the General Assembly. **SB 400 - No Representation Without Population Act**, sponsored by Senator Pugh and 12 additional senators, requires that individuals incarcerated in state or federal prisons at the time of the decennial census shall be counted at their last know address rather than at the address of the correctional facility in which they are incarcerated. Additionally, persons incarcerated in the state who were not Maryland residents prior to incarceration would not be counted in the Maryland census. This bill passed the Senate with amendments 34-10. The cross-filed bill, **House Bill 496**, passed third reader 99-40.

**HB 217 – Election Law – Voter Registration and Nomination Requirements** (previously “Elections – Voter Registration and Voting - Age”) has passed second reader in the House. This bill allows 17 year olds to vote in a primary election in which candidates are nominated for a general election or special election that will occur when the voter is at least 18 years old. The bill also changes the deadline by which a voter can change his or her party affiliation. Previously 12 weeks prior to an election, the deadline to change party affiliation has been changed to coincide with voter registration deadline.

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**HB 444 – Election Law – Citizens Who Have Not Lived In the United States** – Right to Vote, sponsored by Delegate Cardin, has passed the house 102-35 and has a hearing scheduled on April 1 in the Senate EHEA Committee. The bill states that for purposes of voter registration, a resident of the State shall include a citizen of the U.S. born abroad who has never lived in the U.S. but who has a parent who is a resident of the State. These citizens may register to vote and vote only in elections for federal office.

The House has passed (125-14) on third reader **HB 816 – Honorable Lorraine M. Sheehan Act to Protect Voting Rights for Individuals under Guardianship for Mental Disability**. The Senate passed the cross filed **SB 28** by a vote of 40-7. The legislation strengthens the rights of persons under mental disability to register to vote because it requires that a Court must make a specific finding that the individual cannot communicate, with or without accommodations, a desire to participate in the voting process. Under current law, anyone who is legally under mental guardianship is prohibited from registering to vote, even if no specific finding has been made relating to the individuals desire or ability to participate in the voting process. The bill has an effective date of June 1, 2010.

*Lu Pierson*

## **ENVIRONMENT: WATER, WASTE TREATMENT, AND LAND USE**

Generally environmental and land use measures that would entail significant administrative costs or be considered a burden on private economy met a dismal fate in the Legislative committees this session.

**SB 285 - Smart, Green, and Growing - Sustainable Communities Act of 2010** (President at request of the Administration and Senator Della, and 14 others)/**HB 475** (Speaker, Bartlett and 25 others). This is the most ambitious land use bill the Administration has proposed. It brings greater flexibility to use of Historic Credits, extends the life of the Historic Credit program, expands eligibility for funds for sustainable communities, better coordinates efforts to revitalize communities. It also expands the Smart Growth subcommittee to include three more departments. There has been no action and if it is not reported out favorably by cross-over day, March 29, it will go to the Rules Committee. LWVMD supports this bill. (B&T/ENV).

**SB 653 - Coal Combustion By-Products - Minimum Standards - Beneficial Uses** (Lenett et al)/ **HB 1467** (Stein) Coal combustion by-products include substances like boiler slag pozzolan and fly ash that are used in concrete, cinder blocks and land fill. The bill would mandate best engineering practices in using these products in landfill to avoid leachate and dust carrying dangerous substances to be released. Favorable Report out of Environmental Matters - with amendments that clarified that cinder blocks and concrete were not affected by the bill. LWVMD supports this bill. ENV – fav. with amendments which clarify that cinder block and concrete are not affected by the bill.

**SB 462 - Chesapeake Bay Retail Choice Act of 2010** (Raskin et al)/**HB 351** (Carr et al) EHEA unfavorable.

**SB 359** (Lenett et al)/**HB 930** (Frush et al) would require reports to the Department of Agriculture of the release of fertilizers and pesticides annually. This is a step toward controlling pollution of air and water. EHEA unfavorable.

**SB 513 Natural Resources - Vessels - No-Discharge Designation for Maryland Waters** (Conway)/ **HB 1257** (Holmes and 18 others). EHEA and ENV – no action.

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**HB 1125 Stormwater Management - Development Projects - Requirements** (Holmes et al). This bill would give a break to redevelopment projects that were filed before May 4, 2010, allow payments-in-lieu to local governments, among other alterations to the regulations promulgated by MDE from the Stormwater Act of 2007. After extensive amendment, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation supported the bill as well as 1000 Friends of Maryland, and despite opposition by other environment organizations, like Sierra Club, the bill was voted favorably out of committee and passed the full House of Delegates. The League has not taken a stand on the bill. PASSED IN HOUSE 127-13

*Susan Cochran*

## **HEALTH**

Health Care Reform is now a reality and all of the tweaking of the bills appears to be over. Not to waste a moment, Governor Martin O'Malley has announced the formation of a panel to oversee the changes in Maryland. The panel will be headed by Lt. Governor Anthony Brown and Secretary of Health John Colmers. Insurance Commissioner Elizabeth Sammis will serve along with Budget Secretary T. Eloise Foster. The timeline is immediate with the first report due July 15 and a comprehensive report due by January 1, 2011. Secretary Colmers has indicated that the State may consider adding uninsured to the State rolls prior to the deadline. They are anticipating that the reforms could save the State \$1 billion over 10 years.

**HB 1564/SB 1125** is an emergency bill which would allow the Maryland Health Insurance Plan (MHIP) to administer the national pool program for the State as part of the national pool program passed in health care reform. The House bill passed second reader on Saturday, March 27. Senator Pinsky's Single Payer bills, **SB 682/HB 767**, have received an unfavorable vote in Senate Finance and in House Health and Government Operations. The Lorraine Sheehan Health and Community Service Act, **SB 717/HB 832**, is being backed several groups including Health Care for All. It would raise the tax rate on alcoholic beverages and distribute the funds to Medicaid. The bills are still in committee, but have gotten plenty of press coverage and may be positioned well for 2011.

**SB 279**, the Governor's **Maryland False Health Claims Act of 2010** passed the Senate with an overwhelming majority of 37-8. The bill moved forward when the Maryland Hospital Association agreed to support it after they were protected from frivolous lawsuits. It was amended in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee so that any qui tam lawsuit brought by a private citizen cannot go forward if the State does not approve it. The awarding of attorney's fees is not automatic and certain "mitigating factors" must be considered by the court in assessing civil fines against a health care provider.

However, several key issues including the definition of "intent" and the provision which would allow for lawsuits reaching back to 2001 were not amended. The pharmaceutical industry and the physicians remain opposed. The bill has moved to the House Judiciary Committee which could make additional changes to the companion bill, **HB 525**. This group would like to see additional amendments and may have some support from the Attorney General's ruling that the retroactive aspects of the bill may be unconstitutional.

**The Nurse Practitioner bill, SB 484/HB 319**, remains in committees in both Houses, but the physicians and the nurses have reached a compromise on the bills. The compromise simplifies the procedures for obtaining approval of collaborative agreements, but the nurses must have a collaborative agreement with a physician. The bills should move forward in the Senate and then go to the House.

Two bills, **SB 593/HB 699**, were filed to address a catch 22 for two emergency centers, one in Montgomery County and one in Queen Anne's County. Currently only centers with a Certificate of Need (CON) are eligible

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for oversight by the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC), which regulates hospital rates. Because they are not currently rated by the HSCRC, they cannot receive reimbursements from Medicare and Medicaid. The bills have been amended so the centers can bill Medicare and should pass both houses. All new centers will have to apply for a CON before they can bill Medicare or Medicaid. The HSCRC did not want to set a precedent, as they were worried about other centers proliferating without the CON process.

**SB 314, Assignment of Benefits**, passed the Senate on March 15 after CareFirst tried to put several amendments on the bill. The bill has moved to the House Government and Operations Committee where the committee is likely to amend the crossfiled bill, because Chairman Peter Hammen and subcommittee chairman Delegate Shane Pendergrass are concerned about physicians' balance billing. They will likely put a cap on the allowed amount to be billed.

**HB 32**, sponsored by Delegate Wade Kach, to remove the "cost-sharing" provisions in the small market reform insurance policies when the average rate for the standard plan exceeds 10 percent of the average annual wage was withdrawn by the sponsor. Senator James Brochin's **SB 181**, which would have increased the age to 30 for dependents to be eligible on their families individual or group health insurance policy failed in committee, probably because of health care reform.

**HB 1524/SB 745**, requiring health insurers, nonprofit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to reimburse an ambulance service provider directly for covered services passed the House and is in the Senate.

The Medical Marijuana bills probably will not pass. Delegate Glenn withdrew **HB 1388**, while **HB 712/SB 627** are in the Judiciary and Judicial Proceeding Committees. They will probably stay there.

*Neilson Andrews*

## GUNS

Two of the five gun bills being followed by the League this year are now dead, and three have been heard with no report. Killed as a result of an unfavorable report from Judicial Proceedings is **SB 191**, which would have established weapons-free zones around Maryland schools of higher education. Killed earlier by Judicial Proceedings was **SB 516** which would have reestablished an assault weapons ban.

Still pending in both chambers are bills which would increase the number of valid firearms licenses. **HB 52** which would allow Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia licenses to be valid in Maryland was heard by Judiciary January 26. On March 11 Judicial Proceedings heard **SB 842**, which would allow licenses issued by another state to members of the armed forces to be valid in Maryland; and **SB 893**, concerning handgun permits for victims of domestic violence. No reports have been issued on these bills.

*Marcia Reinke*

## OPEN GOVERNMENT

**HB 344/ SB 407** Mizeur/King Maryland Open Government Act appears to have wide-ranging support, with over half of the Delegates and Senators signing on as cosponsors. They also appeared to be supported by the House Speaker and the Senate President. Both bills were sent to their respective chamber's Rules Committee (which include the standing committee chairs in the Rules membership) and are languishing. These bills slightly reduce the purview of the Committee Chairs because it requires more transparency in the committee process. At this point neither house has moved it out of committee for a floor vote so it can go to the other house.

*Marjie Slater-Kaplan*

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