



REPORT FROM STATE CIRCLE

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ELECTIONS

Important legislation passed relating to two areas of elections and voting: Election Cybersecurity and Voter Registration. [HB 1278](#) requires an audit of the accuracy of the voting system's tabulation of votes be conducted after each election. An automated software audit of electronic images of all ballots is required after each primary and general election. Additionally, a hand and eye manual audit of paper ballots from at least 2% of precincts statewide must be conducted after each general election, and although not required, is permitted after each primary election. A manual audit of a number of early, absentee and provisional ballots cast, equaling at least 1% of the statewide total in previous comparable election. SBE is authorized to expand the number of ballots audited if the audit shows a discrepancy. The results of the automated software audit or the manual audit have no effect on the outcome of elections; the certified election results will not be changed as a result of these audits. These audit requirements take effect June 1, 2018.

[HB 1331](#) requires that any voter who uses any method to request to receive an absentee ballot via the Internet must provide a Maryland driver's license or identification card number, the last 4 digits of the voter's Social Security number, and other information identified by SBE that is not generally available to the public but is available to the applicant. This is the same information that is currently required to request an absentee ballot through an online absentee ballot request. Uniformed services voters or overseas voters, or voters with a disability who do not have a Maryland driver's license or identification card can provide their Social Security number.

Two major changes to voter registration in Maryland occurred during the session. [HB 532](#) is a constitutional amendment that will appear on the November 2018 ballot authorizing the General Assembly to allow qualified individuals to register and vote at a precinct polling place on Election Day. Same-day voter registration is currently allowed in Maryland during Early Voting, but not on Election Day.

And automatic voter registration is coming to Maryland, the 11th state to enact this voter reform. [SB 1048](#) requires that several state agencies (MVA, local social services departments, Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Mobility Certification Office of MTA) notify an individual completing a transaction with the agency that he will be automatically registered to vote or have his voter registration updated unless he declines to register to vote or is ineligible to vote. Other states implementing this reform have noted dramatic increases in the number of registered voters. The provisions of this bill will take effect July 1, 2019, except the local social service agencies have until December 1, 2019 to implement the bill's requirements.

Lu Pierson

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Maryland was a leader in the country in addressing the issue of online campaign activity. It passed [HB 981/SB 855 Online Electioneering Transparency and Accountability Act](#) which was heavily amended to include features of [HB 768 Election Law - Online Political Advertisements and Campaign Material – Disclosure](#). [HB 768](#) was

described in [RSC 3](#) and **HB 981/SB 855** were described in [RSC 4](#). This law will make it easier to know who is purchasing online ads for political purposes and how much was paid for them. It creates reporting requirement to the State Board of Elections that have not previously been in place. This was the only campaign finance law that passed this session.

A number of public campaign finance bills were introduced this session including, [SB 374 Public Funding and Small Donor Act for General Assembly Elections](#), [HB174/SB 375 Election Law - Local Public Campaign Financing - Expansion](#) and [HB 785 Maryland Small Donor Incentive Act](#) were introduced but did not gain traction. However, some believe that due to the expansion of public campaign finance in Montgomery and Howard Counties, and the recent reinvigoration of the gubernatorial public campaign finance program that these bills may have more momentum next session.

Nancy Soreng

REDISTRICTING REFORM

Two bills really stood out in redistricting reform this legislative session, one asked for it all [HB 356/SB 307 General Assembly and Congressional Legislative Redistricting and Apportionment Commission \(RSC 2\)](#) and one asked for the bare minimum [HB 1022 Congressional Districts - Standards \(RSC 3\)](#). Neither passed out of committee.

At this point, all eyes are on the U.S. Supreme Court for [a ruling on the constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering](#). This session, the Court has heard two redistricting cases, one out of Wisconsin, where Republicans are accused of drawing unfairly partisan maps, and one out of Maryland, where Democrats are charged with the same. It was thought that the Court had agreed to take a second case, to provide some sort of balance and collect more information before forming an opinion by the end of its session. However, now [there is speculation that the Court may hold off on an opinion until their next session starts in the fall](#), which would give them the chance to take up yet another case out of North Carolina. Whatever happens, it is sure to have a significant effect on redistricting reform in Maryland, so we'll be watching closely.

Ashley Oleson

TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT

The following bills passed both the House and the Senate:

[HB 677/SB 477 Public Information Act - Required Denials - Physical Addresses, E-Mail Addresses, and Telephone Numbers \(RSC 2\)](#), amends the Public Information Act to require custodians of public records to deny inspection of a distribution list that identifies an individual's physical address, e-mail address, or telephone number if the sole purpose of the inspection is to send news about certain activities, informational notices or emergency alerts.

HB 695 Open Meetings Act - Closed Meetings - Cybersecurity (RSC 2),) amends the Open Meetings Act to allow public bodies to meet in closed session to discuss cybersecurity matters, while **SB 396 Open Meetings Act - Training - Application (RSC 2)**, amends the Open Meetings Act to require only those public bodies that meet in a closed session to have a member of the public body designated to receive training on the requirements of the open meetings law.

Valerie Glenn

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Bail Reform - Pretrial Detention

At the start of the 2018 session, it was not expected that any bills would be introduced to challenge the Court of Appeals ruling restricting the use of money bail. ([RSC 1](#)) That proved to be the case. One bill, **SB 170/HB 388 Criminal Procedure - Violation of Conditions of Release (RSC 1)** was passed unanimously. It provided penalties for persons on pre or post-trial release who commit a violent crime or violate conditions of release, such as contact with victims.

Sentencing

In response to an increase in violent crime, the governor announced plans to introduce tough sentencing and corrections legislation to ensure that those convicted of violent crimes serve their full sentences. ([RSC 1](#)) These measures, for the most part, did not succeed. For example, **HB 100/SB 199 Criminal Law - Violent Offenders - Penalties (Accountability for Violent Criminals Act of 2018) (RSC 1)**, introduced by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House at the request of the administration did not make it out of the JPR or JUD committees. **HB 678 Criminal Law - Subsequent Offenders (Career Criminal Truth in Sentencing Act) (RSC 3)** called for stiff penalties for repeat offenders and also failed in committee.

Three bills calling for the reinstatement of the death penalty, **SB 346/ HB 1411 Criminal Law - Death Penalty - Reinstatement, (RSC 2)**, **SB 816 Criminal Law - Death Penalty - Law Enforcement Officers and First Responders (RSC 3)** and **HB 887 Criminal Law - Death Penalty - Murder of Specific Individuals or Mass Murder (RSC 3)** all received unfavorable reports in JUD.

Criminal Justice Reform

The Justice Reinvestment Act of 2016 was designed to use a data driven approach for sentencing and corrections policies in order to reduce the state's incarcerated population and reduce spending on corrections. **HB 1082/SB 593 Justice Reinvestment Act - Modifications (RSC 3)** proposed several changes to that Act, such as reducing mandatory minimum sentences for certain minor drug violations, and consideration of the effect of sentencing on a convict's need for drug treatment, among other things. The bill was passed in the House and in a different form in the Senate resulting in two conference committees with no final agreement.

The Judiciary

Three bills seeking to change the process for electing Circuit Court judges were proposed: **[SB 130 Election of Circuit Court Judges - Nonpartisan Elections \(RSC 1\)](#)**; **[HB 513 Circuit Court Judges - Election, Qualifications and Term of Office \(RSC 2\)](#)** and **[HB 607 Circuit Court Judges - Selection and Tenure \(RSC 2\)](#)**. All were rejected in committee.

Sexual Assault

[HB 301/ SB 270 Courts - Evidence of Sexually Assaultive Behavior - Admissibility \(RSC 2\)](#) passed unanimously. It allows evidence of a defendant's prior sexual assaultive behavior to be introduced in a trial for the crime of sexual assault. Two bills calling for the expedient review of sexual assault evidence collection kits, **[HB 8/SB 413 Criminal Procedure - Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit - Testing Requirement \(RSC 1\)](#)** and **[HB 1700 Criminal Procedure - Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits - Analysis \(RSC 4\)](#)** were rejected in committee.

Marlene Cohn

CORRECTIONS

Several bills were introduced that could improve conditions for inmates both in prison and after release. For example, **[SB 237 Adult Correctional Institutions - Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship Curriculum - Pilot Program \(RSC 1\)](#)** which passed the Senate unanimously, but did not come out of the JUD committee. **[HB 291/ SB 1137 Correctional Services - Inmate Case Record - Educational, Vocational and Job History \(RSC 2\)](#)** which uses information about inmates to develop programs and treatments to facilitate inmates' rehabilitation was passed by both houses. **[SB 598/HB 797 Correctional Services - Inmates - Menstrual Hygiene Products \(RSC 2\)](#)** and **[SB 629/ HB 787 Correctional Facilities - Pregnant Inmates - Medical Care \(RSC 2\)](#)** both passed overwhelmingly and will improve conditions for female inmates. **[SB 539/ HB 786 Correctional Services - Restrictive Housing - Limitations \(RSC 2\)](#)** which would have significantly limited the use of solitary confinement in prisons, was passed by the House but did not come out of the Senate committee.

[SB 249/ HB 846 Inmates - Life Imprisonment - Parole Reform \(RSC 2\)](#) would have repealed the requirement that the Governor must approve parole for inmates sentenced to life imprisonment with the possibility of parole, but it did not come out of either the Senate or House committee. This proposal probably will be introduced in future sessions since the fact that governors historically have not granted parole, has received considerable recent publicity.

Marlene Cohn

DRUG ABUSE

[HB 02/SB 01 Natalie M. LaPrada Cannabis Commission Reform Act](#) Passed both chambers, enrolled.

[SB 87 Controlled Dangerous Substances --- Registration, Schedules, Penalties,](#)

and Orders of Impoundment Passed by both chambers, enrolled.

[SB 139](#) Higher Education – Heroin and Opioid Addiction and Prevention Policies Exceptions and Revisions. Passed by both chambers.

[HB 359/SB 309](#) Health - Reporting of Overdose Information Passed both chambers, enrolled.

[SB 522](#) Health Care Providers - Opioid Prescriptions - Discussion of Information and Risks. Passed both chambers, enrolled

[HB 922](#) Maryland Department of Health - "Pill Mill" Tip Line. Passed both chambers, enrolled.

Chris Hager

GUN CONTROL

[SB 1265](#) – Maryland Safe to Learn Act was introduced and passed in the last days of the session then signed into law. Creates a variety of statewide standards and guidelines, requires public high schools to have either a school resource officer (SRO) or plans for adequate law enforcement presence by the upcoming school year. Public middle and elementary schools would have to have the same in place prior to the 2019-2020 school year. Funding approved to defray costs for school safety improvements, SROs, and mandated local school safety evaluations and emergency plans and mental health services.

Other significant bills that passed include a ban on Rapid Fire Trigger activators (bump stocks) unless an owner receives authorization from ATF to continue to possess. (**[HB 888/SB707](#)**)(**[RSC 2](#)**) and a bill that eliminated the state's Handgun Permit Review Board appointed by the governor and moving those powers to a panel headed by the Secretary of State Police. (**[HB 819/SB 741](#)**)(**[RSC 2](#)**). Finally, legislation passed prohibiting someone found guilty of a domestic-related crime from possessing a regulated firearm, rifle or shotgun. The court must order the convicted person to transfer these firearms and can order a search to remove them, if needed. (**[HB 819/SB 741](#)**) (**[RSC 2](#)**)

Mary Ellis

JUVENILE JUSTICE

[HB 1023](#) / [SB 861](#) Juvenile Law - Witnesses - Body Attachment (Clippinger/Ferguson) (**[RSC 3](#)**) allows the court to issue a body attachment (requirement to appear) for witnesses in juvenile court cases. The Senate passed the bill with an amendment to remove the requirement that witnesses be 18 years of age, but the amendments were rejected by the House and went to a Conference Committee. The Conference Committee's report recommended that the Senate's amendments be rejected, and the bill was passed enrolled with the Conference Committee's report.

[HB 1524/SB 1134](#) **Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council** (Clippinger/Ferguson) ([RSC 3](#)) which establishes a juvenile justice coordinating council to study and make recommendations on the state's juvenile justice programs, passed with amendments to include a union member from the Department of Juvenile Services on the council, and to include additional demographics and situations in studies and reports. When introduced in the Senate, amendments were requested both on the floor and in their Committee's report, which included extending the time for reporting to 2021 and the existence of the council until 2022, as well as reviewing the efficacy of anti-violence programs in public schools and juvenile facilities. The bill passed the Senate with amendments on April 5th, but was not able to be reconciled with the House in time for adoption.

[HB 1607](#) **Education- Juvenile Services Education Program- Management and Operations** (Luedtke) ([RSC 3](#)) establishes a new pilot program for a juvenile services education program managed by a county board of education. The bill passed the House with amendments to add sponsors, specify that the pilot would be one program instead of three, and provisions to eliminate disparities in staffing and facilities for both the program and public schools. It passed in the Senate with amendments to change timelines within the program. In the end, the senate bill passed, with the House being in agreement with the Senate's amendments.

[SB 91](#) **Juvenile Law - Disclosure of Court Records** (Chair, JPR, by request – Departmental – Juvenile Services) ([RSC 1](#)) allows for certain social services agencies to access juvenile court records. The bill passed the Senate with amendments to include coordination with the Department of Juvenile Services.

Judy Morenoff & Jill Muth

EDUCATION

Funding Pre-K to 12 Public Education

Some preliminary recommendations of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) were passed in [HB 1415](#) ([RSC 3](#)), which awaits the governor's signature. It includes a statewide teacher outreach and recruitment program, \$2.5 million in literacy grants for Title I schools, funding to maintain pre-kindergarten programs, \$4.5 million for after school and summer programming for students in high poverty schools and \$2 million to implement a career and technology education framework and pathway. The Kirwan Commission will continue meeting to cost out the extensive recommendations expected in December 2018. **The "Lockbox" or "Fix the Fund Act"** [SB 1122](#) ([RSC 3](#)), a Constitutional Amendment, will guarantee that gaming revenue truly provides supplemental funding, and once fully phased in will add at least \$500 million in new state funding for public education. It must be approved by voters in November. Also, \$200 million was put in reserve for education funding in future years. [HB 547/SB 373](#) ([RSC 2](#)) requires an annual appropriation of \$3 million for Head Start.

School Construction and Maintenance

[HB 1783](#) ([RSC 4](#)) referred to as the **Knott Bill** incorporating some recommendations of

the [21st Century School Facilities Commission](#), passed, was vetoed by the governor and the veto was overridden. The final bill streamlines many processes involved in school construction, expresses an intent to spend \$400 million annually for school construction, provides for a grant program for school safety enhancements and requires an assessment of the condition of all schools in the state, but leaves the decision about how to use the results to a workgroup. An independent Interagency Commission on School Construction will replace the former Interagency for School Construction for project decision-making. [SB 611, The Healthy School Facility Fund \(RSC 2\)](#) allocates \$30 million per year with a limit of \$15 million per county to school systems looking for emergency help to remediate conditions from faulty heating and plumbing systems to mold. [SB 186 \(RSC 1\)](#), the Capital Budget for FY2019, includes \$313 million for the public school construction program, \$68.2 million for local school systems with enrollment growth that over the last 5 years exceeds 150% of the statewide average or with 300 or more relocatable classrooms, \$10 million for public school safety improvements, \$10 million for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning improvements in Baltimore City public school buildings, and \$6.1 million for the Aging Schools Program.

Aid to Nonpublic Schools

The final operating budget bill [SB 185 \(RSC 1\)](#) contains a compromise amount of \$7 million for the BOOST scholarship program for students in nonpublic schools but strengthens anti-discrimination provisions for the program. The Capital Budget includes \$3.5 million for the Nonpublic Schools Aging School Program.

Lois Hybl

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Three important bills which had been considered in previous legislative sessions have passed this year.

[HB 1/SB 2 Termination of Parental Rights \(RSC 1\)](#) passed both houses early in the session and was promptly signed by the governor.

[HB 430/SB 379 Child Care Subsidies – Mandatory Funding Levels \(RSC 2\)](#) and [HB 524/SB 291 Protecting the Resources of Children in State Custody](#) (i.e., foster care) (RSC 2) passed and are awaiting the governor's signature. Also passed and awaiting signature is [HB 1685/SB 912 Thrive by Three Fund \(RSC 3\)](#).

[HB 191 Marriage – Age Requirements \(RSC 1\)](#) passed both houses in different forms and a conference committee was appointed, but no further action occurred. Several bills designed to assure that those required to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect actually do so (by providing more training or increasing penalties for not reporting) did not pass.

Judy Morenoff

HEALTH

[On April 13 the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the 2017 bill, which would have](#)

[protected citizens from sharp increases in prescriptions](#), ruling that it was prohibited by the “dormant commerce clause”. The dissenting opinion argued that such a move undermines the authority of the state. The linked article explains that efforts like these at the state level have been seen more and more due to the inaction of Congress, and public discontent with the price of pharmaceuticals. We can probably expect to see similar efforts introduced next session.

[HB 1782/SB 387](#), that Delegate Pena-Melnyk and Senator Middleton sponsored for leadership, was signed by the governor the day after the close of the session. The proceeds, calculated to be \$380 million, will be used for reinsurance to stabilize the individual health insurance market. This tax will take the place of the federal tax waived for insurance companies for one year in the new federal tax law. The bill also sets up a Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission. This may be the most important health bill of the session and was a true bipartisan effort. Governor Hogan also signed [HB 1400](#) which will allow school districts and non-profits to band together to purchase health insurance allowing for larger risk pools.

Delegate Hettleman’s bill [HB 1024/SB 986](#) mandates coverage of contraceptives for state employees and [HB 1283](#) will allow for single dosing of contraceptives. [SB 284](#) establishes a pilot program for adult dental care through Medicaid. [HB 736/SB576](#) will allow pharmacists and patients to discuss the cost of drugs and their alternatives. [HB 359/SB 309](#) requires reporting of overdose deaths.

All of the malpractice bills supported by the trial bar failed, but [SB 30/HB 1581](#) almost squeaked by and will definitely will be back next year.

Nielson Andrews

MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS & EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Paid Sick Leave

[HB 01](#) (2017) **Maryland Healthy Working Families Act** vetoed last year after session ended, was overridden, and the bill became effective Feb 11, 2018. None of the 2018 bills to modify or weaken this bill made it out of committee.

Earned Income Tax Credit

[HB 856](#) **EITC - Individuals Without Qualifying Children - Repeal of Minimum Age Requirement** ([RSC 2](#)) passed enrolled. The bill extended eligibility to include those 21 to 24 years of age and applies to tax year 2018 and beyond.

Employment

[HB 431](#) **Fostering Employment Act of 2018** ([RSC 2](#)) returned passed. The bill provides employment opportunities for foster care recipients and unaccompanied homeless youth.

Affordable Housing

[HB 1073 Residential Leases - Sewer and Water Bills](#) ([RSC 3](#)) passed enrolled. The bill requires a utility service provider to enable a tenant to establish an account directly with the provider or authorize a tenant to receive directly a courtesy copy of a water or sewer bill from the provider if a landlord is the account holder.

Basic Income

[HB 1729/SB 1164 Temporary Cash Assistance](#) a bill to increase the value of the state's assistance program for adults without dependent children, did not make it out of committee in either House.

Increase in Minimum Wage

[HB 664/SB 543 Fight for \\$15](#) ([RSC 2](#)), a much talked about attempt to increase the state minimum wage never made it out of committee.

Ruth Crystal

TRANSPORTATION

[HB 372 Maryland Metro Funding Act](#) ([RSC 2](#), [RSC 4](#) & [RSC 5](#)) transportation bill passed so that essential dedicated funding for Metro can go forward. After much negotiation, the full amount of \$167 million per year was allocated from the Maryland Transportation Trust Fund. A regional coordination of passing similar bills in Virginia and DC was essential. Amendments in this bill also place higher priority and focus on planning and funding for Baltimore transportation projects. **[HB 744 Complete Streets Policy – Adoption](#)** ([RSC 2](#), [RSC 5](#)) defines the concept of complete streets so all jurisdictions around Maryland may integrate balanced transportation solutions that include vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle options. **[HB 535 Transportation – Complete Streets Program – Establishment](#)** ([RSC 2](#), [RSC 5](#)) assists local governments in the creation, design, and implementation, of their own complete streets policy and amendments specify funding mechanisms. Amendments to both complete streets bills include stormwater management as part of the solution in designing streets for multiple modes of transportation.

Bee Ditzler

ENVIRONMENT: CLIMATE CHANGE

All of the bills covered under the rubric of Climate Change passed the General Assembly. In addition, **[HB 230/SB 290](#)** requires the legislature to pass a law to agree to any action by the governor to withdraw from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). It was signed by the governor on April 5, 2018. It is telling, that two bills which aim to protect Marylanders from the impact of climate change (pension investments and infrastructure) passed with clear support.

The state of Maryland will join the U.S. Climate Alliance in support of the Paris Climate Accord. The governor has already publicly committed to supporting Maryland's membership (See [Baltimore Sun](#)). Since Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goals are already at a 40 percent reduction by 2030, this action is symbolic, yet important in

demonstrating Maryland's desire for leadership in mitigation of the impacts of climate change.

[HB 03/SB 138](#) Environment – U.S. Climate Alliance – Membership ([RSC 1](#)); Passed House (95-33) Passed Senate (36-10)

[HB 230/SB 290](#) Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative – Withdrawal – Legislative Approval Required (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Extension Act) ([RSC 2](#)) Passed House (87-48) Passed Senate (41-5), signed by Governor.

[HB 993/SB 898](#) Maryland Pension Risk Mitigation Act ([RSC 3](#)) Passed House (92-44); Passed Senate (44-0)

[HB 1350/SB 1006](#) Sea Level Rise Inundation and Coastal Flooding – Construction, Adaptation, and Mitigation, ([RSC 3](#)) Passed House (99-39) Passed Senate (36-10) Added Highways to list of infrastructure.

Betsy Singer

ENVIRONMENT: LAND USE

[HB 766/SB 610](#) Forest Conservation Act to strengthen the original FCA Act of 1991 failed in the last hour of the 2018 session. The bill had two lives: first as a bill for a law, then, a bill for a study. The latter version of the bill had two different iterations in the two houses. When the versions couldn't be reconciled in the last minutes of the session, the bill failed ([RSC 2](#)).

[SB 119](#) Program Open Space – Local Funds – Acquisition and Development of Land for Education Purposes failed in committee. ([RSC 2](#))

[HB 1345](#) Sewerage Systems – Residential Major Subdivisions in Tier III and Tier IV Areas, failed in committee. ([RSC 3](#))

Susan Cochran

ENVIRONMENT: STORMWATER, BAY, PHOSPHORUS, PESTICIDES, RE-CYCLING, AIR, & OTHER

Two environmental bills that have become law this session: **[SB 112](#) Natural Resources - Tidal Fish Licenses** and **[SB 113](#) Natural Resources - Recreational License Incentive Discount Program**.

The following bills have passed in the Maryland legislature but not yet been acted on by the governor: **[HB 452/SB 389](#) Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact – Repeal**, **[HB 698](#) Agriculture - Industrial Hemp Pilot Program – Establishment**, **[HB 252](#) Department of Agriculture – Agritourism**, **[SB 94](#) Natural Resources - Unprotected Birds – Pigeons**, **[SB 203](#) Agriculture - Nutrient Management - Fertilizer Use on Turf**, and **[SB 496](#) Environment - Graywater - Residential Use**.

Three bills whose failures were particularly disappointing to many environmental organizations were [HB 116/SB 500 Pesticides - Use of Chlorpyrifos – Prohibition](#), [HB 26/SB 133 Community Healthy Air Act](#), and [HB 538/SB 651 Environment - Expanded Polystyrene Food Service Products – Prohibition](#).

Linda Silversmith

BUDGET

Following the recommendations of the conference committee, both houses of the General Assembly passed the \$43.5 billion Maryland Operating Budget for 2019. One notable change made by the committee was to halve the amount of the personal exemption passed by the Senate to a \$250 increase for single filers and \$500 for married couples. In return, the personal exemption will increase with inflation. It is expected that revenues will be reduced by a projected \$56.6 million next year because of this change.

Several other tax breaks were enacted in separate bills (see [Taxes](#) below). According to the conference committee, although the increase in the budget is just 2.2%, the budget increase provides funding for core State services and priorities including public education, higher education, Medicaid and human services. It restores funding for some legislative priorities while also meeting the guidelines of the Affordability Committee.

Tuition increases at public higher education institutions is limited to 2%, public education formulas are fully funded and Baltimore's school system will receive an additional \$23.7 to help close its \$130 million shortfall. Ten other districts will share an additional \$4 million.

The actuarial requirement for funding the state pension is fully met and an addition \$75 million was added to the fund.

The budget preserves the \$200 million set aside for future educational initiatives and sets aside another \$100 million in reserve. Both of these actions will come out of the expected \$400 million windfall to the state because of changes in Federal tax law.

The projected General Fund balance at the end of the fiscal year is \$201.4 million. The Rainy Day fund balance is \$879.0 million giving the state a projected cash balance of close to \$1.1 million.

Both the **Capital Budget** [SB 186](#) and the **Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act** [SB 187](#) were enacted as well.

Barbara Hankins

TAXES

Unlike recent years when few, if any, significant tax bills were enacted, a number of bills were passed this year, at least in part, because of the expected increase in income tax

receipts due to the impact of the Federal tax reform bill. Legislators wished to return as much as possible to Maryland taxpayers, some of whom are projected to be paying significantly higher Federal income taxes. Among the bills previously reported on are: [HB 43](#) deductions for perpetual conservation easements; [HB 96](#) deduction for costs related to living organ donors; [HB 671/SB 467](#) deduction for classroom supplies purchased by teachers; [HB 1454/SB 967](#) heritage structure rehabilitation tax credit; [SB 299/HB 354](#) tax reduction for retired correctional officers; [SB 966](#) tax reductions for retired public safety officers and veterans; and [SB 1154](#) increased tax credit for film production activities.

Bills affecting the inheritance tax were [HB 198](#) exemption for perpetual conservation easements from the Inheritance Tax and [HB 308/SB 646](#) maintenance of the status quo for the unified credit (passed without the governor's signature) and last, but not least, [SB 877/HB 989](#) the PRIME Act which establishes tax incentives for very large companies moving to Maryland and employing large numbers of employees.

Barbara Hankins



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