

March 14, 2011

I am writing this update on Monday, March 14. We are exactly four weeks from the end of session.

While it seems that I have worked harder this year than any prior session, we still have a great deal more work to be completed. Crossover is two weeks away, so all House Bills need to be voted on and "crossed over" to the Senate on March 28. We will have Committee Hearings every day this week, next week we will work 8 days straight until March 28.

Marriage Equality

The "marriage issue" has consumed my time, my staff's time, my phones and my email for the past two weeks. The issue finally came to rest on Friday, March 11 when the bill entitled Senate Bill 116, "Civil Marriage Protection Act", was recommitted to the House Judiciary Committee. Many people have asked me if the Bill will be back this year, it will not. Some form of a bill for or against same sex marriage has been part of every session I have been in Annapolis. On one hand, I was hoping to finally put this issue to rest with a vote; on the other hand, I was not ready to make a decision. Senate Bill 116 did pass the Senate. The members of the House were extremely divided over the issue, one group wanted Civil Marriage, another wanted Civil Unions, and one group wanted a referendum to go to the people for a vote. I am in favor of a referendum. I have never seen my constituency so divided on an issue, *never* in my thirteen years of public service. We tracked every phone call, every letter and every email, in the end we found the voters were equally divided. I am sure that if we had passed SB 116, it would have been petitioned to referendum by the people. I did not want to put the any group through the process and expense of getting over 55,000 signatures, why not just put the issue to the voters. Certainly if bringing slots back to Maryland was important enough for a referendum, then, in my opinion, same sex marriage is important enough for the voters to decide.

I do want to comment that the testimony that I heard on the House Floor on Friday was both passionate and compelling. The debate was respectful and informative alternating between proponents and opponents. We heard pleas for equality, for civil rights and tolerance. It was argued that the union of two loving people, regardless of their sexual preference, is something to be treasured and honored. Opponents decried the issue was one of morality, children and tradition. We were reminded that at the foundation of our democracy are the concepts of religious freedom and justice.

While I consider myself a religious person and a practicing Catholic, I do not believe I am in office to force my values, or the values of my religious community on others. I

also think that homosexuality affects more families than we could ever imagine. It probably affects the families of most people that are reading this newsletter. Civil Marriage may be an idea that has come to Maryland too soon. (There are many questions that remain regarding this issue) Is a marriage performed by a Justice of the Peace or a Clerk of the Court a religious ceremony or a civil one? Regardless of my opinion, the issue will not be back until next year, or maybe four years from now. I ask that you give this issue serious thought over the next nine months, and share your thoughts with me before the 2012 session.

School Construction

School building construction in Maryland is funded jointly by State and local government with contribution levels varying county by county. Each year, the Interagency Committee on Public School Construction (IAC) makes recommendations to the Board of Public Works on school construction allocations based on eligibility, design completion, enrollment growth and local funding efforts. Here is the list that the IAC has agreed to fund for Anne Arundel County totaling 22.9 million:

Glen Burnie HS	Building A (HVAC system)
Broadneck ES	Open space enclosure
Cape St. Claire ES	Kindergarten addition
Four Seasons ES	Open space enclosure
Piney Orchard ES	Kindergarten addition
Severn ES	Open space enclosure
Southern HS	Roof, water treatment plant, and science lab renovation
Solley ES	Kindergarten addition
Davidsonville ES	Kindergarten addition
Northeast HS	Partial construction funding
Folger McKinsey ES	Partial construction funding
Maryland City ES	Electrical
Severna Park ES	Electrical
Point Pleasant ES	Partial construction funding
Phoenix Annapolis	Local planning

In-state Tuition for Immigrants

I have received many calls, both in support of and in opposition to, "in-state" tuition for immigrants that do not have a legal presence. I *do not* support in-state tuition or other State benefits for people or the children of people that are not in Maryland with a legal presence.

"Puppy Mills"

HB 940, Counties - Kennel Licenses - Requirements for Breeders, has prompted a number of calls and correspondence. This bill requires a person to obtain a kennel license if the person owns or has custody of 10 or more unspayed dogs over the age of 6 months and intends to breed any and sell any offspring; requiring each county to collect and maintain specified information for each kennel license. When passed, this bill would regulate "puppy mills" that breed dogs too frequently and create puppies that are not healthy. I plan to support this bill.

My Bills

I submitted eleven bills, and I still have hope that nine of these bills will pass the House. You can track my bills at <http://mlis.state.md.us/2011rs/sponsors/beidle.htm>.

The Last Four Weeks

While my last four weeks will be very hectic, please do not hesitate to call or email my office about any issue or bill that concerns you. I can be reached at Pamela.beidle@house.state.md.us or at 410-841-3370 if I can be of any assistance.

During the session, I get thousands of letters and emails, be sure to include your name and address when you write to me. My staff -Vincent LaMartina and Nancy Lipin Crawford - and I read each and every piece of correspondence and will get back to you as soon as possible.

For more frequent updates about my activities in Legislative Session 2011, please visit my Facebook page, Delegate Pam Beidle.

You will not see me in the community until after April 11, but I look forward to visiting your community meetings again soon.

Best regards,

Pamela G. Beidle
State Delegate