

Newsletter #2

The pace of the General Assembly is picking up. We are about 1/3 through the 90 days. Currently there are 1,372 House Bills and 994 Senate Bills to be heard and voted on. The “Crossover date” is March 17th; this means each Chamber is to send to the other Chamber those bills it intends to pass favorably. Any bills passed after this date must be referred to Rules Committees.

Two of the “hot topics” under discussion are minimum wage and domestic violence legislation. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the discussion points.

Minimum Wage

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. According to an analysis from the National Employment Law Project, a \$10.10 minimum wage will benefit 472,000 Maryland workers.

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. President Obama plans to sign an executive order requiring federal contractors be paid at least \$10.10 an hour under the terms of new or renewed federal contracts.

Across the country, 21 states and D.C. have minimum wage rates that are higher than the federal minimum wage.

The Administration’s proposal will:

- (1) Restore the purchasing power of Maryland’s minimum wage by gradually increasing \$7.25 to \$10.10 per hour, through three annual increases of \$0.95 (on July 1st of each year) to \$8.20 in 2014, \$9.15 in 2015, and \$10.10 in 2016;
- (2) Index the minimum wage beyond 2016 based on the annual percentage growth in the Consumer Price Index; and
- (3) For workers who rely on tipped wages of at least 70% of the State minimum wage rate.

My concern about increasing the minimum wage is the effect that this change may have part time workers. If the State increases the minimum wage, will fewer young people get seasonal or part-time work?

I am putting a survey question on my website: www.pambeidle.com. Please visit the site and share your opinion.

Domestic Violence Legislation

1. 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. Family Law – Domestic Violence – Permanent Final Protective Orders. This bill requires the court to issue a permanent final protective order against an individual who is convicted and sentenced to serve; a term of imprisonment of at least 5 years for certain acts of abuse. In addition, this bill adds the crime of second degree assault to the list of crimes, which subjects a person to the issuance of a permanent final protective order.
3. Committing a Crime of Violence in the Presence of a Minor– Penalties. This bill increases the penalties for certain crimes of violence that are committed in the presence of a minor. Research has shown that violence witnessed by a minor can significantly impact a child's development, behavior and temperament. The purpose is to hold abusers accountable by giving courts the ability to impose an enhanced penalty for violent crimes committed in the presence of a minor.

My office is open full time during the Session. Nancy Crawford is my Legislative Aide, Jenn Thompson is my Community Liaison and Lisa Johnson is my Intern for the session. My contact information remains the same: pamela.beidle@house.state.md.us or 410.841.3370. Please feel free to share your thoughts and concerns with me.

It is truly an honor to serve you in the Maryland General Assembly.