

March 23, 2009

General Assembly Update.

With only three weeks left until the end of the 2009 Legislative Session, we still have a great deal to be done. In my Committee, we have heard almost 300 bills, and starting March 30 we will begin hearing the cross-over bills from the Senate. The days are long! We are still waiting to see the final result of the 2009 Budget from the Appropriations Committee and we should see it this week. Then the budget will cross-over to the Senate and the negotiations will begin. We continue to have a reduction of revenues expected, so it seems that the budget changes everyday.

I am making progress on two of my three bills. **House Bill 287**, which clarifies the coverage that a condominium association must provide for common elements and units in a condominium community, passed unanimously from my committee on March 19th. It will be heard on the floor of the House on Tuesday, March 24. **House Bill 1368** has been amended to become a task force to study the regulation for pier permits. **House Bill 1241**, the change the words to the State song, *Maryland My Maryland* may not get out of committee. However, the fourth grade classes from Glen Burnie Park Elementary did a terrific job, coming down to testify and singing the proposed new version of the song. They got to experience government in action! For many of the children, it was their first time to visit Annapolis. The students were well prepared and well behaved and Delegate Love and I were proud to have them as our guests in Annapolis.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION

Two of Governor O'Malley's bills on domestic violence have been heard and voted on in the Judiciary Committee. **House Bill 302 and House Bill 296** both passed the House with amendments. The bills will strengthen judges' ability to confiscate firearms when Temporary and Final Protective Orders have been issued.

In 2007, Maryland homicides attributed to domestic violence incidents totaled 30, an increase of over 15% compared to the calendar 2006 total of 26 homicides. The majority of these homicide victims were women, and the weapon used in a majority of these homicides was a firearm. Of the 4,261 aggravated assaults that occurred in calendar 2007, 172 involved a firearm.

House Bill 302 (Surrender of Firearms with Temporary Protective Orders) would give a judge the discretion to order abuse suspects to give up their firearms when served with a seven-day temporary protective order. Temporary Protective Orders (TPO) are typically in effect for no more than 7

days and can be extended to up to 30 days to protect a victim until both parties have the opportunity to go before a judge. Under current law, Judges do not have the authority to confiscate firearms in conjunction with a TPO.

In fiscal 2007 (the latest information available), 1,936 temporary protective orders were granted in the circuit courts and 15,491 were granted in the District Court.

House Bill 296 (Surrender of Firearms with Protective Orders) would require a judge to order someone who is found by a court to be an abuser, and has a final protective order issued against them, to surrender all firearms for the full period of the protective order, typically one-year. Currently, when judges order a Final Protective Order (FPO), the confiscation of firearms is at their discretion.

EMS System Work Group

In January 2009, Speaker Michael E. Busch appointed a special 14 member workgroup to review the emergency medical system (EMS) in Maryland. The Maryland State Police currently operates under a multi-mission system, wherein the helicopters serve to provide Medevac, search/rescue, law enforcement, and homeland security missions using 12 helicopters, purchased between 1989 and 1999, from 8 bases across the state (prior to the Trooper 2 crash). Since its inception in the early 70's as the first civilian agency to transport critically injured trauma patients, the MSP Aviation Command has transported over 130,000 patients. Medevac transports peaked in 2004 and subsequently dropped 23% by 2008, due to increased ground transports. The crash of Trooper 2, a Medevac crew based in Southern Maryland, in September 2008, resulted in increased attention to the State's trauma system; it was the first time a Medevac crashed in 22 years.

The EMS Workgroup focused on:

- The structure of the Statewide EMS System, including the role of local and state agencies;
- Funding of the Statewide EMS system;
- Structure and mission of the MSP Aviation Division, including the recent legislative audit and review of the National Expert Review Panel; and Helicopter Procurement, including the role of commercial carriers.

Recommendations

The EMS Workgroup finalized recommendations including:

- Support of the current fleet of MSP multi-mission helicopters with safety upgrades, flight simulator, maintenance and inventory management software and retrofitted to include night vision goggles, ELTs, TAWs and flight simulators.
- Budgeting for the purchase of three helicopters in the FY10 budget, and three helicopters in each subsequent year, to avoid multiple versions of helicopter models and maintenance problems.
- Establishing a Joint Oversight Committee on the EMS system to oversee the procurement of new assets for the State, to sunset in three to four years.
- Transferring natural resources-related functions to MSP for the more efficient use of helicopter resources, following the elimination of the DNR Aviation Division in the fall of 2008, due to budgetary constraints.
- Updating the Base Study, to be completed MIEMMS, in consultation with MSP, with formal recommendations on the number of bases and helicopters necessary to provide statewide EMS coverage, based on data collected over a two year period from September 2008.
- Review and evaluation of the current network of trauma and specialty referral centers by the Maryland Health Care Commission and recommendations to improve the current system. The review should include an analysis of current centers, possible closures and additions of new centers and the MSP base study.
- The Governor should immediately fill expired terms on the EMS Board with members that have requisite experience in the specific career fields required under statute.
- MIEMMS should respond to the findings of the Expert Panel on triage protocols and helicopter utilization, including national perspectives on best practices.

Please continue to stay in touch, email me, call me, and let me know your position on bills and issues. Thank you for allowing me to serve you in the House of Delegates.