

Newsletter #7 2013 Session

This is the final week of the 2013 Legislative Session. Many major issues remain to be resolved between the House and the Senate. This newsletter will be a short news brief just to mention the current status of the most asked about topics and tell you about the issues you can watch for this week.

The Budget

The budget is in conference committee; there are a few issues to be resolved. The budget seems to be a much more collaborative process this year. The Governor has also submitted a supplemental budget to provide for the revised revenue estimate of \$207,824,065.

The Firearms Safety Act of 2013

This bill is known as "The Gun Bill." SB 281 passed the Senate weeks ago, and the Judiciary Committee has been working on amendments for several weeks. The House will have the "second reader" on Tuesday, April 2. Also, because this is a Senate Bill, amendments can be offered again on the "third reader." I know the debates will be long, and if we send an amended bill back to the Senate, the Senate will need to vote again on the changes made by the House. I cannot predict if this bill will pass by the end of session. I do not support the bill; there are still too many unanswered questions.

Lawful Status Requirement

In 2009 we passed a bill that requires everyone in Maryland to prove "Lawful status" when they apply for or renew a drivers license. SB 715/HB789 would change this process to a "two tiered" drivers license system. If you can prove lawful status you will have one type of drivers' license, if not, you will have a different type of license. If you do not have lawful status, you will have to prove that you have filed Maryland State income taxes for two years. This is a puzzle to me, if you are not here lawfully, why has the IRS issued you a tax identification number so you can file taxes? On the other side of the issue, do we want people driving without licenses and without insurance? This is a complicated issue that has been left to the very end of session.

The Gas Tax

The Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013, HB1515, passed the Senate with a vote 27 in favor and 20 unfavorable. The bill passed the House with a vote of 76 in favor and 63 opposed. It was a close vote in both chambers. I did not vote in favor of the gas tax increase for a number of reasons.

The Business Climate Work Group

I was honored to be a member of newly created Business Climate Work Group. The Business Climate Workgroup was tasked with making short-term recommendations for this session and long-term recommendations for next session to the Speaker and House leadership. The Work Groups inaugural year proved to be very successful. We met weekly early in session and supported a number of business bills. HB 560, Public Private Partnerships and HB 613, Tax Increment Financing, have both passed the House and are currently on the Senate floor. We recommended the expanded uses of tax credits to include Research and Development and Cyber Intelligence. We met with TEDCO and learned of funding to opportunities to support entrepreneurs with business technical experience in technology and about the business incubators in Southern Maryland, Northeastern Maryland and the Eastern Shore. Also, we supported funding for the creation of an Innovation Portal to help new start up businesses.

Once again this year we have had difficult issues. I appreciate your comments and opinions that you share with me. I will send one final newsletter next week after session ends with the final disposition on the controversial bills.

Please continue to stay in touch and be sure to include your full name and mailing address. My Legislative Assistant is Nancy Crawford and my intern is Joanna McKee from UMCP. We are experiencing very a high volume of phone calls and e-mails daily, please be assured that your correspondence is read and your opinion is very important to me. It is truly impossible for my office to provide each constituent a timely personal response.

My contact information is: Pamela.beidle@house.state.md.us or (410)841-3370.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your representative in the House of Delegates, it is truly my honor.