

TO CONTACT
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www.senatorpinsky.org

Annapolis Advocate

Paul Pinsky, your senator in Maryland's 22nd district



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Scholarships Now Available

Interested in financial help for tuition to attend a Maryland college? If you live in the 22nd district, you can now apply to Senator Paul Pinsky's scholarship committee for a state senatorial scholarship.

The scholarships range up to \$2,000 annually for up to four years. Residents who have graduated high school or will be graduating high school (or receiving a GED) this spring can apply.

To submit your application, please go to www.senatorpinsky.org or call the senator's office at 301-858-3155. You can also check with your local high school's guidance office.

The application due date: April 1.

Senator Pinsky's scholarship committee, made up entirely of citizen volunteers from the 22nd district, will be selecting the scholarship winners later this spring.

Our Times Demand Both Safeguards and Vision

Dear Neighbors,

January 10 starts another legislative session, and lawmakers have some big issues to take up. We also have an election coming up next fall. So this session should be quite a whopper.

Governor Hogan has been trying to distance himself publicly from President Trump's self-serving rants. But our governor, behind the scenes, has been pushing some really backward proposals — described elsewhere in this newsletter — that are decimating statewide health and environmental protections.

We need state and local safeguards against President Trump's attacks on important federal programs. We need bold solutions to the problems facing our state. We're getting neither from our governor.

In 2018, my legislative colleagues and I will be doing our best to pick up the slack. At the start of the session, I'll be voting to override Governor Hogan's veto of the earned sick leave legislation the General Assembly passed last year.

I'll also be introducing new legislation — the Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act — that provides working and middle-income families two years of free community college and limits tuition increases at our state's four-year colleges.

I'll be working with fellow lawmakers on many other



Governor Larry Hogan is pushing, on several key fronts, policies that reflect the White House line.

fronts as well. We'll be fighting for legislation that adds Maryland to the list of states that have joined the U.S. Climate Alliance, a group that's working to honor the Paris climate accords, despite President Trump's decision to pull out of that all-important agreement.

We also have legislation in the works, long overdue, to ensure that women who conceive after a rape can terminate the parental rights of their

assailant.

Finally, I'm going to be pursuing efforts to implement a "Medicare For All" act to ensure that everyone in Maryland has a right to affordable, accessible, and quality health care.

Yes, this all makes for an ambitious agenda. But we should demand no less. With your help, Maryland can be the shining star our nation needs at this most trying time.

Senator Paul Pinsky to Seek a New Term

Longtime 22nd district Senator Paul Pinsky has announced that he will run for reelection in 2018.

"We have yet to win the battle for social, economic, and environmental justice," says Senator Pinsky. "We need to build a mass movement toward those ends, and I hope to continue to be a voice in the Senate for that movement."

The 2018 Democratic Party primary election will be held June 26, and the general election will follow on November 6.



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Education

Improving Access Across Our County and State

What do we need to do here in Maryland to make our public schools truly world class?

Back in 2016, the Maryland legislature created a blue-ribbon Commission on Innovation and Excellence — chaired by former University of Maryland system chancellor Brit Kirwan — to explore this fundamental question.

Only 25 people statewide are serving on this “Kirwan Commission,” Senator Paul Pinsky among them.

The commission has so far advanced preliminary proposals that aim to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession by making teacher prep programs more challenging and increasing salaries and the time teachers have for professional collaboration.

The world’s most educationally successful nations are already taking these steps.

The Kirwan Commission is also emphasizing the importance of expanding high-quality pre-kindergarten opportunities for children in poverty, extending the school day and year, and creating incentives that encourage our best teachers to stay in the classroom.

The Commission will be proposing new funding formulas to increase school spending and wants to make some state funding conditional on local districts implementing reforms proven to work. The final Kirwan Commission recommendations will appear later this year.

In Our Colleges

Study after study shows that achieving a two-year associate’s degree — or receiving a formal job training certificate — signif-

icantly increases lifetime income. Four-year degrees have an even stronger lifetime-income impact. Unfortunately, high costs often discourage young people in Maryland from pursuing these opportunities.

That’s why Senator Pinsky is

certainly do remain. But Superintendent Kevin Maxwell has brought stability and modest gains in student performance to county schools.

The board minority seems too busy generating headlines to notice. Instead of offering

Assistance in Annapolis?

Are you planning a family trip to the state capital anytime soon? Does your child’s class have a trip to Annapolis in the works? Or your community group?

If you’re headed to Annapolis — and need some help setting up a tour — why not give Senator Pinsky’s reliable staff a call? Staffers stand ready and willing to help you get the most out of any visit to our state capital.

Senator Pinsky’s office can also help out if you run into a problem with one of the state’s many agencies or if you would like to know the status of a piece of legislation you’re tracking.

You can reach the office at 301-858-3155 or at Paul.pinsky@senate.state.md.us.

Currently staffing Senator Pinsky’s office: chief of staff Ian Ullman and community relations specialist Carole Smith. Seth Cohen and Mitchell Wilson will also be on hand as interns during the 2018 session.



Maryland’s former university chancellor is heading a panel that could vault education in our state to world-class levels.

proposing the Degree and Job Certification Without Debt Act. This legislation will phase in free tuition for students from families making under \$150,000 a year who are seeking an A.A. degree or job certification in fields like practical nursing or mechanics.

The new Pinsky legislation also freezes tuition hikes at public four-year colleges for three years and helps bring back “near-completers,” those former students within a few credits of graduating who’ve had to drop out because of financial or family problems.

The Pinsky bill would finance these new efforts by closing corporate tax loopholes.

In Prince George’s County

A small minority of the members of the Prince George’s Board of Education have been making headlines of late criticizing our county schools and superintendent.

Problems in the system

constructive feedback, this minority block spends its time searching for people to blame, while rarely even mentioning students.

One case in point: the recent controversy over the inordinate number of grade changes for graduating seniors.

An audit has found no evidence that the superintendent or the central office drove these changes. Some of the changes could be legitimate. But others likely reflect perverse moves by overzealous principals and teachers to up their graduation numbers.

“Rather than lower standards for graduation,” says Senator Pinsky, “we should be raising standards and making education in Prince George’s County more rigorous.”

“Yes, our county needs more resources,” he adds. “But with effective instruction, our students can learn. We need to raise the bar.”

Transportation

Does Maryland Need a Magic Carpet Ride?

Solve the area's traffic and transportation problems or pander to the conventional wisdom with flashy proposals that make for attractive sound bites? Promote a fact-proven approach or pursue the next fad?

These choices will soon be facing Maryland voters as smart growth advocates like Senator Paul Pinsky square off against the vote-hungry policy makers of the Hogan administration.

How do the approaches of these two groups to our area's commuting woes compare? This comparison can help define the differences.

Undercutting Metro

The Washington, D.C. area's Metro system obviously needs financial support to stabilize the rail network and make needed upgrades. But no dedicated revenue source to fund these improvements currently exists.

Other major U.S. metro areas do have dedicated revenue sources.

Governor Hogan, for his part, has been unwilling to designate a permanent funding source. His unwillingness has left Maryland's partner jurisdictions in Metro — D.C., Virginia, and the federal government — unwilling to commit on their own part.

"The governor's refusal to make a real commitment leaves our regional riders forced to rely on a somewhat unreliable system," notes Senator Pinsky.

Finding a dependable revenue source for Metro clearly needs to be a higher priority for our state.

In the meantime, some local jurisdictions are seeking solutions. Montgomery County has proposed a dedicated bus

transit-way, adjacent to I-270, to move employees from upper Montgomery County into D.C.

Governor Hogan has rejected this modest proposal.

Making Riders Pay

To address traffic congestion and driver frustration on I-270 and the I-495 Beltway, Governor Hogan wants to add four lanes to both, as well as take over the Baltimore Washington Parkway from the federal government and add four lanes to this thoroughfare, too.

These new lanes, the governor acknowledges, would re-

"MagLev," a train that runs by magnetic levitation above the tracks. The governor now wants one of these high-tech wonders for Maryland.

Governor Hogan is proposing a high-speed train that would go from downtown D.C. to Baltimore in 15 minutes, traveling at speeds over 300 miles per hour, with long-term plans to continue on to New York and Boston.

The cost? In terms of neighborhood disruption, that would be huge. The Maglev route would tear up numerous neigh-



Governor Hogan wants to give our area's most affluent commuters a super-fast option for racing to Baltimore and beyond — at the expense of everybody else.

quire tolls. Yes, tolls. Like the \$44 one-way tolls for going ten miles now in effect in Virginia.

"Who could afford these tolls?" asked Senator Pinsky. "Not the hard-working working families of our region."

The governor's lane additions may not even be structurally possible, some analysts note, given the bridges and close-in development in some parts of their path.

None of this may matter to the governor. His proposal appears to be more about gaining votes from frustrated commuters than making commuting less demanding on our time and wallets.

Toys for Boys

On a trip to Japan this past year, Maryland's governor saw that nation's high-tech

neighborhoods and green spaces and parkland in its wake.

The dollar cost to riders? So far, unexplained.

The cost of the existing high-speed Acela train to New York is already running beyond the reach of all but people on an expense account. Any MagLev would be even more costly and end up serving only the wealthy, not average Prince George's County residents.

The dollar cost to Maryland taxpayers? The governor says that he can build a MagLev without costing state taxpayers anything.

"If you believe that," said Senator Pinsky, "I have a couple of national monuments I can sell you."

New Tax Bill, Old Inequality

The same week this fall that the U.S. Congress debated a tax overhaul, creating a record tax cut for America's wealthy and the corporations they run, New York University economist Edward Wolff released his latest analysis on the distribution of our nation's wealth.

The wealthiest 1 percent of American households, Wolff found, now own 40 percent of America's household net worth, more than the entire bottom 90 percent combined.

Wolff bases his totals on the latest Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances, a detailed study that takes place once every three years.

The new Fed survey shows that the most affluent 20 percent of U.S. households hold 90 percent of the nation's wealth. Households in the bottom 40 percent have zero net worth. Their debts offset whatever assets they may hold.

America's 1 percenters gobble up a wealth share twice as large as the top 1 percent share in nations like Canada and France — and three times as large as the top 1 percent share in even more equal nations like Finland.

The Republican tax plan enacted late in December will, all independent economic analysts agree, worsen income and wealth inequality in the United States.

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By Authority: Citizens for Paul Pinsky, Anna Frankle, Treasurer

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This *Annapolis Advocate* makes up just part of Senator Paul Pinsky's ongoing effort to keep 22nd district residents informed. Paul also sends out a monthly e-mail newsletter. To subscribe, e-mail "update-on@list.senatorpinsky.org."

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The Culture Corner

My Take on Recent Books and Flicks

By Paul Pinsky

I love sitting down to a good book or seeing a film whenever I set my work aside. For the new year, I have a few gems I'd like to pass on. You can find them either on the big screen or streaming.

Mudbound tells the story of two families, black and white, joined by poverty and racism in the post-World War II South. Hard-hitting and at times hard to watch, but great acting throughout, from a cast that includes Mary J. Blige. Available on *Netflix*.

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri centers on a strong mother — and quite the character — played by an outstanding Frances McDormand, a woman on a most challenging mission who won't be stopped. A tale of revenge and race that ultimately softens its early view of racism and redemption.

Lady Bird, a coming-of-age film, captures a freewheeling teenager, family squabbles, and growing up in Sacramento. Dreams, achieved, deferred, and smashed, glue this thoughtful film together.

City of Thieves, not a new book but a real favorite. During the siege of Leningrad in WWII, two young people go out on an odyssey that takes them on an emotional and physical roller coaster that includes laughter, love, and danger. The author does a masterful job of weaving the emotions and adventure.

Democracy in Chains won a place on my reading pile after I saw a slew of great reviews. Nancy McLean insightfully details the roots and rise of the right wing over the last fifty years. A good companion read to Jane Meyer's *Dark Money* from 2016.

Beautiful Ruins, another blast from the past, chronicles the travels of two star-crossed people from Italy to Oregon. More personal than political, the author tells a great story. A book about aging? A book about love? Both? Up to you to decide.