

TO CONTACT
SENATOR PINSKY:
301-858-3155



Annapolis Advocate

Paul Pinsky, your senator in the 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 current 22nd district, you can now apply to Senator Pinsky's scholarship committee for a state senatorial scholarship.

The scholarships range up to \$2,000 annually for up to four years and are available to residents who've graduated high school — or will be graduating or receiving a GED this spring — and attending college or grad school in the fall.

To apply, click your way to the Web at www.senatorpinsky.org or call the senator's office at 301-858-3155.

You can also check your local high school's guidance office. The application due date: April 4.

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

Please note that new communities joining the 22nd district in 2014 should apply to their current senator.

Dear Neighbor: We Can Be Even Prouder!

"I'm proud to live in Maryland."

I've heard this line a lot over recent weeks. Ever since Election Day, people have been telling me how good they feel about our state. The passage of the "Dream Act" and "marriage equality" — and the overwhelming vote to re-elect the President — have showcased Maryland on the national stage.

And for all the right reasons! Other states have had legislatures that took positive action on the Dream Act and marriage equality. But in Maryland we the voters also spoke up — and spoke up unmis-

takably — for justice and decency.

We still, of course, have many major challenges ahead.

On gun control, for instance, the best route to reducing the violence that plagues us remains with the federal government. But Maryland can — and should — strengthen our state gun laws.

We also need to guarantee funding for the Purple Line, the east-to-west Metro line — New Carrollton to Bethesda — that will ease our near-total reliance on cars and the Beltway.

On the local school level,

to insure continued progress, we need to hire a permanent superintendent with vision, dynamism, and commitment.

Our efforts to improve local schools have been uneven. We need to recruit new principals to schools with weak leadership, make sure our teachers have adequate resources, and, above all, raise expectations among all the stakeholders involved in our schools.

We can build off of our success, but this building won't just happen. We have to demand change — and help build it ourselves.

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Paul".

Cleaning Up All Those Disposable Bags

Every year, Americans throw away billions of plastic and paper bags. These bags end up despoiling our parks, rivers, and front yards — and making global warming even worse.

The cost of these bags currently gets built into the price of goods at the supermarket. Shoppers, in other words, are al-

ready paying for them.

In recent years, two of our neighboring jurisdictions, Washington, D.C. and Montgomery County, have enacted a small disposable bag fee to encourage the use of reusable bags.

Senator Paul Pinsky last year introduced legislation to have our county join D.C. and Montgomery County in this environ-

mental safeguard effort, and area supermarkets didn't object to the senator's proposal. But the manufacturers of plastic bags did. They lobbied hard against the bill and successfully defeated it.

Senator Pinsky's bag legislation has been reintroduced this session. Hopefully, with the bill's passage, we'll soon see some cleaner neighborhoods.

Education

About the New 'Common Core' and More

Death Penalty Redux?

Should Maryland retain the death penalty or join the 17 states that have outlawed it?

That question may very well be before the legislature when lawmakers convene January in Annapolis. The state has had a de facto moratorium in place for the last six years. Five people currently sit on death row.

Studies have shown that the death penalty neither deters capitol crime nor saves money.

Yes, executions do bring closure to a victim's family. But they also bring death to defendants wrongfully convicted.

The total number of death penalty convictions now overturned has reached 72, and well over 100 other cases may soon be overturned as well.

Senator Paul Pinsky agrees with Governor Martin O'Malley and will support a Maryland state ban on the death penalty.

Locally . . .

Voters in November's election determined three Board of Education seats in the northern part of our county.

In the Laurel/Beltsville area, Zabrina Epps, a college advisor, was elected to the board while in the Bowie area, current Board chair Verjeana Jacobs, an attorney, was re-elected.

In the Landover area, voters returned incumbent Patricia Eubanks to the board.

Their major task this year: selecting a permanent superintendent to replace Dr. William Hite, who left to take over the Philadelphia school system.

"Hiring a dynamic leader — with a proven record of success — has to be the board's top priority," notes Senator Pinsky. "Improving county schools, besides helping our children succeed, can stimulate greater economic development, expand our tax base, and raise property values as well."

Statewide . . .

Maryland is currently implementing a new curriculum called the "common core" in every state school. This time-consuming effort for teachers, particularly in the early stages, stresses the use of more original source material and de-

mands higher-order analytical skills from our students.

The material covered in the new common core should better prepare students for college, reducing the need for costly remedial courses after entering. In the next two to three years, new tests will deter-

commitment. Taking this step — by providing serious professional development, more resources, and better salaries — would also help retain those effective teachers who now choose to leave the teaching profession.

Effective evaluation and accountability would also

The new state 'common core' for our schools, if implemented with care, could reduce the need for remedial courses.

mine if more students have become "college ready."

With the onset of these new tests, Senator Pinsky believes, school systems should be able to start phasing out some existing tests — so our students are not constantly tested.

Nationally . . .

Many critics of public education have become quite fond of "quick fix" solutions that either can't be replicated system wide, or simply don't work.

One of these quick fixes: Encouraging talented young college graduates — with no experience in teaching — to enter the teaching profession for a couple of years before they move on to their "real" careers.

A much better solution: make teaching a profession that attracts our best and brightest not just for a few years, but for a career

help strengthen the teaching profession. Some so-called "reformers" want to add more tests to calculate how much "value" a teacher has "added" to students, then use the results from these tests to decide whether to keep teachers or fire them.

The better option: Create evaluations that amount to more than isolated test-day snapshots, assessments that can be used to improve teacher's performance throughout the school year.

"We need to both challenge and support our teachers. For those who don't respond to these challenges and this support, we need to part ways," says Senator Pinsky. "High standards remain a must for teachers working with our children."

In our county . . .

A Milestone for Franklin's in Hyattsville

Twenty years might not be enough in everybody's book to establish a "landmark" presence. But Franklin's General Store and Restaurant has certainly reached that status in just two decades. The importance of Franklin's to our region simply cannot be underestimated.

Back in the early 1980s, anyone driving through Hyattsville on Rte. 1 passed by one empty used car lot after another, and hardly any vitality existed in the northern part of our county. To find restaurants and entertainment centers, locals had to go into Washington or drive to a neighboring jurisdiction, like Bethesda or Annapolis.

Mike and Debbie Franklin took a chance. They invested their savings at the foot of the Alternate Rte. 1 Bridge. For close to 15 years, while successful, they sat on that stretch of

Rte. 1 all alone.

"We need Franklin's to have company, to be joined by more commercial and residential development," said Senator Paul

state and county support to jumpstart the commercial effort. The project's huge success and energy have now become obvious. "The momentum along



used car lot after another, and hardly any vitality existed in the northern part of our county. To find restaurants and entertainment centers, locals had to go into Washington or drive to a neighboring jurisdiction, like Bethesda or Annapolis.

Pinsky at the time.

EYA, a locally based housing firm, would soon start providing that company. EYA began building urban-style residential units, with plans for more retail. The commercial

Rte. 1 is only getting started," says Senator Pinsky. "Riverdale Park, Berwyn Heights, College Park, and, while a few more miles away, even Lanham can all benefit from this economic growth."

Remember when drivers on Rte. 1 through Hyattsville passed little more than empty used car lots? We've come a long way!

effort stalled, but a commitment to join the Hyattsville scene from Andy Shallal, the mover behind Busboys & Poets, kept hope alive.

Senator Pinsky and other local officials then intervened and put together

"None of this happened overnight, and plenty of people made contributions," he adds. "But we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude to our latter-day pioneers, Mike and Debbie Franklin, and their initial vision."

Happy 20th anniversary!

Did You Know?

Two top research groups, the Economic Policy Institute and the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, recently released the latest edition of their *Pulling Apart* report on state-level income inequality.

One key measure of that inequality: the ratio between the income of a state's most affluent 5 percent and poorest 20 percent.

By this measure, Arizona ranks as the nation's most unequal state, with a top 5 percent reporting 17 times the income of the state's bottom 20 percent.

The ratio in Maryland stands at 11.7 times. Maryland currently ranks, on this yardstick, as the 29th most unequal state.

The ratio in Iowa, the nation's most equal state: 8.7 times.

For more data on income and wealth gaps, check online at inequality.org.

Why Wait? Sign Up

Now for E-News

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," with "subscribe" in the subject field.

This newsletter, totally paid for by citizen donations, uses no state funds.

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

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Senator Paul Pinsky

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New Delegate Selected

On December 19, Alonzo Washington of Hyattsville was sworn in to fill the unoccupied House of Delegates seat that became vacant when Justin Ross unexpectedly resigned to pursue other interests.

Before his swearing in, Delegate Washington served on the staff of County Council member Will Campos.

The 22nd District delegation welcomes Alonzo to our team!

Assistance in Annapolis

Planning a trip to the state capital anytime soon?

If you or your school or your community group has a trip to Annapolis in the works — and you need help setting up a tour — why not give Senator Pinsky's office a call? His staffers can 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 a state agency or need info on a pending bill.

Just call the office at 301-858-3155 or email paul.pinsky@senate.state.md.us.

Currently staffing Senator Pinsky's office: chief of staff Ian Ullman, community liaison Kym Taylor, and interns Roy Brown and Phoebe McHale.

A Commentary on Our Kids

Newtown, Guns, the NRA, and Race

By Senator Paul Pinsky

The mass carnage in Newtown, Connecticut — the murder of twenty children and six school staff — brought grief to our entire nation. The sadness enveloped us all.

What will the long-range impact of this tragedy be? This unspeakable crime has placed gun violence back in our national political discourse. More and more Americans agree that no civilian should be allowed to own a semi-automatic, large-clip weapon.

But let's remember that young people are dying by gun violence every day, particularly in our inner cities. Many of these youth would be alive today if guns were not so readily available.

The National Rifle Association's response to Newtown? The answer to a bad man with a gun, the NRA informs us, is a good man with a gun.

But clever sound bites can't conceal the insensi-

tivity to suffering, the greed, and the unspoken racism that's driving the NRA leadership.

These NRA leaders see no need to confront gun violence. They push positions instead that end up increasing firearm sales, exactly the same positions held by gun manufacturers.

Many NRA rank-and-file members, on the other hand, support reasonable restrictions on magazine clips and semi-automatic weapons. Hunters know you don't need 30 bullets to bring down a deer.

We as a nation are not going to solve our gun violence problem by placing armed guards in every school — or encouraging every teacher, as some NRA diehards apparently believe, to "pack" a pistol.

Spread more guns around? Can you imagine the results? A security officer mistakenly shooting an angry parent? A crazed gunman seeking out a security officer to get him —

or her — "out of the way"? Or the worst scenario of all, a distraught student taking a teacher's gun and wreaking murderous havoc on classmates?

The net result of encouraging the sale of more weapons? We already know that: More guns will mysteriously end up in the inner city, with ever larger numbers of African-American and Latino youth losing their lives.

What do NRA leaders say about these likely eventualities? Nothing. Not their problem, they insist, not their responsibility.

The NRA leadership has failed miserably to take responsibility for gun violence in minority communities, just as this leadership has failed miserably to take responsibility for weapons of mass destruction in places like Newtown.

I find these failures hideous — and totally unacceptable.