

Annapolis Advocate

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Editorial Ethics Matter

First our governor fires hundreds of veteran state employees, each with years of technical expertise and experience, to make jobs for his supporters and contributors.

Then the school superintendent here in Prince George's County is nailed for signing state contracts that benefited his live-in partner.

Meanwhile, out across the country, corporate executives are convicted for cooking corporate books and looting pension funds.

And on Capitol Hill the nation's highest-ranking lawmakers ride corporate jets to exotic destinations and auction off favors to the highest deep-pocket bidders.

What message does all this send our children?

These "ethical lapses" have become so commonplace that we take them for granted, as part of the natural order of things, just as people become numb to our many metro area murders.

That attitude has to stop. We need to blow the whistle on unethical behavior wherever we see it. We need to hold the perpetrators accountable.

It's not too late to shift from cynicism to hope, to make "ethical lapses" in our government, workplace, or communities simply "unacceptable."

Senator Paul Pinsky

Dear Neighbor,

Something fairly amazing took place in Annapolis during the 2005 legislative session. On a number of issues that matter to working families, we actually made some real progress. Now I know this isn't the impression of the 2005 session that came across in the newspaper coverage. The headlines almost universally emphasized the unresolved battle over slot machines and the endless conflict between our governor and the legislative majority.

But this session, despite all this conflict, did turn out to be surprisingly productive. Elsewhere in these newsletter pages, you'll find more information about this 2005 session's admirable record.

Who's responsible for the progress this session registered? I think a good bit of credit goes to the backbone the Democratic majority displayed.

Long-time readers of this newsletter will know that I haven't hesitated to criticize my party's majority in the past, for not fighting hard enough for working people. This session's majority did fight.

Was this willingness to stand up and be counted just a reaction to Gov. Ehrlich's policies and his often blatant efforts to polarize the legislature? Maybe.

But I like to think that this year's successes also reflect the progressive perspective that so many of you have articulated over recent years, a perspective that I've tried to bring, on your behalf, before my lawmaker colleagues.

Unfortunately, much of our legislative success this session now stands in limbo. The governor, a few weeks after the session ended, vetoed a string of the positive measures that lawmakers passed.

These vetoes will now have to be overridden next January, when the legislature reconvenes for the last session before election day next November. We can, I believe, override the governor's ill-advised — but predictable — vetoes. If we stand strong in our core beliefs, we can improve both our county and state.

An Insider's Update on Annapolis: Sign Up Now!

Are you interested in the real story — on state and county politics — behind the story you see on the news? Do you appreciate what Senator Paul Pinsky has to say and what he stands for? If your answer is "yes," then you probably ought to be reading Senator Pinsky's monthly email newsletter. Subscribing is easy. Just send an email to mylist-request@senatorpinsky.org and type the word "subscribe" in the "subject" line.

Working to Create a More Livable Community

State efforts are boosting Prince George's redevelopment initiatives

A better Prince George's County, on a number of fronts, is now emerging, helped along by action at the state level.

This year's 2005 session in Annapolis enacted several different measures that should help change the image of Prince George's County.

One new measure will **close liquor stores at midnight** rather than 2 a.m. This new closing time should reduce the number of people from surrounding jurisdictions who come into our county late at night in search of alcohol – and possible trouble.

Prince George's municipalities have also gained, through state "permissive legislation," the right to restrict nude dancing through zoning.

Still another new piece of "permissive legislation" allows the Prince George's County Council to set a **surcharge on developers** to pay for the police and fire services that new development may make necessary.

This surcharge will run higher beyond the beltway, a smart move that will direct new investment inside the beltway and preserve green space outside.

Meanwhile, state dollars are helping

redevelopment along throughout Prince George's County.

One example: Senator Paul Pinsky and the 22nd district delegates have been able to bring in \$400,000 to help build the Hyattsville Renaissance Square Project behind the Castle along Route 1.

This public-private project, led by housing activist Mosi Harrington, will combine 40 artist work-live rental units, 60 market price condos, and a full-service YMCA, including pool and child care.

Plans are also underway to reform the Lustine property and place townhomes, condos, and retail space along both sides

of Route 1. Both projects have contributed to Hyattsville's naming as a state "Priority Place."

Around Prince George's Plaza, new redevelopment plans call for the office park across from the Plaza to become the home to a new high-rise apartment building, parking structure, and restaurants and movie theaters.

And, finally, the University of Maryland has designated the area below the College Park metro as "M-Square," with plans to bring in new office buildings — and jobs — to the area adjoining Riverdale Park.

From Hyattsville to University Park, New Leaders Take the Reins

Early May saw elections in a number of 22nd district municipalities. Congratulations to **Adam Ortiz**, the new mayor of Edmonston, as well to council members **Lynta Giddens** and **Betsy McCauley**.

Hyattsville voters have elected new council members **Marc Tartura**, **Mark Matulef**, and **Krista Atteberry** and returned incumbents **Carlos Lizanne** and **Ruth Ann Frazier**. **June Garrett** and incumbents **John Schaffer** and **James Wildoner** have been elected in New Carrollton, and, in Riverdale Park, **Vernon Archer** has been elected mayor and **Tracey Toscano**, **Mary Donaldson**, **Novella Sargusingh**, **Lawrence Taylor**, **Gerry Kiernan**, and **Ken Webb** have been voted onto the council.

University Park voters have elected to their council **Francis Lucas**, **Lisa Jackson**, and incumbent **John Tabori**.

On behalf of all local residents, a hearty thanks to the elected leaders who are leaving their respective town councils for their many years of dedicated service.

Local Notes

Scholarship Committee Volunteers Work To Give Kids in Need a Leg Up

Over \$38,000 in scholarship money is now going out to outstanding students in the 22nd district who need help to attend college.

Each Maryland state senator has scholarship monies available to distribute. Senator Paul Pinsky distributes his share of this state scholarship assistance through a volunteer committee of local residents.

This year's committee reviewed applications from families throughout the district and chose the most deserving students.



Lewisdale's Laverne Williams was one of the 18 volunteers who decided the student winners of Senator Paul Pinsky's 2005 scholarship awards.

panel: **Laverne Williams** and **Nora Facchiano** (Lewisdale); **Liz Gaines**, **Rae Brooks**, **Kathy Labukas**, and **Konrad Herling** (Greenbelt); **Kay Stauder**, **Theresa Creel**, **Jennifer Porter Gore**, and **Robert Croslin** (Hyattsville); and **Tamba Mayah** and **Jane Michalek** (New Carrollton).

Also: **Felix Yeoman**, **Jill Moss-Greenberg**, **Janet Moreland**, and **Lisa Jackson** (University Park); **Dorothy**

Health Care



On Health Care, One Step Forward . . .

. . . *but drug companies and Gov. Ehrlich stall two other needed reforms*

Some 30,000 people across the state will now be paying less for their prescription drugs, thanks to a legislative effort initiated by Senator Paul Pinsky and backed by the grassroots Health Care for All coalition.

Senator Pinsky's legislation, as enacted by the General Assembly, will enable working families whose incomes are over the poverty line, but less than 200 percent of that level, to qualify for the same drug discount that Medicaid recipients now receive.

Low-income families in Maryland will become eligible for the discount as soon as the federal government okays a waiver to let this new program go into effect.

Senator Pinsky actually introduced two prescription drug bills in the 2005 session. The second, a bill to allow low-cost drugs from Canada and Europe to be re-imported into the United States, did not meet the same success as the first.

The reason? The U.S. pharmaceutical industry lined up four-square against the Pinsky re-importation legislation.

"Big Pharma," notes Senator Pinsky, "is more concerned about protecting corporate profits than making prescription drugs available — and affordable."

Health Care Fairness and Wal-Mart

A third key piece of health care-related legislation backed by Senator Pinsky did make its way through the legislature, only to be vetoed by Gov. Ehrlich.

This legislation, the "Fair Share" bill, starts from a simple premise: Maryland's

**Taxpayers across Maryland
are subsidizing Wal-Mart's
refusal to provide adequate
health care benefits.**

biggest employers ought to offer all their employees affordable health insurance.

All companies employing more than 10,000 workers in Maryland currently do offer affordable health insurance — except one. Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart is Maryland's only major employer that does not devote at least 8 percent of its payroll cost to health care benefits. The Fair Share bill aimed to change that. Lawmakers, by passing it, mandated that all large employers in Maryland either lay out 8 percent of payroll on health care benefits or contribute the difference to a state program to help working families.

Workers at Wal-Mart currently earn so little that they qualify for Medicaid, the state-run health care program for low-income people. Taxpayers, in effect, are subsidizing Wal-Mart's refusal to provide adequate health care benefits.

Can Wal-Mart afford to pay decent health benefits? Last year, the company waltzed off with \$10 billion in profits.

Gov. Ehrlich is doing his art to make sure these profits stay high. He vetoed the "Fair Share" bill. The governor called the bill "unfair" to Wal-Mart.

"Unfair?" asked Senator Paul Pinsky. "What about the unfairness to Maryland taxpayers and Wal-Mart employees?"

The Economy

A half-century ago, the taxes paid by corporations underwrote half the cost of running the federal government. Corporate taxes today pay just 7 percent.

What explains this enormous shift? Loopholes! Thanks to loopholes in the tax law, corporations are avoiding their fair tax share and shifting the tax burden onto average Americans.

At the state level, corporations play a simple game. They report their business income in the states that boast the most loopholes, a sort of tax hopscotch at taxpayer expense.

In the 2005 session, Senator Pinsky introduced a "combined reporting" bill to stop this game playing and bring back corporate tax revenue due Maryland.

But the power-suit lobbyist crowd in Annapolis won the day and had the bill defeated. Senator Pinsky will pursue the legislation again next year.

Minimum Wage

Maryland lawmakers gave corporate lobbyists their way on combined reporting, but they did stand up for working people on the minimum wage. The legislature passed labor-backed legislation to increase the state minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.15.

That new minimum won't be going into effect anytime soon. In May, Gov. Ehrlich vetoed it. The General Assembly will have an opportunity to override in January.

Trade Policy

Should Maryland support the Central

America Free Trade Agreement, or CAFTA, now pending before Congress? And who should decide Maryland's position, the governor or lawmakers?

Senator Pinsky introduced a bill in the 2005 to answer these questions. And the bill has now become law, over the governor's veto.

The new law requires full legislative approval before Maryland's name can be added to any international agreement — and requires that Maryland's support be removed from the current CAFTA bill.

CAFTA, as written, prohibits any state that signs on from setting trade standards. If CAFTA goes through, for instance, Maryland would be prohibited from limiting trade on goods manufactured overseas with child labor.

An Annapolis Scorecard: The 2005 Session

	Description	Sen. Pinsky Position	Legislative Action
4 "P" (Pollutant)	Would have restricted harmful emissions from power plants.	Introduced by Sen. Pinsky.	Passed Senate Committee;died in House.
Teen Driving	Limits teen use of cell phone and carrying of passengers.	Supported by Sen. Pinsky.	Bills passed into law.
Slot Machines	Would have allowed gambling at tracks and multiple locations in P.G. county.	Opposed by Sen. Pinsky.	Passed Senate; no agreement reached between chambers.
Medical Decisions	Would have allowed unmarried couples to make certain health and funeral decisions.	Supported by Sen. Pinsky.	Passed legislature; vetoed by governor.
Renaming BWI	Adds "Thurgood Marshall" to name of BWI Airport.	Supported by Sen. Pinsky.	Bill passed into law.
Outsourcing	Would have prohibited state service contracts from going overseas.	Introduced by Sen. Pinsky.	Passed Senate; died in House committee.
Stem Cell Research	Would have provided funds and procedures in support of embryonic stem cell research.	Supported by Sen. Pinsky.	Passed committee; died on Senate floor.
Disposal of State-Owned Land	A constitutional amendment to restrict governor's ability to sell parkland.	Co-sponsored by Sen. Pinsky.	Passed; goes onto 2006 state ballot.
Universal Health Coverage	Would have created a "single-payer" health system.	Introduced by Sen. Pinsky.	Bill failed in committee.

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