



MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
Michael E. Busch, Speaker

PRESS RELEASE

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**BIG WINS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, CRIME
& EDUCATION IN THE HOUSE**

Speaker Busch says "good public policy makes for good politics."

ANNAPOLIS, MD – The House of Delegates finished the 2007 legislation session with significant progress for the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland students and working and middle class families. This term includes 34 new delegates, as well as a new Administration.

"The House of Delegates made great strides in putting forward good public policy for Maryland's residents. We started this legislative session having clearly heard from our constituents that the issues of education, the environment and healthcare were the top concerns for Maryland families," said Speaker Michael E. Busch. "I am proud that the House of Delegates set the pace for this session in creating substantive policy solutions to the challenges facing Marylanders."

The achievements of the House this session include:

EDUCATION – The House bolstered Maryland's knowledge-based economy, providing resources to improve K-12 education and access to higher education:

- Maintained a tuition freeze to keep college affordable for working families
- Fully funded the final year of Thornton legislation, providing an additional \$680M to local school boards, for hiring classroom teachers, providing all-day kindergarten and improving student achievement.
- Increased funding for community colleges by 18%
- Invested a record \$400M in school construction, the #1 priority for Maryland counties

ENVIRONMENT - The House fought to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, as well as protect the environment.

- Passed the Chesapeake & Atlantic Coastal Bays Green Fund to reduce the impact of runoff pollution from development by creating an incentive for developers to minimize the environmental impact of projects, or pay into a fund devoted to Bay and coastal bay clean up and smart growth.
- Passed the Maryland Clean Cars Act, making Maryland the 12th state in the US to reduce the nearly three-quarters of the highest three pollutants by 2011.
- Funded the Horn Point oyster production facility to produce more oysters to clean the Bay, as well as continued funding DNR's oyster restoration program
- Created the Oyster Advisory Commission to get the best research and science available to improve the health of the Bay
- Fully funded Program Open Space
- Worked to expand the State's use of alternative energy, including solar and wind power, reducing Maryland's dependence on natural gas and fossil fuels.

CRIME – The House made Maryland laws tougher for violent criminals.

- Unanimously passed the newest version of Jessica's Law, denying parole eligibility to anyone convicted of first or second degree sexual abuse against a child
- Unanimously passed legislation making sexual abuse against a child a crime of violence
- Provided another tool for prosecutors to fight gang crime by passing the Maryland Gang Prosecution Act of 2007.

HEALTHCARE – The House passed comprehensive healthcare reform proposals, with a dedicated funding source.

- Passed landmark legislation to provide healthcare access to up to 250,000 Marylanders. The Maryland House of Delegates joined eight other states across the country, including Republican and Democratic governors, in proposing an increase to the tobacco tax to pay for a comprehensive healthcare expansion that would provide healthcare access to one third of Maryland's uninsured and guarantee healthcare access to every child in the State of Maryland.
- Funded \$23M for stem cell research to keep Maryland on the cutting edge of health advancements
- Ensured the health of Maryland's workers by passing a smoking ban to prevent smoking in all bars, restaurants and clubs

BUDGET – The House took a fiscally responsible approach to crafting the FY08 budget.

- Passed a fiscally responsible budget that limited growth, while maintaining services to Marylanders. Next year's budget helps Maryland maintain a triple-A bond rating, a 5% Rainy Day Fund and a fund balance of \$56 million.
- Passed legislation to eliminate a loophole that allows property owners to evade transfer taxes on real estate deals over \$1 million – and dedicates new revenue to school construction projects, parks and land preservation.

- Passed legislation to prohibit companies from using captive Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT) to avoid corporate income taxes.

“I’d like to congratulate all of the House members, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the six standing committees and the Delegations, as well as the Republican leadership on having substantive debate on the issues that matter most to Marylanders,” said Speaker Busch.

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