

## Committee Report, February 2007

### **Legislative Committee: Sharon Barbee, Chair, [sbarbee@verizon.net](mailto:sbarbee@verizon.net) MCCPTA Legislative Update / PTA Night in Annapolis, 2/12/07**

For most parents, the night began with the decision to brave icy and snowy conditions to get to Annapolis. Those that made the courageous journey were treated to legislators speaking with candor about the State of financial affairs in Annapolis.

The Legislative Briefing was kicked off by a welcome from the President of the State PTA, Mary Jo Neil. Corinne Patt, State VP for Legislation and members of the State PTA Legislative Committee gave briefings on bills and other subjects related to: the appointment of parents with children in public schools to the State Board of Education, the State PTA's participation with the newly formed Maryland Coalition for Excellent Schools (MCES) <http://www.mdces.org/index.html>, school construction and the impact of BRAC (base realignment and closure).

Then the floor was turned over to Mr. Mike Miller, President of the Senate.

Mr. Miller set the tone for his legislative brief by introducing himself "a business man" and conveyed his support for "all of the laudible goals that pta members are currently pursuing on behalf of youth and children" and "fulfilling one of his two Maryland constitutional mandates, funding education." Mr. Miller continued utilizing his analogy of business in comparing Maryland's current state of financial affairs claiming "when my business fails to make money, I forego a paycheck so my employees get paid.... We can't go on doing business this way." Transitioning from analogies, Mr. Miller discussed the challenges faced by leaders in the Senate and House trying to find consensus in making up a \$1.5 Billion Dollar structural deficit. Some delegations are opposed to slots while supporting an increase in the sales tax or vice-versa. This makes it hard for everyone to come to consensus on a revenue enhancement. Delegates Roger Manno and Heather Mizuer were present before and during the legislative briefing.

At the conclusion of the legislative briefing, parents met with Del. Karen Montgomery, Sen. Rob Garagiola, Del. Brian Feldman, Del. Craig Rice, Sen. Brian Frosh, Del. William Bronrott, Del. Susan Lee, Sen. Jennie Forehand, Del. James Gilchrist, Sen. Rich Madaleno, Del. Ana Sol Gutierrez, Del. Jane Lawton, Sen. Mike Lenett, Sen. Jamie Raskin, Del. Tom Hucker, , Sen. P.J. Hogan, Del. Charlie Barkley, and Del. Nancy King.

During the breakout session with the delegation Senator P.J. Hogan and Del. Charles Barkley were asked to respond to comments made by Mr. Miller. Senator Hogan discussed that even with the adoption of slots providing \$800 million, and an increase in the sales tax by "a penny" providing \$600 million, we still fall short. There isn't the stomach in our area to increase taxes. But the bill is coming due.

Senator Madaleno and Del. King provided an update on school construction funding in response to rumors floating around the Montgomery county community that the county would not be receiving any construction dollars. Of the \$242 million already appropriated, \$29 million has been committed to Montgomery County. There remains the balance of \$158 million of the \$400 million to be appropriated and it is expected that more money will be committed to the county to address the needs of our large public school student body.

Del. King commented that the Legislative Alert issued by MCCPTA had been effective and that many emails supporting construction standards for relocatable classrooms were received. Pam Moomau pointed out that the legislation failed to address "leased portables" and that Montgomery County leases and does not purchase relocatable classrooms. The bill needs to be amended.

Del. Montgomery discussed the issue of fee waivers and locating appropriate venues for high school graduations.

At the conclusion of the discussion issues were expressed to the Montgomery County delegation with regards to the funding of GCEI, School Construction, BRAC funding, Portable Construction Standards, and securing laws for the protection of youth and children.

A huge thanks to the brave souls, through rain, through sleet, through snow, they made the journey to make sure the message got through....

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**Submitted by: Victor Salazar, VP for Legislation, MCCPTA**