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CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY GRACE TOOHEY

State Comptroller Peter Franchot (center left) welcomes Gov.-elect Larry Hogan's (center right) support to mandating state public schools begin after Labor Day -- in the Louis L. Goldstein Treasury Building in Annapolis, Maryland, January 15, 2015. Hogan became the 13,244th signature on Franchot's "Let Summer Be Summer" petition.

Hogan Signs Comptroller's Petition to Push Back School Start Past Labor Day

By GRACE TOOHEY
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS -- Gov.-elect Larry Hogan finalized Comptroller Peter Franchot's campaign to mandate public schools to begin after Labor Day by adding his name to the "Let Summer Be Summer" petition Thursday morn-

ing, which totaled 13,244 signatures in support of a later start date.

Franchot and Hogan said this change will bring increased revenue for businesses and the government—without any tax hikes—and bring more opportunities for family time.

"I think it makes a whole heck of a lot of sense to start

school after Labor Day," Hogan said. "There's just no downside to this issue."

Local school boards determine start dates, which have been trending to before Labor Day since the 2000s. John Woolums, director of governmental relations for the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, said this

coincided with testing initiatives from the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Many counties wanted more time for instruction before tests, Woolums said, but they also had the power to respond to local needs.

See LABOR DAY Page A5

Education Groups Fear For School Funding

By DEIDRE MCPHILLIPS
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS -- Gov.-elect Larry Hogan's transition team has curtains pulled tight over the budget until after he takes office next week, but many education groups are gearing up to fight for school programs they feel are particularly endangered this year.

The Maryland State Education Association, previously known as the Maryland State Teachers Association, is running a radio campaign and petition drive to protect school funding in Maryland.

The petition calls for Hogan and the General Assembly -- with a notably high number of new members and Republicans among them -- to "step up and do more for our schools" and has, according to their website, more than 11,000 signatures.

While the Maryland State Education Association has used this strategy to drive several special-issue campaigns before, this time is different, said Sean Johnson, government relations director for the group.

"We started the campaign prior to the session," Johnson said. "A lot of work and progress has gone into making our schools what they are. Many of those policy and funding decision-makers may not be returning to town."

With more than one third of the 188 legislators sworn in to the General Assembly on

Wednesday being new and forecasts for heavy budget cuts, Johnson said the goal was to get the word out early.

Johnson said he hopes Hogan will fund The Maryland Association of Boards of Education's full budget request of just under \$5.5 billion, which is about one third of the total general fund budget.

John Woolums, the director of governmental relations for The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, said that he recognizes the heftiness of the request and understands the potential effects a severe budget shortfall may have on education.

"We are concerned about the preservation of integral proponents of the Maryland education system that are not mandated by the state," Woolums said, particularly the Geographic Cost of Education Index, a formula that provides additional state funding to local school systems where educational resource costs are above the state average.

Democrats were strongly in favor of the idea in 2014, but it did not go to vote. This time around, if a bill is presented to a legislature on a tight budget and with a larger number of seats filled with Republicans, support may not be as great, he said.

Vice Chairman of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee Sen.

See FUNDING Page A6

PGCPS Graduation Rates Soar To Record High Levels

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, MD -- Data released on January 27, 2015 by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) shows a graduation rate of 76.59 percent, a 2.47 percentage point increase in the overall four-year graduation rate for Prince George's County Public Schools. This is the highest graduation rate on record for the school district.

Moreover, graduation rates rose among almost all student subgroups, with the largest increases made by Hispanic/Latino students with a 4.78 percentage point increase and African-American students, whose rate increased by 2.56 percentage points. Students receiving special education services showed an 8.02 percentage point increase in four-year graduation rate and those in the

See GRADUATION Page A7

PGFD New Large-Scale Training Opportunity - Market Place Project

By PRESS OFFICER
PG County Fire/EMS

The Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department has obtained the use of a vacant mall, Market Place Mall, in Bowie, Maryland for large-scale interior firefighter training. The owner of the mall is allowing the Department to conduct live exercises

in and around the structure. No live burns are scheduled at this time.

Battalion Chief Christian B. Wargo is the PGFD point of contact with the Developer and will be the PGFD Market Place Project Manager. Over this three month period, com-

See PROJECT Page A3

Delegates Hear Bill That Would Punish Heroin and Fentanyl Dealers Whose Drugs Kill

By NATE RABNER
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS -- A coalition of public officials and advocates presented a bill Tuesday that would increase punishments on heroin and fentanyl distributors by charging them with homicide when their drugs kill users.

"If there's someone that's distributing it and it caused the death, then ... I don't think it's inappropriate to go after the manufacturer and the distributor," said Delegate Kathleen Dumais, D-Montgomery, the bill's sponsor. A person who distributes heroin or fentanyl that is found to be a "contributing cause" to a user's death would face a prison sentence as long as 30 years.

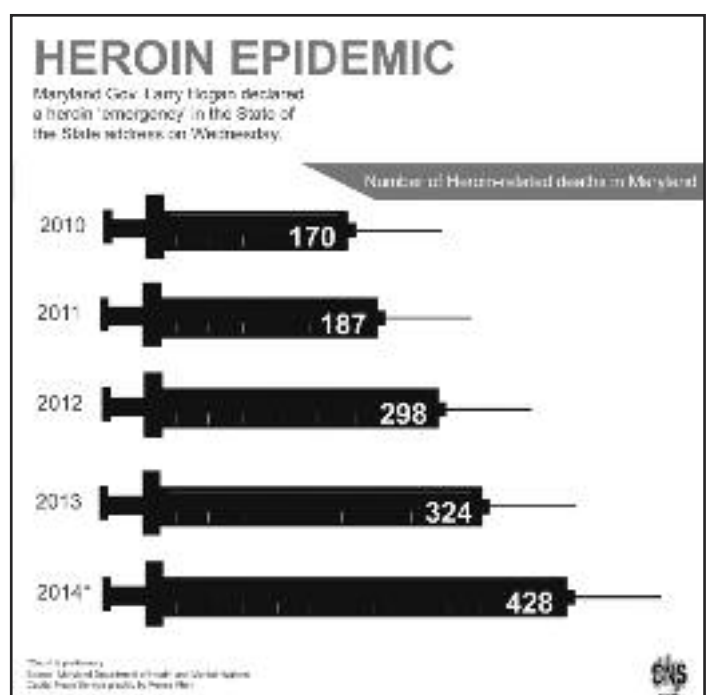
Several state's attorneys, police officials and family members of heroin addicts testified Tuesday in favor of the bill before the House of Delegates Judiciary Committee. Proponents said a felony charge would fill a gap in the state's legal authority, allowing prosecutors to "go up the chain" and hold distrib-

utors responsible for heroin-related deaths.

"There is not anyone out there dealing heroin that doesn't know that a lot of people are dying of what they are distributing," said Brian DeLeonardo, Carroll County state's attorney. "The crime should reflect that."

Heroin and fentanyl played a role in the deaths of about 700 Marylanders last year, said Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy, who helped draft the bill. State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene data show a drastic increase, from 170 heroin-related and 31 fentanyl-related deaths in January-September 2010 to 428 and 141, respectively, in the same period in 2014.

"I don't care where you're from," McCarthy said. "Everyone's being affected by this issue." He said the "catastrophic loss of life" among heroin and fentanyl users would have been even higher if not for the use of the medication Naloxone to treat overdoses, and encouraged delegates to ask first responders about nonfatal overdoses.



CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE GRAPHIC BY RENEE KLAHR
Source: Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Heroin's increasing accessibility is partly responsible for the rise in fatalities, McCarthy said. The state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program has made prescription painkillers such as oxycodone harder to obtain, while heroin is available at a fraction of the price of pre-

scription drugs, and with increasing potency.

Fentanyl, a synthetic opiate, can be lethal on its own or as an adulterant to heroin.

See HEROIN Page A6

INSIDE

Franchot Asks Marylanders to Share What Starting School After Labor Day Means to Them

Each person will receive a personal thank you from the Comptroller and those who submit an especially funny or clever video will receive a "Let Summer Be Summer" T-shirt. The best videos will be posted on the Let Summer Be Summer YouTube channel.

Community, Page A3

Push for Progress: Children Cannot Wait

The President's forward looking budget pays for his critical proposed new investments to alleviate child poverty and reverse harmful unjust cuts by eliminating egregious tax loopholes benefitting powerful corporations and the super-wealthy and other spending inefficiencies.

Commentary, Page A4

USDA Announces Funding for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects

USDA is offering grants for up to 25 percent of total project costs and loan guarantees for up to 75 percent of total project costs for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements. The REAP application window has been expanded.

Business, Page A5

Movie Review: "The Voices"

Jerry lives in a normal apartment, the type you would expect from a young bachelor with his dog, Bosco, and his cat, Mr. Whiskers. Yet something seems off. Jerry is asked to help plan the company picnic, and he meets the attractive Fiona. Jerry excitedly goes home to tell his pets about her. And surprisingly, they answer.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

What on Earth are plastic "microbeads" and how are they threatening the Great Lakes?

— Billy Alexander,
Macon, GA

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

1951 Morningside Tragedy Remembered, by a Phone Call

"Sixty-one years ago, on April 8, 1951 at 4:07 p.m., an abandoned twin-engine B-25 passed over the ICE Club (now VFW), hurtled across Suitland Road, down Lombardy Road, and plowed into a house at 302 Poplar Road. The two young daughters of MSgt. Samuel and Dorothea Snyder, and Samuel's brother-in-law Irvin Guyer, died in the explosion and the fire. The house was rebuilt. The Snyders moved away; they never had any more children."

I wrote that paragraph for a column back in 2011. I have returned to the 1951 story many times. It haunts me.

Now it has returned in a most extraordinary way—I had a call earlier this month from Roslyn Guyer Winfield, who lives in Hackettstown, N.J. She is the daughter of Irvin Guyer who died in the fire, and his wife Violet, who was seriously injured. Roslyn told me her daughter had stumbled across an old column of mine about the accident, which encouraged Roslyn to call me.

Her parents came to Morningside that fatal April from their home in Cranford, N.J., to see the cherry blossoms and their nieces, 6-year-old Kay and 8-week-old Rene. The two families had just returned to the Snyder house from a drive around the tidal basin when the plane struck the house. Her dad, Irvin, died. And, Roslyn said, her mom suffered facial and chest injuries, which required surgery.

However, Violet Guyer lived for more than 30 years after the accident. She was an RN and worked for the Union County Court House in Elizabeth, N.J. She was 67 when she died Feb. 2, 1982.

Roslyn asked me if there was anyone around who still remembers the tragedy or who helped fight the fire or rescue the victims. If so, she'd like to hear from them.

Call me (301-735-3451) or email me (muddmm@aol.com) and let me know. I'll forward the information to Roslyn, who has had to live with this tragedy for 64 years.

Lori Knox Dies in Freak Accident

Lori Debra Wood-Knox, 62, died in the strange accident I wrote about a couple of weeks ago. She was killed after, apparently, stepping in or out of her Ford Windstar when it went into reverse, crushing her between the car door and a tree. It happened at the intersection of Allies and Randolph Road about 6:30 the morning of Jan. 23. Her husband said she was driving to a nearby school bus stop to talk to the driver.

Lori and her husband Richard have lived for years on Morgan Road. She had been a stay-at-home mom for her four children, Joseph, Heather, Asa and Chris, but as they grew up she went to work for a company in Virginia.

Her husband and children describe her as "selfless." The long list of tributes in her Memory Book are filled with that sentiment. One friend wrote, "Lori had a great zest for life, was a dedicated employee and an even more devoted wife, mother and grandmother."

In addition to her husband and children, Lori is survived by seven grandchildren, the youngest born just the Saturday before her tragic death.

No More Falling Cement?

Last week I told you about the cement falling from the underside of the Beltway bridge over Suitland Road. Since then, the Maryland State Highway Administration has inspected 69 bridges and began patching 17 of them, removing loose concrete and shoring up concrete with wood planks. Five of those bridges are in Prince George's County.

Andrews' Spouse of the Year

Holly McHugh, has been selected Joint Base Andrews

Spouse of the Year 2015. She manages the Airman's Attic and has volunteered more than 2,000 hours the past four years. Military families displaced by fires, single military personnel, extended deployments and military members moving from overseas awaiting their shipments are just a few examples of those Holly has helped through her service with the Airman's Attic. She is the wife of Marine Staff Sgt. Jay McHugh.

May They Rest in Peace

Martha "Marti" Dargan Quigley, 74, of La Plata, died Feb. 11. She was born in Washington, grew up in Hillcrest Heights and graduated from Suitland High School. She worked for the federal government, eventually retiring from the National Archives. Her husband, Burton "Bud" Quigley, preceded her in death.

Clarence M. Gates Sr., 83, owner/operator of Gates Automotive of Fort Washington for more than 50 years, died Dec. 8. His wife Marjorie predeceased him. Survivors include five sons, eight grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and his brother, Williams Gates Sr.

Milestones

A special greeting to Gerry Jolliffe on his 15th-and-three-quarters birthday. He was born Feb. 29, 1952. He'll celebrate his 16th birthday in leap year 2016.

Happy birthday to Angela Hutchinson and Thomas "TJ" Flaherty, Feb. 27; Terrence Flaherty, Feb. 28; Winnie Lanehart, March 1; Karen (Elborne) Stern and Harold Titus, March 2; Jennifer Vilky, March 3; Amy Schlor and Matthew Flaherty, March 4.

Happy anniversary to Freda and Michael McDonald, their 35th on Feb. 28; Tom and Sarah Shipman, their 56th on March 4; and to Larry and Susan Frostbutter, on March 5.

Largo Road Largo, Maryland. To obtain tickets visit www.pgcc.edu/go/theatre. Call 301-322-0926 for more information. This is a great production that you will enjoy.

HORSE SHOW

Friday, March 27, 2015 at 8:00 AM there will be a free Horse show for spectators at show Place Arena. The address is 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

A SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY

The Rev. Kwame Abayomi (Rev. Norman Handy) former pastor at Christ United Methodist Church in Aquasco, Maryland recently published a book. The book is entitled "A Voice in the Wilderness: Sermons and Homilies for Urban Ministry: with 'The African American Creed'". These 18 Sermons represent a spiritual biography of Dr. Kwame Abayomi's years as the Senior Ministry of Unity United Methodist Church in Baltimore.

STROKE SUPPORT GROUP

Join us for a free Stroke Support Group on the fourth Thursday of every month at 5:00 PM-

6:30 PM in Southern Maryland Hospital Library. Registration is required. Call 301-877-5858. Hospital address is 7503 Surratt's Road, Clinton, Maryland.

BADEN COMMUNITY CENTER

Baden Community Center is a good place where you can go and exercise. The Center includes a fitness center with Nautilus and five stations of cardio equipment and dumbbell hand weights.

The Center is located at 13601 Baden-Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland. Telephone number is 301-888-1500; TTY 301-203-6030.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT

A community service project to mentor high school students was created by Anoop Kumar, MD., emergency room physician at MED Star Southern Maryland Hospital Center. He created a "mini-medical school" for students who are participating in the Health Sciences career track at Dr. Henry Wise Jr. High School in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Neighborhood Events

Edwards Statement on Republicans' 56th Attempt to Repeal The Affordable Care Act

Washington, D.C. — Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) released the following statement regarding H.R. 596, to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The bill passed the House 239-186.

"In the 114th Congress, we've seen an all too familiar theme: House Republicans ignoring the real work of governing for partisan and ideological gimmicks. Today, that trend continued with their 56th attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This is an irresponsible bill that would have catastrophic implications for the 19 million previously uninsured Americans who are now covered because of the ACA, the 129 million Americans with pre-existing conditions who are now protected from being denied coverage, and the 8.2 million seniors who have saved over \$11.5 billion on their prescription drugs. In Maryland, over 229,000 people would be impacted who have coverage through the ACA's expansion of Medicaid and CHIP. The numbers speak for themselves.

"Yet, Republicans remain focused on repealing the ACA and costing Americans their healthcare, their peace of mind, and their hard earned money. Democrats are focused on putting working families first by investing to create jobs, rebuilding our infrastructure, and growing paychecks. It's time for Republicans to join Democrats in these efforts to move America forward."

No Kid Hungry Maryland receives \$30,000 Grant From Hunger Is

Hunger Is, a joint charitable campaign of The Safeway Foundation and The Entertainment Industry Foundation, raises public awareness and funds to end childhood hunger in the U.S.

Washington, DC — No Kid Hungry Maryland has received a \$30,000 grant from Hunger Is to help solve childhood hunger. No Kid Hungry Maryland was nominated by the managers of Maryland Safeway stores, and this grant was made possible by their customers who contributed generously during a month-long in-store fundraiser this spring. Hunger Is, the joint charitable program of The Safeway Foundation and The Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF) featuring Academy Award®-nominated actress and Hunger Is Ambassador Viola Davis, raised more than \$4.6 million to eradicate childhood hunger from shoppers throughout 1,300 Safeway family of stores across the U.S., as well as on-line contributions.

Hunger Is allowed the local stores to identify an organization to receive a grant to help make a difference in their own community. The \$30,000 Hunger Is grant will go towards feeding children in the local community living in households that struggle to provide sufficient and healthy meals, including supporting daily breakfast. Studies have shown that eating breakfast can improve a child's attention span during school and lead to higher test scores. Three out of five elementary and middle school teachers say they regularly see students come to school hungry, a statistic Hunger Is seeks to end.



Congresswoman
Donna F. Edwards

"It's a great honor to receive this Hunger Is grant and the recognition of the Maryland Safeway managers for our work," said Josh Wachs, Chief Strategy Office, No Kid Hungry. "Making sure the children in our community have the necessities to succeed is so important and this grant will make a difference. We thank everyone who paused in their shopping routine to think about the children in need in our community."

To learn more about the fight against childhood hunger and to donate to the cause, visit HungerIs.org.

About Hunger Is

Hunger Is, a joint charitable program of The Safeway Foundation and The Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF), is designed to build awareness and raise funds in an effort to eradicate childhood hunger in America. Funds raised through Hunger Is directly benefit programs focused on combating childhood hunger and improving health-related outcomes. For more information, visit www.HungerIs.org.

About The Safeway Foundation

Founded in 2001, The Safeway Foundation supports causes that impact our customers' lives. Safeway stores provide the opportunity to mobilize funding and create awareness in our neighborhoods through the generous contributions by our customers, our employees' passion and partnerships with our vendors. We focus on giving locally in the areas of health and human services, hunger relief, education and helping people with disabilities. Safeway Inc. and The Safeway Foundation have invested \$1 billion in our neighborhoods since 2001. For more information about The Safeway Foundation, visit www.safewayfoundation.org.

About No Kid Hungry

No child should grow up hungry in America, but one in five children struggles with hunger. Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry® campaign is ending childhood hunger in America by ensuring all children get the healthy food they need, every day. No Kid Hungry connects kids in need to effective nutrition programs like school breakfast and summer meals and teaches low-income families to cook healthy, affordable meals. This work is accomplished through the No Kid Hungry network, made up of private citizens, public officials, nonprofits, business leaders and others providing innovative hunger solutions in their communities. No Kid Hungry Starts with Breakfast, our national breakfast initiative, is generously supported by Kellogg Company Fund and Tyson Foods. Join us at NoKidHungry.org.

Maryland Retailers Routinely, Illegally Sell Cigarettes to Underage Youth

Baltimore, MD (December 22, 2014) — New findings by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) show that more than 30 percent of tobacco retailers in Maryland are selling cigarettes to youth younger than 18, in violation of both state and federal laws.

In random inspections conducted across Maryland from October 2012 through September 2013, DHMH inspectors found 24.1 percent of tobacco retailers sold cigarettes to minors. In a series of subsequent random inspections conducted May 2014 through September 2014, 31.9 percent of retailers sold cigarettes to underage youth, with rates in one jurisdiction as high as 54.7 percent. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has similarly found 23.8 percent of retailers across Maryland sold tobacco to minors.

Among underage youth who are frequent smokers (smoking on 20 days a month or more), more than one in four (26.4 percent) report that they usually buy their own cigarettes.

Federal law requires Maryland retailers to check photo identification of individuals younger than 27 years old attempting to buy cigarettes or other tobacco products. Nonetheless, only 37.5 percent of underage Maryland youth attempting to buy tobacco from a retail store report that they were asked to show photo identification during the past 30 days.

"It is embarrassing that cigarettes are easier for kids to get in Maryland than everywhere else," said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. "Legislation is needed so that retailers who violate the law and sell tobacco to minors are at risk of losing their licenses."

According to the 2014 Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, every day more than 1,300 people die in the United States due to smoking. Nearly 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 18 and 5.6 million children alive today will ultimately die early from smoking, if more is not done to reduce current smoking rates. In Maryland alone, an estimated 52,000 underage youth use tobacco products.

DHMH is working with local health departments to increase youth-access enforcement efforts across the state. Further solutions will require legislation to accomplish a sustained reduction of tobacco sales to youth. Recommended steps include:

1. Increasing penalties on retailers who sell to minors, to include suspension and revocation of licenses to sell tobacco products;
2. Facilitating enforcement by making violations a civil, rather than criminal, offense;
3. Increasing retailer license fees to cover federal youth-access penalties incurred by the state; and
4. Requiring supplemental licenses for flavored tobacco products and electronic smoking devices, enabling more targeted enforcement efforts on products that are especially appealing to children.

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Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

Making Sure Loved Ones Are Prepared for Their Retirement Years

What if a sudden, debilitating illness, fraud or economic downturn affected your senior family member's retirement, estate or long-term care issues? Would you be prepared to take over?

If the answer is no, you're not alone. According to 2013 research (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/07/18/as-population-ages-more-americans-becoming-caregivers/>) from the Pew Research Center, four in 10 U.S. adults are caring for a loved one with significant health issues.

Don't wait for a crisis to initiate this conversation. Starting early can help you plan and even safeguard your own career and retirement planning. Here are some suggestions for starting the conversation:

Identify the missing links. Find information gaps you need to fill to help your senior relative plan for retirement. If key financial information – investment and banking accounts, legal documents or doctors' contact information – is missing, list any and all unknowns to be researched and compiled.

Schedule a family financial meeting. Schedule a specific day and time and create an agenda that meets the needs of your senior relative. It is not always necessary to involve all direct family members in a preliminary discussion, but make sure that relevant individuals are aware of the meeting. After helping your senior relative assess his or her financial situation, make sure to identify next steps and responsibilities.

Locate important financial documents. Ask your senior relative to show you where his or her key documents and accounts are, such as retirement and pension information, checkbooks, investment statements, insurance policies and legal and estate data. Find out where incoming bills are kept in case you have to step in and help manage monthly bills.

Consider seeking financial counseling. Any number of reasons, from illness to fraud, may explain losing control of personal finances. If your relative has been working with a qualified financial or tax advisor, the family team should consider meeting with him or her if a need arises. If outside tax, financial or legal help is needed, the team and your senior relative should discuss who those professionals should be, what their fees are and what you expect them to do.

Make and agree on a plan. After all the information gathering and discussion is complete, make a plan – in writing, if possible – to review the senior's wishes, set an action plan and assign responsibilities as necessary. As mentioned above, you should review this plan every year. And if problems emerge in any topic area from retirement to health issues, you'll find guidance throughout the Practical Money Skills for Life website. (<http://www.practical-moneyskills.com/personalfinance/>)

Bottom line: Asking older relatives about retirement, estate and long-term care preparations can be an uncomfortable conversation. Making a plan and initiating early conversations to involve the right people can ease the financial strain and stress on everyone involved.



Franchot Asks Marylanders to Share What Starting School After Labor Day Means to Them

Selected Videos to be Posted on "Let Summer Be Summer" YouTube Channel

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the State Comptroller

Annapolis, Md. (February 2015) – Building on the overwhelming success of his "Let Summer Be Summer" petition drive, Comptroller Peter Franchot is now asking Marylanders to submit videos describing what starting school after Labor Day would mean to them and their families.

"I would like to hear from citizens from across our great state and share those video testimonials with lawmakers," Comptroller Franchot said. "The more than 13,240 Marylanders who signed the petition have made it clear they support starting school after Labor Day to give families, students, teachers and small businesses the break they need, and deserve. It gives students time to learn life lessons beyond the classroom, teachers time to recharge their batteries and small

businesses a much needed boost during tough economic times."

To submit a video, please follow these guidelines:

- Email videos to letsummerbesummer@gmail.com
- Any videos exceeding the 25MB limit of Gmail must be posted online on YouTube or Vimeo and the web address (URL) provided.
- The videos should not exceed two minutes in length.
- Please include your name, address and email.

Each person will receive a personal thank you from the Comptroller and those who submit an especially funny or clever video will receive a "Let Summer Be Summer" T-shirt. The best videos will be posted on the Let Summer Be Summer YouTube channel.

Last month at a press conference in Annapolis, Com-

troller Franchot along with Gov. Larry Hogan, Ocean City Mayor Richard W. Meehan, state Sen. James N. Mathias Jr. and other elected officials announced the results of the "Let Summer Be Summer" petition drive. With overwhelming support from every corner of the state, more than 13,240 people signed the petition. Gov. Hogan also added his name to the signatures and fondly recalled spending Labor Day weekend working in Ocean City before heading back to the classroom.

Last August, the campaign kicked off on the Ocean City Boardwalk and Deep Creek Lake. The list of supporters, which continues to grow, has been presented to members of the General Assembly. The grassroots, citizen-led "Let Summer Be Summer" petition campaign came on the heels

of a May 2014 governor's task force recommendation that the state's public schools delay opening until after Labor Day. The state task force met for nearly a year and voted 11 to 4 to embrace a later start date and extend summer vacation statewide.

The previous summer, the Comptroller released an economic impact report on a post-Labor Day start for public schools. Completed by the Bureau of Revenue Estimates, the report found that a delayed school start in Maryland would result in an additional \$74.3 million in direct economic activity including \$3.7 million in new wages and a separate \$7.7 million in state and local revenue.

Media Contact: Barbara Sauer, 410-260-7438 (office) 410-212-9414 (cell)

Project from A1

panies will attend the training during one of three operational periods held six-days a week (rotating Saturdays and Sundays), 0700-1100 Hours; 1200-1500 Hours; 1700-2100 Hours. Fire Chief Marc S. Bashor said, "While the bulk of the training will be geared towards commercial structure fires, I encourage officers to review procedures on commercial structure fires, long-line deployments, search techniques, forcible entry, commercial roof operations, and maydays."

The Department's Emergency Services Command (ESC) Master Training Calendar will be utilized to manage the training schedule. If there are questions or concerns, or if you would like to offer assistance with the Market Place Project, please contact Battalion Chief Wargo via county email: cbwargo@co.pg.md.us.

Battalion Chief Wargo stated, "This is an amazing opportunity for our personnel to really sharpen their game. From long leader line operations, pitched roof cuts, cutting metal roof decks, search techniques, and so much more. We have spent countless hours of building props, creating scenarios, getting funding from the department, donations from builders, saw companies and suppliers. This is hands-on training that includes many adjuncts and instructors daily."

MICRB certified instructors are encouraged to participate with the training. Please contact Battalion Chief Wargo for additional details.

The Fire/EMS Department has previously conducted similar large-scale training projects including the use of a high-rise apartment building in the late 1990's. The Vermillion Avenue Project involved live fire exercises requiring firefighters to scale



PHOTO PROVIDED COURTESY OF PGFD PIO
Today's training involved truck work including cutting roofs and doors.

several flights to extinguish an apartment fire. The Parkway Terrace Project allowed firefighters to practice their skills in battling 3-story apartment building fires.

Media are encouraged to participate in our training. Reporters, editors, writers, an-

chors, videographers and producers are invited to don firefighters personal protective equipment and go through training, side by side, with firefighters. A Media Day is being planned for early March but no need to wait, join us today.

State Fire Marshal Provides Facts About Home Fire Sprinklers

By PRESS OFFICER
Maryland State Fire Marshal

STATEWIDE (February 12, 2015) – More than 2,500 fire deaths occur throughout the U.S. each year. Eight out of ten of those fire deaths resulted from home fires. In Maryland, during 2014, 49 fire deaths occurred in one and two family homes out of the reported 63 total fire deaths recorded in the state. "Most home fire deaths can be eliminated with the installation of residential fire sprinklers," stated State Fire Marshal Brian S. Geraci. "The advantage of having fire sprinklers in your home far surpasses the ability of a working smoke alarm alone. A smoke alarm will notify you of a fire; however, a fire sprinkler can react and in most cases extinguish a fire before it reaches excessive heat and lethal doses of carbon monoxide and other toxins that are released during a fire". Fire sprinklers are designed to allow more time for escape during an uncontrolled blaze inside the living area of your home. The added benefit in most cases is a single fire sprinkler operates and either controls the fire or extinguishes it entirely before excessive irreparable fire damage occurs.

Many myths and falsehoods about fire sprinklers exist in the minds of Marylanders. The fol-

lowing facts and safety tips are provided to provide the public with factual information about residential fire sprinklers.

> Home fire sprinklers save lives and property by reacting during the early stages of the fire occurrence.

> Smoke does not affect fire sprinklers. Home fire sprinklers react to high heat temperatures of 135° - 165°.

> The risk of dying in a home fire decreases significantly when the home is equipped with a fire sprinkler system. To date no one has died from an accidental fire in a home protected by residential fire sprinklers.

> Home sprinklers are easy to maintain by ensuring nothing is hanging from or blocking individual sprinkler heads. A simple test by the homeowner or a contractor can be performed annually to ensure proper water flow.

> Only the sprinkler closest to the fire operates and sprays water directly on the fire. Due to the quick response of the fire sprinkler, the fire is almost always controlled and/or extinguished prior to the fire department arrival.

> Homeowners experience lower insurance premiums with installed fire sprinkler systems. Insurance companies offer discounts from 5% to

30% off the fire portion coverage of the home.

> Fire sprinklers are environmentally friendly. The amount of water run-off, pollution and fire damage is reduced by as much as 71%. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), water used to fight a home fire can be reduced by as much as 91%.

> Materials placed in homes today burn faster and at a higher heat release rate as compared to furnishings and small appliances made twenty or more years ago. Fires tend to grow much faster, which allows even less time to escape the deadly heat and toxins produced during a fire.

> On average, a fire doubles in size every 60 seconds. Occupants have roughly three minutes from the sounding of the smoke alarm to escape the effects of fire.

> Some new building methods call for the use of lightweight construction materials. These materials are an outstanding product, unless exposed to fire. Direct comparisons of dimensional lumber as floor joists to manufactured joists reveal a much quicker burn through that allows for faster collapse, which places first responders in jeopardy for serious injury or death during the early stages of an uncontrolled fire.

> In 2014, 62% of the fatal home fires in Maryland occurred between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. when Marylanders are most vulnerable – while sleeping.

It has been brought to the attention of the Office of the State Fire Marshal that improperly informed legislators are being misled by false statements regarding unproven research stating residential fire sprinklers are for property protection and not as lifesaving devices. This is an obvious attempt to garner support under false pretense. The sole purpose and design of the residential fire sprinkler system is to provide occupants the additional time needed to escape the harmful effects of an uncontrolled fire inside the home. Factual data can be located at the websites listed below.

Additional information for residential fire sprinklers may be found at these websites:

www.nfpa.org
www.homefiresprinkler.org
www.firesafehome.org
<http://mdsp.org/firemarshal>

When considering moving into a home or when having a new home constructed, be sure to demand residential fire sprinklers as a requirement to protect your family, friends, pets and property.



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COMMENTARY

Barbara A. Mikulski

United States Senator for Maryland



Mikulski Calls for Mandatory Metro Safety and Evacuation Training For Regional Firefighters in Wake of Yellow Line incident

Senator Requests Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Complete a Regional Work Plan For Training Firefighters on Metro Safety and Emergency Evacuation Protocols

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.) today called on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to complete a regional work plan for training firefighters on safety and emergency evacuation protocols on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) system. The Senator's request comes a day before the COG Board of Directors meets to begin work on a work plan for interoperability following the Yellow Line smoke incident on January 12, 2015 that caused the death of one passenger, critical injuries to two passengers and the hospitalization of 84 others.

"I was shocked to learn that the training of firefighters is not mandatory. There are only voluntary emergency practice drills between Metro and the region's fire departments. In addition, we have recently learned that the training practices of the region's fire departments are uneven and fall below what should be required to keep riders safe in some jurisdictions," Senator Mikulski wrote. "Every firefighter should be required to attend training at Metro's Rail Operations Control Center and Emergency Management Facility. This should be a requirement during their initial training and then recertification should be required."

Currently, the region's fire departments have the discretion to decide who participates in emergency practice drills on Metro safety

and when. This training is not mandatory. It was recently learned that the region's fire departments do not set the same requirements for their firefighters to receive emergency evacuation training at Metro's facility in Landover, Maryland.

Additionally, there are concerns that the training practices of the region's fire departments are uneven and that some fall below what should be required to keep riders safe in some jurisdictions.

Senator Mikulski's letter follows a briefing she convened for the National Capital Region Congressional Delegation provided by leaders of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and Metro on the January Yellow Line smoke incident. Following that briefing, Metro released an initial list of early-action safety items, available here.

Senator Mikulski has been an outspoken advocate for Metro safety and was the first to introduce a bill, the *National Metro Safety Act of 2009*, to establish the first-ever national safety standards for transit systems, including metro systems. As the senior Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Mikulski fought to pass legislation authorizing \$1.5 billion in federal funds over 10 years to help improve Metro's aging infrastructure and provide Metro's first dedicated, federal funding source was passed in 2008.

Marc Morial, President and CEO

National Urban League



Facing Hard Truths – The Rhetoric of Race at the Crossroads of Police Reform and the Word of FBI Director Comey

"Much research points to the widespread existence of unconscious bias... We all – white and black – carry various biases around with us. I am reminded of the song "Everyone's a Little Bit Racist" from the Broadway hit, *Avenue Q*: 'Look around and you will find no one's really color blind. Maybe it's a fact we all should face. Everyone makes judgments based on race.'"

– FBI Director James Comey in his speech "Hard Truths: Law Enforcement and Race," February 12, 2015

It was in the wake of the protest-fueled aftermaths of the high-profile killings of Black men at the hands of police officers, along with the execution-style murders of two New York City police officers, that the nation's sitting FBI director marked an unprecedented first. FBI director James Comey – addressing an auditorium full of Georgetown University students on the celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birthday – delivered an unsparing, timely speech on the alarming state of policing in Black and Brown communities.

Comey, the son of Irish immigrants and the grandson of a police officer, addressed the historically-charged relationship between law enforcement and the communities of color they are sworn to serve and protect, and in doing so, gave his speech an authority that cannot be understated. In fact, he made a sizeable step towards inserting this much-needed analysis into our ongoing conversation on race in America.

Unfortunately, rhetoric, even candid rhetoric on the devastating impact of racism or unconscious racial bias in law enforcement, cannot stop a fatal bullet or bring back those we've lost. For Comey's words to be more than acknowledgement of this dilemma, they must translate into policies that address the unsettling issue of police misconduct in minority communities.

Pointing to the ever-present influence of unconscious racial bias that seeps into the daily interactions between the police and minorities, Comey also recognized that "racial bias isn't epidemic in law enforcement any more than it is epidemic in academia or the arts." He is right on that score. According to the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, implicit racial bias "refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner." The police, as well as the communities they serve, both come to the proverbial table with their implicit biases.

Implicit racial bias is not a figment of imagination, and acknowledging its existence can be the difference between life and death for all parties involved. Understanding this, Comey noted that "if we can't help our latent biases, we can help our behavior in response to those instinctive reactions, which is why we work to design systems and processes that overcome that very human part of us all."

I applaud the FBI director for calling on the nation's law enforcement community to do more than simply acknowledge the problem, but to also act on the knowledge we have. In November 2014, the National Urban League released our "10-Point Justice Plan for Police Reform and Accountability." Among other recommendations, such as outfitting police officers with body cameras and a national comprehensive anti-racial profiling law, we advocated comprehensive retraining of all police officers. We understood then, as we do now, that without addressing implicit racial bias, there is no policing tactic or theory that will change the status quo of law enforcement in Black and Brown neighborhoods.

See **Hard Truths**, Page A5

SOJOURNER TRUTH ROOM

Oxon Hill Library
6200 Oxon Hill Road
Oxon Hill, MD
301-839-2400

The Oxon Hill Library is built on the site of the Sojourner Truth Elementary School. The Sojourner Truth Room was established in 1967 and named in honor of the great activist for the rights of African Americans and women.

It contains a collection of books, periodicals, pamphlets, photographs, and other material on African American history and culture.

It is one of the two largest African-American research collections in Maryland, comparable only to the State Library Resource Center in Baltimore.

The library is open to the public. Call for additional information and operating hours. (D)

Open to the Public



Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Push for Progress: Children Cannot Wait

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow.' His name is today."

– Nobel Laureate Gabriela Mistral

The President's budget released this week proposes billions in critical new federal investments for 2016 and beyond to improve the life chances of millions of poor children. It also would prevent more harmful budget cuts in cost effective child investments while providing essential new investments to decrease the morally indefensible number of poor children (14.7 million, 6.5 million of them extremely poor) desperately in need of hope and help.

So many children have lost ground as the trumped-up fear of excessive debt children did not cause has been used by some in Congress to cut safety net programs we know work. For example, the indiscriminate and unjust sequestration guillotine cut 57,000 children from Head Start and 100,000 low-income households from critical rent assistance. Yet Congress did nothing to curb hugely unfair tax loopholes disproportionately benefitting powerful and wealthy corporations and individuals while starving federal programs millions of poor children depend on to survive. Members of Congress in both parties must now join the President to help our nation move forward by protecting and investing in America's neediest children and future.

The President's budget proposal includes major increased investments in the critical early childhood years of rapid brain development which help prevent poverty. The most significant of the President's new child investments would add \$80 billion over 10 years for the Child Care and Development Fund to guarantee child care assistance to all low-income working parents with children under 4. Currently

only 1 in 4 eligible children under 5 receives this crucial assistance. New investments in voluntary home visiting, Early Head Start/Child Care Partnerships, Head Start, and Pre-School for All grants (totalling \$75 billion over 10 years) for low income 4-year-olds will all bolster child readiness for school. It is hard to find a better investment. Society reaps an \$8 return for each dollar invested in high-quality early childhood programs and we cannot afford not to help children and decrease current and future costs. Members of Congress on all sides of the political aisle should put politics aside and build on the important 2014 bipartisan reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant to help ensure states implement the quality improvements that legislation requires and enable more children to benefit.

There's much other good news for children in the President's budget which all Americans and all members of Congress should strongly support:

- Four more years of funding for the successful bipartisan Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to ensure 8 million children in working families will continue to have access to high-

quality, affordable, and effective child health coverage. If Congress takes no action, CHIP funding will run out this fall.

- A \$1 billion boost for Title I education funding for poor children – a critical program children living in areas of concentrated poverty desperately need. Title I must include strong accountability measures to make sure poor and vulnerable children truly benefit.

- Funding to make permanent key improvements in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) scheduled to expire at the end of 2017. These two tax credits lifted 5 million children out of poverty in 2013. Making these improvements permanent would prevent one million children falling into poverty and 6.7 million falling deeper into poverty.

- New help for abused and neglected children and children in foster care including \$1.4 billion over 10 years in new guaranteed funding for preventive services to help keep children safely in families and out of costlier foster care, promote family-based care for children with behavioral and mental health needs,

See **WATCH**, Page A16

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

When To Pay Attention To Your Child's School Complaints

Most children will sometimes say things like, "I don't like school," or "The teachers don't like me" or "I'm just no good at math." Parents tend to ignore such comments as just part of the usual school complaining.

But there are times when what your child is trying to express may be a deeper problem and one with which he or she really needs help. It's important to look for signs like declining grades or grades below expectations that may signal very real problems.

Younger children find it hard to say, "I'm confused" or "I'm feeling inadequate." Preteens and teenagers are often reluctant to admit they're struggling because it makes them look bad exactly when they're trying to appear more adult, responsible and in control. So instead of saying, "I need homework help," it comes out as "I hate school" or "My teacher is out to get me."

When such comments are frequent, they shouldn't be ignored. Nor should other clear signs of real problems. When a child is reluctant to discuss school, seems angry or hostile about homework and studying, or demonstrates a lack of motivation or confidence, these are all signs that complaints about school may have a real basis. Students in such cases may refer to themselves as stupid or incapable of doing the work. They are often withdrawn, hostile to school-related questions, very defensive and afraid of criticism.

When such symptoms appear an important first step is to let your child know you understand and empathize with the difficulties being faced. Try talking about your own school struggles, offering academic assistance, and complimenting cooperation and progress in order to rebuild confidence. If you find you can't effectively assist with homework or studying, and many parents can't, consider a qualified tutor to help overcome the academic problems.

Your child's school counselor should be able to recommend a tutor, but can also help in other ways. He or she has seen similar problems and has the training and experience to offer assistance on how best to help your child. They may even have alternative explanations, from the school's perspective, on why your child is struggling.

School can and should be a positive and enjoyable experience for almost every student. Being alert for when a child is asking for help, even though indirectly, can bring not only better academic success but a happier, better balanced child.

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

Hard Truths from A4

Comey's other policy recommendations, including the better and wider collection of data in police-involved shootings and increasing the dialogue between police and the communities they serve, are also initiatives that we put forward in our 10-Point Plan. The plan also called for the implementation of a 21st century community policing model as well as mandatory, uniform FBI reporting and audit of lethal force incidents involving all law enforcement.

While our nation's conversation on race relations both within and beyond the borders of law enforcement is one we have engaged in for decades, Comey's voice and ideas are welcome ones in the

ongoing fight for racial equality and justice. But, of course, we need more than voices or ideas; we need a real commitment to policy change that trickles down to police academies, precincts and sheriffs' offices around this nation.

America is at a crossroads. We can choose to face and change the legacy of distrust of law enforcement in communities of color and vice versa. We can choose to heal the wounds of that legacy and promote dialogue within these communities and with those charged with their protection. As Comey concluded, quoting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "We must all learn to live together as brothers, or we will all perish together as fools."

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USDA Announces Funding for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects

REAP Program Reduces Energy Costs for Ag Producers and Small Businesses, Boosts Economy, Reduces Dependence on Foreign Oil

By PRESS OFFICER
USDA

WASHINGTON, — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that rural agricultural producers and small business owners can now apply for resources to purchase and install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements. These efforts help farmers, ranchers and other small business owners save money on their energy bills, reduce America's dependence on foreign oil, support America's clean energy economy, and cut carbon pollution. The resources announced today are made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill.

"Developing renewable energy presents an enormous economic opportunity for rural America," Vilsack said. "The funding we are making available will help farmers, ranchers, business owners, tribal organizations and other entities incorporate renewable energy and energy efficiency technology into their operations. Doing so can help a business reduce energy use and costs while improving its bottom line. While saving producers money and creating jobs, these investments reduce dependence on foreign oil and cut carbon pollution as well."

USDA is making more than \$280 million available to eligible applicants through the

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). Application deadlines vary by project type and the type of assistance requested. Details on how to apply are on page 78029 of the December 29, 2014 Federal Register or are available by contacting state Rural Development offices.

USDA is offering grants for up to 25 percent of total project costs and loan guarantees for up to 75 percent of total project costs for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements. The REAP application window has been expanded. USDA will now accept and review loan and grant applications year-round.

Eligible renewable energy projects must incorporate commercially available technology. This includes renewable energy from wind, solar, ocean, small hydropower, hydrogen, geothermal and renewable biomass (including anaerobic digesters). The maximum grant amount is \$500,000, and the maximum loan amount is \$25 million per applicant.

Energy efficiency improvement projects eligible for REAP funding include lighting, heating, cooling, ventilation, fans, automated controls and insulation upgrades that reduce energy consumption. The maximum grant amount is \$250,000, and the maximum loan amount is \$25 million per applicant.

USDA is offering a second type of grant to support organizations that help farmers, ranchers and small businesses conduct energy audits and operate renewable energy projects. Eligible applicants include: units of state, tribal or local governments; colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning; rural electric cooperatives and public power entities, and conservation and development districts. The maximum grant is \$100,000. Applications for these particular grants have been available since December 29 of last year and are due February 12.

The REAP program was created in the 2002 Farm Bill. Because of the success of the program, Congress reauthorized it in the 2014 Farm Bill with guaranteed funding of no less than \$50 million in annual funding for the duration of the 5 year bill. The 2014 Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past six years while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers.

Since 2009, USDA has awarded \$545 million for more than 8,800 REAP projects nationwide. This includes \$361 million in REAP grants and loans for more than 2,900 renewable energy systems. When fully operational, these systems are expected to generate more than 6 billion kilowatt hours annually — enough to power more than 5.5

million homes for a year.

In 2013, owners of the Ideal Dairy restaurant in Richfield, Utah, used REAP funding to install 80 solar modules and two 10-kilowatt inverters, which convert energy from solar panels to electricity. The owners have saved, on average, \$400 per month. These savings have helped them preserve their restaurant and livelihood.

President Obama's plan for rural America has brought about historic investment and resulted in stronger rural communities. Under the President's leadership, these investments in housing, community facilities, businesses and infrastructure have empowered rural America to continue leading the way — strengthening America's economy, small towns and rural communities. USDA's investments in rural communities support the rural way of life that stands as the backbone of our American values.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users.)

Labor Day from A1

Worcester County followed the trend and switched to a start date before Labor Day, but after hearing Ocean City area businesses' concerns, Woolums said, they chose to start this year after Labor Day. He said this local response is better than a statewide mandate.

Hogan recalled his years working summers in Ocean City as a teen, and said that extra weekend of work into Labor Day at \$1.35 an hour made all the difference to him.

Franchot said this issue crosses party lines, and is an issue of the "common sense caucus," because students, teachers, families, small businesses and taxpayers want a break. He said this date change can make that break happen.

"We can accomplish this easily," Franchot said. "This meaningful adjustment can be done relatively smoothly and keep the current end of the school year at early- to mid-June."

He said that local districts can determine how to make up lost pre-Labor Day school days and still ensure students are in the classroom for a minimum of 180 days by using the flexibility of winter and spring breaks, as well as eliminating "soft time" in current schedules.

Cutting days could end up cutting teachers' professional development time, said Woolums. He also said the lost time from the beginning of the year would most naturally be made up in an extension at the end.

In May, the Task Force to Study a Post-Labor Day start for Maryland Public Schools—which included parents, teachers, business representatives, state delegates and senators, a student, and a representative from both the Maryland Tourism Board



CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY GRACE TOOHEY
State Comptroller Peter Franchot (center) announces the more than 13,000 signatures on his petition supporting a start date after Labor Day for Maryland public schools at the Louis L. Goldstein Treasury Building in Annapolis, Maryland, January 15, 2015.

and the Maryland State Education Association—recommended to Gov. Martin O'Malley a later start for Maryland public schools.

The task force met eight times throughout the 2013-2014 school year, reviewing the impact of a later start date on the education system, the economy and summer tourism.

The state Bureau of Revenue Estimates released an economic impact report on the post-Labor Day start in August, which estimated a possible \$74.3 million increase in direct economic activity by using assumptions about the number of families taking a new summer vacation. The Bureau of Revenue Estimates was not available for comment on the specifics behind these assumptions.

Bill Paulshock, owner of Bill's Seafood in Perry Hall, Md., said Thursday the extra weekend can be the difference between a business staying open or having to shut down.

"It's a stimulus package that's not going to cost our taxpayers a dime," Paulshock said.

But the Maryland Association of Boards of Education is completely against the idea of a statewide-mandated start date after Labor Day, said Woolums.

"There is the concern that economic interests, such as the reported sales tax revenues that could be generated by extending summer in Ocean City, are being held above and given higher priority than the educational needs of our students," Woolums said.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education, which represents the 24 local boards of education in the state, also opposes the state's intrusion on local governance in such complex issues, like a starting date, Woolums said.

There were no teachers or representatives of education organizations at the conference.

Thursday morning, though Franchot said many teachers signed the petition and are in support of the later state date.

State Senator James N. Mathias Jr., D-Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester, said he hopes to carry a bill on the topic to the Senate, and Delegate Anne Healey, D-Prince George's County, has plans to also bring it to the House of Delegates.

OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review "The Voices"

The Voices
Grade: A-
Rated R, abundant harsh profanity, some sexual vulgarity, a lot of graphic and bloody violence
1 hr., 40 min

There are three messages to take away from "The Voices." One: Marjane Satrapi, the Iranian filmmaker whose autobiographical "Persepolis" made waves a few years ago, is a major directorial talent. Two: there is a demented screenwriter named Michael R. Perry who should probably be on some kind of watch list. Three: if Ryan Reynolds will keep making risky, offbeat aberrations like this, we'll overlook the "Green Lantern"s and "R.I.P.D."s and love him forever.

Here is a pitch-black psycho-horror-comedy to restore one's faith in the "What the eff did I just watch?" genre. Set in a wholesome American town (the praises of which are sung in an opening theme song [!]), the film stars Reynolds as Jerry Hickfang, a smiling, awkward, not-quite-all-there fellow with a low-level factory job. He's just out of prison on a work-release program and has a regular appointment with a court-ordered psychiatrist (Jacki Weaver), but he seems harmless enough. He goes through life in a bit of a daze, attended by imaginary butterflies, and has a cute crush on Fiona (Gemma Arterton), a beautiful brunette from the accounting department.

Also, his cat speaks to him. Abusively, hilariously, and with a Scottish accent. Mr. Whiskers harangues Jerry the same way that Mrs. Bates belittled Norman, and to similar effect. (His dog talks, too, but as you'd expect, he's sup-



ROTTENTOMATOES

Jerry is a seemingly normal man trying to succeed in his new job at the Milton Bathtub Factory. He lives in a normal apartment the type you would expect from a young bachelor with his dog, Bosco, and his cat, Mr. Whiskers. Yet something seems off. As the new guy at work, Jerry is asked to help plan the company picnic, and he meets Fiona, an attractive English girl from accounting. Jerry immediately takes a liking to Fiona and excitedly goes home to tell his pets about her. And surprisingly, they answer. But all this is just the beginning of an insanely bizarre and twisted tale.

portive and optimistic.) Jerry's mother also heard voices, and Jerry has medication that silences them. But when he's medicated, his bright, TV-like world turns dark, and he gets lonely. The only real problem with having Mr. Whiskers talk to him is that Mr. Whiskers, being a cat and a natural killer, has some violent suggestions.

There are a number of directions you could go with this premise. Perry's screenplay, named one of the best unproduced scripts of 2009, probably doesn't go where you think it will (or at least doesn't take the route you'd expect). Unsettling flashbacks shed light on what made Jerry the way he is, explaining the twisted logic that his subconscious now repeats to him through the voice of his cat. The

plot veers madly between dark comedy and graphic horror, and Satrapi handles the tonal shifts with expert skill. She doesn't wallow in the pain — like Jerry, the director doesn't like to see any living thing suffer — but she's not afraid to spray the screen with blood when the situation calls for it, and to make us squirm with the grimly funny (but awful) logistical details of Jerry's deeds.

Reynolds is more than just serviceable as Jerry; he's genuinely great, fully committed to the emotions of the role as he avoids both the campiness and the over-the-top evil that could have crept in. Jerry sweetly tries to woo the unresponsive Fiona, oblivious to the affection another co-worker (Anna Kendrick) has

for him, all while trying to ignore Mr. Whiskers' goading and lying to the shrink when she asks whether he hears voices. Even when we're horrified by what Jerry is doing, Reynolds makes us understand him.

And then, just when it seems like the story is wrapping up in a disappointingly conventional fashion, the film goes full nutso for an incredibly bizarre, high-energy finale. It's simultaneously a happy ending and a deeply disturbing one, and it makes perfect sense given what we've already seen. The movie isn't for everyone (to put it mildly). But if you're up for a loopy, ghoulish, funny, morbid, and unforgettable 100 minutes, you might find that "The Voices" speaks to you.

Funding from A1

Paul G. Pinsky, D-Prince George's, supports mandating the index and said that he is very worried about the education budget.

"We (legislators) have the power to cut funding, but not to bring it back," Pinsky said. He eagerly awaits Hogan's budget announcement expected on Thursday.

To Sen. Edward R. Reilly, R-Anne Arundel, control over the budget is what makes the governor in Maryland so powerful. But rumors about budget cuts are just that -- rumors.

"Everyone up and down the food chain is nervous," Reilly said. "Tax cuts might be coming. A revenue shortfall might be coming, and that would put pressure on all aspects."

Precautions are already being taken. In a special session, the University System of Maryland Board of Regents on Friday voted to approve mid-year tuition adjustments for spring semester 2015.

The current state deficit is about \$750 million and has the potential to rise to \$1 billion if no spending adjustments are made, University of Maryland, College Park President Wallace Loh said in an email Friday announcing \$15.6 million in cuts his administration plans to make this year to compensate.

"For now, we, and all state employees, must make sacrifices," Loh said.

Freshman Delegate Benjamin Brooks, D-Baltimore County, said that he would most likely vote in favor of any

legislation that benefits the education system.

"The shortest distance to prosperity from poverty is education," said Brooks, maintaining that cutting funding for education would not only shortchange the students, but the state.

Educating the new legislators of the 435th General Assembly and reaching across the political aisle may not be the only problems facing education, though.

Generally, during the legislative session, "teachers definitely don't know that decisions are being made," said Pat Yongpradit, director of education at Code.org and former high school computer science teacher and curriculum team lead for Montgomery County Public Schools. "They don't know how

the governor is leaning. Legislators are cooking up things and the general public has to live with what comes out unless they know what's happening."

Yongpradit said that he would have been happy to retire from Montgomery County Public Schools, but was offered an opportunity to promote computer science education at a federal level.

"Maryland was No. 1, three or four times in a row, but now we're third," said Yongpradit, referring to Education Week's annual report of the best public school systems by state. "I don't know if that's cause for alarm, but we're doing great in comparison (to other states)."

Hogan is expected to give a briefing of the budget on Thursday, one day after his inauguration.

Heroin from A1

Maryland State Police Maj. James Pyles, Northern Command commander, said an increased punishment for heroin and fentanyl distributors would not alter police investigations into heroin networks. But it would help law enforcement officials "on the front line" against the drug, he said.

"There is a lot of moving parts within this fight against heroin," Pyles said. "This is one moving part that will tremendously help law enforcement as we move forward."

Dumais' bill includes a "good Samaritan" clause, which provides immunity from criminal prosecution for anyone who calls for help for an overdose victim, as well as the

victim. Opponents said the provision, which reinforces a law passed last year, would not encourage heroin users to help one another during a medical emergency because it only blocks prosecution, but would not stop police from arresting a good Samaritan and charging him or her with a crime.

Opponents of the bill, including several relatives of addicts, argued that heroin is a public health issue and lawmakers should focus state resources on treatment and recovery instead of additional criminal charges.

"I simply don't think it achieves the purpose that you're trying to achieve," Delegate Curt Anderson, D-Baltimore, told the state's attorneys. "Why do we try to prosecute our way

out of this when the obvious answer is treatment?"

Anderson, who said his sister died of cocaine use, criticized the state's war on drugs, which he said has created a prison population in which many prisoners are drug offenders.

"We've been fighting this battle for 40 years, and I don't think we've won anything," Anderson said.

Nancy Rosen-Cohen, executive director of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence of Maryland, said the bill was too vaguely worded and would lump in friends who share drugs along with major distributors.

"The goal of the bill, to go after the dealers-for-profit — the goal is not being achieved in the language as drafted,"

Rosen-Cohen said. She added that the state already has punishments aimed at drug dealers, including a 20-year minimum sentence for a "drug kingpin" who manages a production or distribution network.

State senators have introduced several additional bills to address the use of heroin and other opioid painkillers. Susan Lee, D-Montgomery, is sponsoring a companion bill to Dumais'. Catherine Pugh, D-Baltimore, has sponsored a bill that would expand insurance coverage for abuse-deterrent opioid products, and Katherine Klausmeier, D-Baltimore County, has proposed the creation of a Maryland Opioid Use Disorder Consortium to develop a strategic plan to reduce drug abuse

The Edge of Sports by DAVE ZIRIN

Deflated Balls for Some, Miniature American Flags for Others!



Around midnight, mere hours after Tuesday's State of the Union address, where the most powerful person on earth put forth arguments on war, peace and the health of our economy, the number-one trending topic on Twitter was about deflated balls. Footballs, to be specific. Or most pointedly, the footballs used by the New England Patriots in their 45-7 thrashing of the Indianapolis Colts in last Sunday's playoffs. Eleven of the twelve balls used in the game were missing some hot air, and the hot takes were flying about whether Patriots coach Bill Belichick had engaged in cheating (never!) or if New England's victory should be seen as illegitimate.

The NFL, a league that has covered up instances of massive brain trauma; homophobic, racist bullying; and violence against women, is said according to ESPN to be "disappointed...angry...distracted." Yes, if you really want to disturb the moral compass of the NFL leadership hierarchy, deflate their balls. Typical of this was a throwaway tweet by the ultimate NFL insider Adam Schefter, who said, "The NFL starts in controversy and ends in controversy." I don't think Schefter meant any harm with these words, but they speak volumes. The "controversy" that started the season of course was compelling evidence that NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell was continuing an ignominious NFL tradition of covering up violence against women. Knocking out your partner, deflating some balls... it's all just another cart on the rumbling, stumbling and often bumbling NFL gravy train. It's Roger's world, a world where if you can get away with it, you do it, and by all means, you never do it on videotape.

But forget for a moment the hot takes about Belichick, his legacy, and how this event could dominate the next ten days as idle reporters in Glendale, Arizona, now have something to feed the 24/7 news cycle. Forget as well that the Patriots would have beaten the Colts last Sunday if they had played with a rubber chicken wrapped in silver duct tape. At least some of the collective outrage, not to mention interest, about this speaks to our profound cynicism about formally trusted institutions of power in this country, and our continued, shockingly unshakable, relative absence of cynicism about sports. After years of hearing about doping scandals, dirty players, hypocritical commissioners and games that seem to be staged only as background to sell the "war on terror brought to you by Budweiser", people still want to believe that the play itself, if not pure, is still an honest endeavor in between the lines.

Contrast the faith people project onto sports with the utter absence of credulity we give politics. Why were people talking more about deflated balls than President Obama's State of the Union address? I imagine it's because unless you are someone who sees Beltway politics as a form of entertainment, or a DC insider consuming and analyzing every last optic, you would have to be Shirley Temple to feel like anything said by the president, no matter how artfully articulated, connects with your life. We were told the economy is booming, yet household income for the middle and working classes is still far below pre-2008 crisis levels because of stagnant wages. We were told that a tax on the 1 percent and free childcare was on the agenda, yet a hostile Congress makes those promises about as realistic as hoverboards for all. We were told that the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan are over, yet the facts—and boots—on the ground tell a different story. We were told that it was time to come together and see both sides on questions of police violence, yet protesters were being targeted in Ferguson while the president was speaking.

Meanwhile, we saw the Patriots kick the snot out of the Colts and we saw the Seahawks have as wild a fourth-quarter comeback as I've ever seen to beat the Green Bay Packers. We want to believe that this—if nothing else—represents a tangible truth. Frightening as it is to consider, sports might be our last collective tether to a recognizable reality. If people feel like Bill Belichick has taken that away, it will affect his legacy and this sport, more than a thousand instances of Roger Goodell looking like he has the moral compass of a feral raccoon. It's sad. It's pathetic. But it's also understandable. We can only work with the world we're given, and it's a place where the trust in institutions of power is more deflated than any damn balls.

Calendar of Events

February 26 — March 4, 2015

A Black History Experience at Potomac Landing Community Center

Date and Time: Friday, February 27, 2015 7-9 pm
Description: Join the members of the Kids Care and Xtreme Teens programs as they travel through history showcasing important members of the Black History Experience, from slavery to present day.
Cost: \$5/person (FREE ages 3 and under)
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Potomac Landing Community Center
12500 Fort Washington Road, Fort Washington
Contact: 301-292-9191; TTY 301-203-6030

Xtreme Teens: Teen's Choice

Date and Time: Friday February 27, 2015 7-10 pm
Description: Enjoy a full night of fun, because it's your choice. That's right, whether it's a movie in the gym, games in the lobby, or arts and crafts, it's YOUR choice.
Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Columbia Park Community Center
1901 Kent Village Drive, Landover 20785
Contact: 301-341-3749; TTY 301-445-4512

Seniors: Sandy Brown and the Blue Revue

Date & Time: Friday, February 27, 2015 1-2 pm
Description: Get ready to go on a musical journey of sound and motion that will leave you transformed! Experience the blend of soulful song and inspired dance that weaves a tapestry of emotion to make the spirit soar. You will be entertained by a mixture of dance and live music jazz that include the blues, gospel-infused syncopations, lush jazz ballads and popular tunes from the past.
Cost: Resident: \$2; Non-Resident: \$3
Ages: 60 & better
Location: Camp Springs Senior Center
6420 Allentown Road, Camp Springs 20748
Contact: 301-449-6420; TTY 301-446-3402

Opening Reception: Biological Flyers

Date and Time: Friday, February 27, 2015 6-8 pm
Description: Our latest exhibition, Biological Flyers, is a collaboration between College Park Aviation Museum, M-NCPPC Park Rangers, the Prince George's Audubon Society and Patuxent Bird Club. Get a first look at the exhibit while mingling with some of the creators and enjoying light refreshments.
Cost: Free
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: College Park Aviation Museum
1985 Corporal Frank Scott Drive, College Park
Contact: 301-864-6029; TTY 301-699-2544

Xtreme Teens: Tie-Dye Friday

Date and Time: Friday, February 27, 2015 7-10 pm
Description: Teens, bring a friend for a night of creative fun. Create your own awesome, tie-dye designs, just remember to bring your own t-shirt or hat.
Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Bladensburg Community Center
4500 57th Avenue, Bladensburg 20710
Contact: 301-277-2124; TTY 301-445-4512

Xtreme Teens: Skate Night

Date and Time: Friday, February 27, 2015 7-10 pm
Description: Teens skate with your friends for a night of fun, while enjoying music and light refreshments.
Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Kentland Community Center
2411 Pinebrook Avenue, Landover 20785
Contact: 301-386-2278; TTY 301-445-4512

Xtreme Teens: Regional Black History Excursion-The History of HBCUs

Date and Time: Saturday February 28, 2015 6:30-10 pm
Description: Have you seen the the HBCU facts posted around the community center in honor of Black History Month? We sure hope so! Tonight, teens will travel to Kentland Community Center to challenge those teens in a trivia competition. Departure is at 6:30 pm, with a return time of 10 pm. Signed permission slips by a parent/guardian are a requirement for trip attendance.
Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Columbia Park Community Center
1901 Kent Village Drive, Landover 20785
Contact: 301-341-3749; TTY 301-445-4512

Highland Tea

Date and Time: Saturday, February 28, 2015 2 pm
Description: Celebrate Darnall's Chance's Scottish heritage and partake in a cozy winter afternoon tea. Participants will enjoy the tastes and sounds of Scotland. Capacity is limited; reservation and payment required in advance.
Cost: Resident \$23; Non-Resident: \$28
Ages: 18 & up
Location: Darnall's Chance House
14800 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro 20772
Contact: 301-952-8010; TTY 301-699-2544

Black History Month Family Program: Meet Benjamin Banneker

Date and Time: Saturday, February 28, 2015 1-3 pm
Description: Explore Black History with this family program. Meet Benjamin Banneker, as played by Bob Smith, who will visit and tell us about his work as an astronomer, mathematician, almanac writer and farmer. Participants will create related crafts and other activities.
Cost: Residents:\$4; Non-Residents: \$5
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Montpelier Mansion/Historic Site
9650 Muirkirk Road
Laurel, MD 20708
Contact: 301-377-7817; TTY 301-699-2455
montpeliermansion@pgparks.com

EARTH TALK ... Microbeads & Marine Pollution

Dear EarthTalk:

What on Earth are plastic "microbeads" and how are they threatening the Great Lakes?

— Billy Alexander,
Macon, GA

Can brushing your teeth or using an exfoliating face or body wash be an act of pollution? Perhaps so, because over 1,000 personal care products contain tiny plastic "microbeads," each about a half millimeter in diameter. The Los Angeles-based 5 Gyres Institute, which works to end plastic pollution in the world's oceans, found about 360,000 of these plastic beads in one tube of Neutrogena Deep Clean face wash. Hardly visible to the naked eye, these tiny objects flow straight from bathroom drains into sewer systems.

In July 2012, 5 Gyres went on an expedition with researchers from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Fredonia to determine the micro-plastic pollution of the Great Lakes Region. Data from this study, which was published in the December 2013 edition of the peer-reviewed Marine Pollution Bulletin, revealed an average of 43,000 plastic microparticles per square kilometer in the Great Lakes. The highest concentrations were observed in Lake Erie, and accounted for about 90 percent of the total plastics found.

"We found high concentrations of micro-plastics, more than most ocean samples collected worldwide," said Marcus Eriksen, the study's lead author and co-director of the 5 Gyres Institute. "These were of similar size, shape, texture and composition to plastic microbeads found in many consumer products used as exfoliants, giving us circumstantial evidence that these products, designed to be washed down the drain, are not adequately being captured by sewage treatment."

Sewage treatment facilities are not designed to capture tiny microbeads, and during rainy days sewage can overflow into waterways. Once they enter waterways, they move into fish, which confuse them for food, then into those who eat the fish, including wildlife and humans.

"People simply don't like washing their face with plastic, and the fact that it's designed to go straight into the environment makes microbeads a particularly egregious source of plastic pollution," says Stiv Wilson, Policy Director at 5 Gyres. "These beads are similar in size to fish eggs and can absorb and concentrate toxins found in the aquatic environment, making them an ecosystem wide threat to the food chain."

Once they determined the scale of plastic microbead pollution in the Great Lakes region, the 5 Gyres Institute launched a campaign asking personal care product manu-



CREDIT: 5 GYRES INSTITUTE

Products like facial scrubs, soaps and toothpaste contain thousands of polyethylene and polypropylene microbeads, ranging from 50-500 microns (or 1/2 mm) in diameter.

facturers to remove plastic microbeads from their products. The response has been very positive: Unilever said that it would complete a global phase out of plastic scrub beads from personal care products in 2015; Procter & Gamble said that all of its products will be free of microplastics in 2017; Johnson & Johnson, the maker of Neutrogena facial products, has already begun the phase out of polyethylene microbeads in its personal care products and has stopped developing new products containing plastic microbeads; and L'Oreal has decided not to develop any new products with microplastic-pearls and is also working on a substitute for these exfoliating agents in existing product formulas.

You can determine if there are microbeads in your personal care products by checking the ingredients for polyethylene or polypropylene, or by using the 5 Gyres Institute app, Beat the Microbead, which scans the barcode of products and informs you whether or not they contain plastic microbeads and if the manufacturer has agreed to remove them.

CONTACTS: 5 Gyres Institute, www.5gyres.org

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Graduation from A1

free and reduced-price meals program increased 1.79 percentage points.

"Improving graduation rates was one of my top priorities when I returned to PGCPSS as CEO. The data shows that our strategic focus on academic excellence, developing a high-performing workforce, and engaging with our families and communities is working. I commend our students, staff, teachers, and administrators for their hard work in achieving this significant milestone. Our union partners were with us every step of the way and we are grateful for their collaboration and support in helping us increase our graduation rates. We are going to continue the work to push our

graduation rates even higher than where we are today," said Chief Executive Officer for PGCPSS Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell.

As graduation rates rose in the school district, the dropout rate declined in Prince George's County Public Schools. Now at 16.73 percent, the dropout rate decreased 1.77 percentage points, which is the lowest since 2010 and the largest decrease in one year on record for the school district.

The following high schools made gains of three or more percentage points in their graduation rates:

- Central High School with an 8.72 percentage point increase
- Forestville High School with a 6.15 percentage point increase
- Laurel High School with a 5.82 percentage point increase

• Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School with a 4.79 percentage point increase

• Parkdale High School with a 4.79 percentage point increase

• Largo High School with a 3.22 percentage point increase

• Bladensburg High School with a 3.06 percentage point increase

Bowie High School, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Gwynn Park High School and Charles Herbert Flowers High School all have graduation rates at or above the state average of 86.39 percent.

"I am excited to congratulate Prince George's County Public Schools on this excellent news and progress," said Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. "Two years ago, we made bold

moves intended to improve our schools in categories such as graduation and drop-out rates. Today, we are seeing tangible results because of the school system and Board leadership, the dedication of the principals, teachers, and support staff in schools throughout the county, and, most importantly, because of the hard work, persistence, and tenacity of our students and their parents."

MSDE uses a four-year cohort method to calculate graduation rates. It follows a set group of students from freshman year through their senior year.

To view data for any district or school in Maryland, please visit the 2014 Maryland Report Card website at www.mdreportcard.org.

USDA Improves Forest Health by Harvesting Biomass for Energy

By PRESS OFFICER
USDA

WASHINGTON, — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that more than 200,000 tons of biomass were removed from federal lands through the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP). BCAP, reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, provided incentives for the removal of dead or diseased trees from National Forests and Bureau of Land Management lands for renewable energy, while reducing the risk of forest fire. This summer, 19 energy facilities in 10 states participated in the program.

"This initiative helps to retrieve forest residues that are a fire risk, but otherwise are costly to remove," said Vilsack. "In just three months, working with private partners across the country, the program helped to reduce fire, disease and insect threats while providing more biomass feedstock for advanced energy facilities."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency administered

the program earlier this year. Eligible farmers, ranchers or foresters participating in BCAP received a payment to partially offset the cost of harvesting and delivering forest or agricultural residues to a qualified energy facility. Up to \$12.5 million is available each year for biomass removal.

Key program accomplishments include:

- In Colorado's Front Range, 18,000 tons of trees targeted by the USDA Forest Service to reduce forest fire threats were removed to generate energy.
- In California's Rim Fire area in Tuolumne County, nearly 100 percent of the USDA Forest Service's targeted 40,000 tons of forest residue was approved for removal and transport to energy facilities.
- In Arizona, 41,000 tons of forest residue in Apache and Navajo counties were approved for removal and transport to energy facilities.
- In Oscoda County, Mich., home of the Huron Manistee

National Forest, 5,000 tons of forest residue were approved for removal and transport to energy facilities.

These accomplishments helped the Forest Service meet or exceed its restoration goals for Fiscal Year 2014, including reducing hazardous fuels on 1.7 million acres in the wildland urban interface and sustaining or restoring watershed conditions on 2.9 million acres, resulting in 2.8 billion board feet of timber volume sold. To further support this program, the Forest Service has entered into a three-year, \$1.5 million agreement to provide technical assistance to the Farm Service Agency as they implement BCAP on National Forest System lands. This will enable the development and execution of biomass sales, and help open and support new and existing markets for biomass products.

USDA will issue a final regulation this winter to incorporate BCAP updates established in the 2014 Farm Bill. The next funding opportunity will be announced once updates are incorporated.

BCAP was reauthorized by the 2014 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/farmbill.

For more information visit www.fsa.usda.gov/bcap or contact a local FSA county office at offices.usda.gov to learn more about BCAP.

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