

The Prince George's Post



A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY Since 1932

Vol. 83, No. 15 April 9 — April 15, 2015

Prince George's County, Maryland

Newspaper of Record

Phone: 301-627-0900

25 cents



Senators applaud staff work on budget after Thursday's vote.

CAPITAL NEWS SERVICES/SCREEN SHOT BY ANJALI SHASTRY.

Maryland State Budget Unanimously Passes Through Senate

By ANJALI SHASTRY
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Maryland Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller Jr. called the roll for the budget bill on Thursday, and 46 green dots appeared next to the names of the state senators. Senate members started wildly applauding, cheering and whistling as the 46-0 vote lit up the board, marking the official passage of the state budget through the chamber.

Maryland's \$40.7 billion state budget and its companion legis-

lation reinstated about \$62 million for supplemental education funding to 13 jurisdictions, about \$60 million for state employee raises and about \$45 million for Medicaid subsidies for physicians.

The Senate's version modifies the budget they received from the House of Delegates, which had first crack at the budget this year.

Budget and Taxation Committee chair Senator Edward Kasemeyer, D-Baltimore and Howard, said the differences between the two budgets were very small.

"The differences are probably the same categories, they cut a little less or a little more than we did," Kasemeyer said. "I think the main difference probably is that we provided \$15 million for Prince George's County Hospital, they didn't include that at all."

Gov. Larry Hogan in January proposed a budget that was lambasted by Democrats for being too harsh with spending cuts. Hogan, a Republican elected on a platform of reducing taxes and state spending, attempted to address a \$700 mil-

lion structural deficit in the state budget in one year.

Hogan's budget proposal had rescinded a 2 percent cost of living raise given to state employees in January, and also slashed the supplemental public education budget — known as the Geographic Cost of Education Index — that Montgomery and Prince George's counties, as well as Baltimore and 10 other jurisdictions, have grown reliant on.

See BUDGET Page A5

PGPCS Celebrates National and State Recognition

By PRESS OFFICER
PGPCS

UPPER MARLBORO, MD — Nineteen Prince George's County Public School (PGPCS) teachers achieved National Board Certified status, while Greenbelt Elementary School is one of only three schools in the state of Maryland to be recognized and honored for their gifted and talented program.

The National Board Certification is the most prestigious teaching credential that educators can obtain in the United States. This year's honorees include nine new nationally-certified teachers and 10 renewal National Board Certified Teachers:

Catherine Abbott — Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School

Melissa Alfano — Thomas Claggett Elementary School

Catalina Ballitoc — Glenridge Elementary School

Sarah Barias — Panorama Elementary School

Alexis Cortez — Riverdale Elementary School

Maria Darza — James Ryder Randall Elementary School

Ayana English Brown — Largo High School

Karen Gibson — Forest Heights Elementary School

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WSSC Completes 10-Year Long Bi-County Water Tunnel Project

By PRESS OFFICER
WSSC

Laurel — After a decade of planning, drilling and digging, the construction stage of WSSC's Bi-County Tunnel is complete. Two large valves have been opened and the brand new 84" in diameter water main pipeline is officially in service.

The completion of one of the biggest public utility projects in the Washington area marks a significant infrastructure milestone, not only for WSSC but for the 1.8 million residents it serves in Montgomery and

Prince George's counties. The tunnel, which cost a total of \$146 million, is the first tunnel built by WSSC in 35 years.

"This project is a tremendous accomplishment that provides an immediate and significant upgrade to our infrastructure" said Jerry N. Johnson, GM/CEO for WSSC. "I would like to commend everyone for the hard work and dedication devoted to this project. The impeccable coordinating efforts between both counties, members of the com-

See TUNNEL Page A5

Cardin Brings Senate Small Business Committee to Bowie State

Field Hearing Addresses Access to Capital for Minority Small Businesses

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of Senator Ben Cardin

Bowie, Md. -- U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Ranking Member of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, chaired a field hearing Monday exploring the successes and challenges of programs designed to support minority small businesses gain access to capital. Minorities make up just 22% of American businesses, despite representing more than 35% of the population. This achievement gap results in part from the significant obstacles that minority business owners face in accessing capital.

"We need to do a better job helping minority-owned businesses. Minority-owned businesses still face discrimination in the small business credit market, and still have trouble getting their fair share of government contracts," said Cardin. "If we deny a segment of our community from reaching its full po-

tential, we lose value and strength in our overall economy. Despite improvements, there is still work to be done to ensure that the tools we have are effective. We can't just layer program upon program. We need to make sure we have the most efficient programs available.

"Since becoming Ranking Member of this Committee, I, along with the other members of this committee, have made it a top priority to focus on removing the barriers that still affect minority-owned small businesses. In some cases, those barriers are not unlike the barriers which plague all businesses. But, in some cases, the obstacles that minority small business owners face are very unique: Minority-owned businesses are two to three times more likely to be denied credit; more likely to avoid applying for loans based on the belief that they will

See BOWIE STATE Page A6

Maryland House, Senate Pass Bills to Restrict Hydraulic Fracturing

By NATE RABNER AND
ANJALI SHASTRY
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS -- The Maryland House of Delegates and Senate on Tuesday each passed separate bills that would restrict hydraulic fracturing in the state, over the objections of lawmakers who say the legislation ignores the state's economic interests.

The House bill, sponsored by Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo, D-Montgomery, would prohibit the Maryland Department of the Environment from issuing permits for hydraulic fracturing wells until 2018. In the meantime, a panel of experts would study the environmental and public health risks of hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking.

Several Republican delegates spoke against the bill in the House chamber, claiming it places "hysterical myths" about the dangers of fracking above the needs of Western Maryland's economy. Some said the bill, which passed by a vote of 93-45, is a way for fracking opponents to ban the practice without explicitly saying so.



Well Head where fluids are injected into the ground.

"That commission is a travesty," said Delegate Wendell Beitzel, R-Garrett and Allegany, who argued the state should al-

low "reasonable, regulated hydraulic fracturing."

Proponents of the bill voiced concerns about drinking-water contamination from fracking, which involves pumping fluid into the earth to break up natural gas deposits. Delegate Kumar Barve, D-Montgomery, chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee, said his committee "wants to get the science right" before making a decision.

In the Senate, a debate broke out about who should be liable if fracking damages the environment. Senator Bobby Zirkin, D-Baltimore County, sponsored a bill that would hold hydraulic-fracturing companies liable, which was not received well by Senate Republicans.

The bill, which passed with a veto-proof majority of 29-17, would mandate that hydraulic-fracturing companies keep \$10 million on hand for insurance and would ensure that state taxpayers are not responsible for funding environmental cleanup after accidents.

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INSIDE

University Construction Projects Draw Governor's Ire After Officials Ask for Additional Funding

University construction officials at the board meeting Wednesday characterized the requests as contract modifications rather than budget increases, and said the additional funding would not impact the state's budget.

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Don't Leave Children Short

Rigorous research studies have found that quality, evidence-based home visiting programs produce measurable, long-term outcomes for children and families, including better health, greater school readiness, academic achievement, parental involvement, economic self-sufficiency, reduced child maltreatment, abuse, and juvenile delinquency.

Commentary, Page A4

Comptroller Franchot Urges Taxpayers to File Electronically as April 15th Deadline Approaches

With the tax-filing deadline just over two weeks away, Comptroller Peter Franchot today urged taxpayers who have yet to submit a return to considering using the agency's free online tax filing system, iFile or another electronic method.

Business, Page A5

Movie Review: Unfinished Business

A hard-working small business owner and his two associates travel to Europe to close the most important deal of their lives. But what began as a routine business trip goes off the rails in every imaginable - and unimaginable - way, including unplanned stops at a massive sex fetish event and a global economic summit.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

What is the "National Food Policy" that environmentalists and foodies are asking President Obama to enact by Executive Order, and how would it affect American diets?

— Justin Brockway,
Los Angeles, CA

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Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Four running for two Morningside Council Seats

Morningsiders will go to the polls on Monday, May 4, to elect two Town Council members. The following candidates will be on the ballot:

Todd Mullins has served on the Council since Feb. 2012 and he's running again. He and his wife Susan moved to Morningside in 2008 and have been active with the Morningside Recreation Council. Todd works for Aggregate Industries and maintains a lawn-care business. He has worked with the Town's Public Works, plowing snow. And soon he'll be repaving and striping the Town Hall parking lot.

Dakota Tyree has lived in Morningside since birth, 24 years on Woodland Road. She previously worked three years in the Town's Public Works Department and assisted in the administrative office. These activities have introduced her to the workings of the Town. She looks forward to updating the Town Ordinances and Charter.

Sheila V. Scott has lived in Morningside for 25 years and previously served on the Town Council. She was instrumental in upgrading the Town Hall, installing slider doors, handicapped ramps, sidewalks, railings, lighting and canopies. She is dedicated to the concept of participatory government, encouraging residents to be involved in their government, and she represents Morningside in the County Civic Federation and the 202 Coalition, organizations that deal with jobs, education, neighborhoods and more.

Brad Wade moved to Morningside when he was ten, in 1987, and his wife Amy was born and grew up in Morningside. They think it's a good place to raise their four daughters. His goal, serving on the Council, is to bring the Town back "to the way it was when I was growing up." Things like the Easter Egg Hunt. And he plans to work on vacant houses, getting families to move in.

The polls will be open at the Town Hall, 6901 Ames St., from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on May 4.

Morningside Memories

As Morningsiders get ready to vote in the upcoming Council election, I am reminded that 30 years ago this month two lifelong Morningsiders filed to run for two Town Council seats: Russell Butler and Carol Kline. Both won. Both had attended Morningside Elementary and Foulis and graduated from Central. Carol served two terms, Russell served four.

News from Morningside VFD

The Fire Department put out a fire just around the block from the station the morning of March 31. The unoccupied house, in the 6500 block of Clayton Lane Drive, suffered major damage. I understand arson is a possibility. On a personal note: years ago this was the lovely home of Col. Edward McManus and his wife Rosemarie, a dear friend of mine.

In January Morningside VFD dropped off its recently-purchased 2001 Spartan Luverne pumper to the 0-8 EVS located in Lancaster County, Pa., for a rehab. The pumper was in good shape, but needed a little TLC to ensure that it would last well into the future.

Applause

Father Jeffrey Samaha, Chaplain at Southern Maryland Hospital, has been chosen to receive the 2015 Msgr. Harry A. Echle Award for Outstanding Service in Healthcare Ministry. The award was presented by The John Carroll Society at the Rose Mass on March 15 at the Church of the Little Flower in Bethesda.

Father Samaha currently resides at Holy Spirit Church in Forestville, and formerly at St. Philip's in Camp Springs.

Remembering a G.I. who died in Korea

I had a call from Joe Mothershead who told me about Army Sgt. James Anderson who died in an ambush in South Korea on Easter morning 1968. Another GI and two South Korean soldiers also died. Anderson was driving a

truck for a fellow soldier who was sick that night.

He was only 20, and he was from Camp Springs. His mom worked at the Giant in District Heights. You can read more about the ambush on the Stars and Stripes website.

Two area Lt. Colonels, both 92, die in March

Lt. Col. Lewis H. Batty, USAF (Ret.), 92, formerly of Hillcrest Heights, died March 20 at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. He was a deacon at the Camp Springs Community Church, in Clinton. Survivors include his children, Crystal Keast, Randolph and Nelson Batty, five grandchildren and eight great-grands.

Lt. Col. Carl W. Roy, USAF retired, 92, formerly of Camp Springs, died March 9. His military career spanned 32 years. He was a POW and survived the Bataan Death March. He was the husband of Anna G. Roy, father of Carl W. and the late Linda Ann Robinson and Gail Marie DeLozier. He is survived by grandchildren, great-grands, and lots more family.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Donna Wood, April 11; (Darlie) Fay Norton and Donald Brown Jr., April 13; Ruth Nanney, Jean Osterkamp, Donald Brown Sr., Sarah Shipman, Autumn Williams and Fr. Jeffrey Samaha, April 14; Bill Ward, Eva Hay and Les Bornman, April 15; Tara Destiny Buckner, Edna Ducote, Wanda Brooke and Jane (Martin) Talbert, April 16.

Happy anniversary to Chuck and Laura (Smith) Jenkins, April 10; Tex and Rickie Beardmore, their 51st on April 11; and John and Emily Tierney, their 65th (!) on April 15.



Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301 888 2153

USHER'S ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to the Usher Ministry of Clinton United Methodist Church. They will be celebrating their First Usher's Anniversary on Sunday, April 19, 2015 at 3:00 PM. Rev. Dorothea J. Belt Stroman is the Pastor. The church is located at 10700 Brandywine Road, Brandywine, Maryland.

ARITHMETICKLES

Arithmetickles is a Math Game Show moving Math off the page and onto the stage. The game show provides Interactive Skits, Comedy and 100% audience participation. Visit www.artsonstage.org or call 410-252-8717 for more information.

AVON 39 THE WALK TO END CANCER

Please join us at St. Phillips Episcopal Church in Brandywine, Maryland to raise money for the cause. Party yourself into shape with Team Pretty in Pink at a Zumba Fitness Party Saturday, April 11, 2015 from 1:00 PM -3:00 PM. Light refreshments will be served. Cost is

\$8.00 in advance and \$10.00 at the door. Instructors are Nay Crawley and Honey.

Fellowship with Team Pretty in Pink at a BBQ Fundraiser Saturday, April 18, 2015 from 12:00 PM-4:00 PM. There will be a 50/50 Raffle Drawing at 3:00 PM. Rib Dinner \$15.00, BBQ Chicken Dinner \$12.00 (Dinners include corn on the cob, green beans, baked beans, potato salad, slice of cake and a soda or water). Rib Sandwich Combo \$12.00, BBQ Chicken Sandwich \$10.00, Hot Dog Combo \$5.00 (Combos include: one side, cookie and soda or water.) Rib Sandwich only \$10.00, Chicken Sandwich only \$8.00, Hot Dog only \$3.00, side order \$2.00, Can Soda (Pepsi or Sierra Mist) \$0.75, bottle of water \$1.00. *Delivery available to local businesses for \$25.00 minimum order. Orders for delivery must be placed in advance by calling 240-438-2121*.

Team Pretty in Pink has committed to participating in the Avon 39 The Walk to End Breast Cancer. Money raised will be managed and disbursed by the

Avon Foundation Breast Cancer Crusade to provide access to care for those who need help the most. The money will also be used to fund educational programs, and accelerate research into new treatments and potential cures.

HEALTH FAIR

A journey to wellness (free Community Health Event) will be Saturday, April 18, 2015 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Clinton United Methodist Church, (Pastor Dorothea J. Belt Stroman). The address is 10700 Brandywine Road Clinton, Maryland 20735.

Workshops offered by Heartland Hospice of Beltsville and Community Vendors. The workshops offered are a Caregiver Workshop, Making Healthcare Choices (frequently asked questions) and Benefits of Pre-planning (How will you leave your legacy)? Various Vendors will be available to address your concerns. For free Vendor registration please call Renee Clark at Heartland Hospice 240-264-1690. This event will be held indoors, rain or shine. Door prize with participation.

Neighborhood Events

Edwards Introduces the Child CARE Act To Make Quality Child Care Affordable

Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) reintroduced the Child Care Access and Refundability Expansion Act (Child CARE Act), H.R. 1492, which expands the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) to help families with the ever-increasing cost of child and dependent care.

"In Maryland and across the country, working families are struggling to cope with child care expenses that are one of the biggest financial burdens they face, exceeding costs for housing, transportation, and food," said Congresswoman Edwards. "For working parents, access to safe and high-quality child care is a necessity to make ends meet. As President Obama said in his State of the Union address earlier this year, child care 'is not a nice-to-have – it's a must-have.' Access to affordable care for children, dependents, and aging parents is a national economic priority."

In 20 states, the cost of child care for two children is more than the cost of the mortgage on the family's home. In Maryland, a single mother spends an average of 36% of her income on child care. To make matters worse, the current CDCTC is outdated and does not reflect the realities of these rising costs. It applies a sliding scale that reduces the credit to only 20% of eligible expenses (currently \$3,000 for one dependent and \$6,000 for two or more) for families making more than \$43,000 per year. Additionally, the credit is not currently refundable, meaning that lower-income families with no tax liability cannot benefit from the CDCTC, no matter what their child care costs are.

The Child CARE Act will allow more families to benefit fully from the credit and afford child and dependent care. It helps working parents with the high cost of care by increasing the credit to 50% of eligible expenses and raising the cap to \$8,000 per eligible dependent (\$16,000 for two or more). It allows middle-class families with a household income of up to \$200,000 to fully benefit from the credit and also makes the credit refundable, which would allow many lower-income families to benefit from the CDCTC for the first time. The bill also indexes both the eligible expense cap and income threshold to inflation, meaning that the CDCTC will keep up with the rising cost of care.

Additionally, the bill creates a tax credit to encourage child care providers to send their employees to professional development classes in early childhood education and child development. Child care providers are an integral part of the child care system that cares for millions of children across the country. Ensuring the high quality of the child care available in our communities is a vital part of creating a setting where young children can grow, flourish, and enter school ready to learn.

The bill was introduced with 21 original cosponsors: Reps.



Congresswoman
Donna F. Edwards

Blumenauer, Bustos, Capps, Castor, Conyers, Delaney, DeLauro, DelBene, Fudge, Hastings, McCollum, McDermott, Nadler, Holmes Norton, Perlmutter, Pingree, Rush, Schakowsky, Slaughter, Speier, and Wasserman Schultz.

HHS Awards \$8,766,550 to Maryland to Support Families Through the Home Visiting Program

Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell today announced \$8,766,550 in grant awards to Maryland to support the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (Home Visiting Program). These funds will allow Maryland to continue to expand voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services to women during pregnancy and to parents with young children. Nationally, \$386 million was awarded to states, territories, and nonprofit organizations to support the Home Visiting Program.

"Home visits by a nurse, social worker, or early childhood educator during pregnancy and in the first years of life can make a tremendous difference in the lives of many children and their families," said Secretary Burwell. "Today's awards give Maryland the flexibility to tailor its home visiting programs to address the specific needs of the communities it serves."

The Home Visiting Program currently serves approximately one-third of the counties in the country with high rates of the following indicators: low birth weight, teen birth rate, living in poverty and infant mortality rates. More than 1.4 million home visits have been conducted through the national Home Visiting Program, serving parents and children in 721 counties in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories. In 2014, the Home Visiting Program served 115,000 parents and children across the nation. Nearly 80 percent of families participating in the program had household incomes at or below the 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

"The Home Visiting Program gives parents who chose to participate, the tools they need to support healthy outcomes for their children," said Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., RN, administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). "Evidence-based home visiting services are proven to help improve maternal and child health, prevent child abuse and neglect, and enhance school-readiness."

Administered by HRSA, in close partnership with the Administration for Children

and Families, the Home Visiting Program is one part of President Obama's Early Learning Initiative that focuses on both high-quality infant and toddler care through Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships and universal Pre-K to improve the essential foundations in early childhood for future healthy development and well-being. Current authority for the Home Visiting Program expires on March 31, 2015. The President's Budget requests \$500 million for fiscal year 2016 and \$15 billion over the next 10 years to continue to expand Home Visiting for families.

For more information and further details on HRSA's Home Visiting Program, visit <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting>.

For a list of awardees, visit www.hrsa.gov/about/news/2015tables/homevisiting.

Healthier Food Options in Its Cafeteria Helps Doctors Community Hospital Reinforce Its Mission

Lanham, MD – Doctors Community Hospital now offers healthier food options in its cafeteria. This change will reinforce its "passion for caring about your health" mission by allowing patients, guests and employees to enjoy more nutritious breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one third of U.S. adults are obese. Also, obesity is often related to other health issues like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. "To help address the direct and indirect impacts of obesity, we have developed various clinical programs including our Bariatric and Weight Loss Center, Joslin Diabetes Center, Cardiac Rehabilitation Center, Center for Comprehensive Breast Care, Lymphedema Center and many other specialty services. In addition to caring for community members who have these concerns, we are constantly researching ways to help people improve or maintain their health as well as avoid preventable conditions," stated Paul Grenaldo, chief operating officer at Doctors Community Hospital. One such recent effort is the hospital's providing of healthier food selections in its cafeteria.

Started in January 2015, the hospital has adopted healthier food preparation techniques in its cafeteria and has reduced the availability of consumables high in saturated fats. Also, Doctors Community Hospital no longer offers deep fat fried foods. Instead, there are healthier and tasty baked alternatives. As mentioned by Mr. Grenaldo, "We sincerely care about the health and well-being of both our external and internal communities. By improving the selection of food options that are offered to those who visit our cafeteria, we are continuing our nearly 40-year tradition of improving the health of people who receive our quality care while also advancing the wellbeing of our exceptional employees who provide those services."

COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

Debt and the Deceased: How Should Spouses and Heirs Proceed?

If your loved one died leaving significant debt behind, would you know what to do?

It's a worrisome question for everyone. Young or old, based on particular debt circumstances or geographic location, death with debt can provide significant problems for surviving family members. Depending on state law and the specific credit relationships involved, they might be shocked to learn that they could be legally liable for a deceased relative's outstanding debt — anything from unpaid mortgage balances and medical debt to unpaid credit card balances.

Spouses (<http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/unexpected-death>) who may share any kind of debt jointly, particularly credit cards in dual name, could face greater challenges. It also may spell problems for co-signers of any kind of loan.

As with all financial planning, the best time to act is before an issue arises. Watching any family deal with extensive debt problems after a spouse or relative passes on illustrates the need for financial transparency while all parties are alive. No matter how difficult a family member's credit circumstances are, spouses and adult children should face those circumstances while options are available to deal with any problems.

Spouses can begin by requesting and sharing their three free annual credit reports (<https://www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action>) from TransUnion, Experian and Equifax to confirm debt status. Once that information is out in the open, it's time for the couple or family members to deal with specific circumstances related to that debt. For example, a young couple may have different debt issues than an older, retired couple, but both should consider how they would handle the debts of a spouse or legal partner after death. It can be helpful to meet with a qualified financial or estate expert about ways to extinguish or manage debt issues as part of current financial and estate planning.

It is particularly important for borrowers and their executors to know what categories of the deceased's debts will likely need to be repaid after their death and other debts that might be canceled or forgiven. Generally, certain forms of unsecured debt held in the deceased's name alone — like credit cards or federal student loans — may likely be discharged, but check with qualified experts first.

Any kind of debt held in joint name should be evaluated. Spouses, legal partners and family members who have co-signed loans or joint credit accounts of any kind risk payoff responsibility for that debt if their co-borrower dies. Experts can advise how to deal with individual situations.

Experts also may suggest that co-borrowers without credit in their own names apply for a credit card in separate names while their spouse is still alive. A separate credit account, if responsibly managed, can help the survivor qualify for additional credit in their name after a spouse or legal partner dies.

Keep in mind that all debt situations are unique to the individual. For example, a senior who qualifies for nursing home care under Medicaid (public aid) may have family members who will need to sell the senior's home to address certain expenses after he or she has died. It is best to prepare relatives for that possibility in advance. Separately, a healthy senior relative may leave a home to heirs still under mortgage, or there could be a significant tax debt.

Airing and reviewing these issues in advance can either prepare relatives for certain realities or enable them to solve problems while the relative is still alive.

Bottom line: Dealing with a deceased relative's debt can add stress at a particularly worrisome time for spouses and relatives. The best option is transparency while relatives are alive so debt issues can be addressed as part of overall estate planning.



University Construction Projects Draw Governor's Ire After Officials Ask for Additional Funding

By BRIAN MARRON
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Gov. Larry Hogan — along with the rest of the Board of Public Works — did not hide his irritation with Maryland universities' request for nearly \$35 million in construction funding above original estimates, after officials were unable to clearly explain their requests.

"We're trying to be fiscally responsible... and I hear some people at universities talking about wanting to raise tuition rates, and we're here talking about \$35 million more than you thought you were going to spend," said Hogan, a Republican, at Wednesday's board meeting. "It just seems out of whack to me."

The board delayed voting on \$29 million in additional funding for four projects, including academic buildings at Bowie State University, Salisbury University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore; and a Universities at Shady Grove parking garage. They approved a \$6 million payment for an athletic complex at Salisbury.

Comptroller Peter Franchot, a Democrat, was also upset with the universities' process of asking for more money after the approval of initial cost estimates.

"How can we possibly have any confidence (in the original estimates) if the bid is just a placeholder, you adjust it, and move forward?" Franchot said. "That's just absurd. How can you run a business like that?"

University System of Maryland Procurement Acting Director Jim Haley and Interim Executive Planning and Construction Director Bill Olen blamed a changing and unfriendly market as the culprit for the additional funding needs.

Franchot said he was skeptical of that reasoning.

University construction officials at the board meeting Wednesday characterized the requests as contract modifications rather than budget in-

creases, and said the additional funding would not impact the state's budget.

But board members were unimpressed.

Treasurer Nancy Kopp expressed frustration over convoluted and complex written proposals to the board from the University System of Maryland's Capital Planning Office. Board Executive Secretary Sheila McDonald also noted that the contract language hampered the universities' requests.

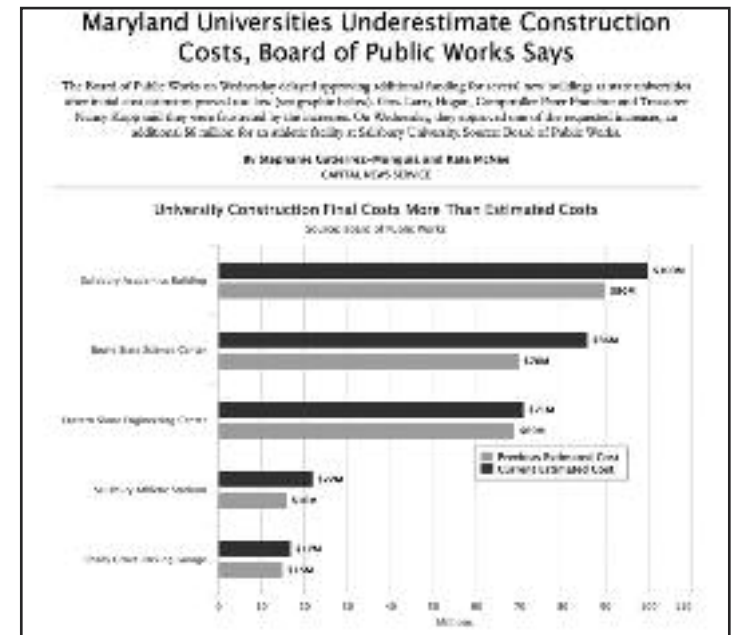
"I think you do yourselves a great injustice and cause confusion on everyone's part by not writing (explanations for these requests) in a way a normal person would," Kopp told Haley and Olen regarding their requests for funding. "We don't understand it."

Hogan also expressed disappointment that James Salt, the associate vice chancellor for real property and procurement for the University System of Maryland in charge of these agenda item proposals, decided not to attend the meeting. Hogan said he wants Salt to personally explain these items to the board during its next meeting on March 4.

Salt declined to comment on the situation by phone on Wednesday afternoon, but did maintain that the University System was not asking for budget increases. In an interview with Capital News Service last week, Salt also said the reason for the additional funding was due to market changes.

The board did approve additional funding for Salisbury University for the construction of a new athletic stadium to replace the current Gull Stadium, and for renovations to its athletic fields. Because the university underestimated the original bill, the project will cost \$22 million compared to an earlier estimate of \$16 million, according to officials' remarks submitted to the board.

That request went through because university officials were present and able to explain their request.



GRAPHIC BY STEPHANIE GUTIERREZ-MUNGUIA AND KATE MCNEE

The board deferred requests to fund these four projects (with costs rounded to the nearest million), and is likely to hear them again on March 4:

- A New Center for Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Nursing at Bowie State University. The new request, for an additional \$16 million, means a 23 percent increase from an initial \$70 million estimate. The facility will feature classrooms, lounges and research and computer labs in support of the natural sciences, mathematics and nursing departments. This project will mean the Weisman Center and Crawford Science Center are demolished.

- A parking garage at the Shady Grove campus. Its cost rose from \$15 million to \$17 million. The garage would include approximately 700 spaces.

- A new Academic Commons library at Salisbury would contain space for quiet studying, research and special events, among other uses. The final cost came in at \$100 million compared to the original projection of \$90 million.

- Lastly, a new Engineering, Aviation, Computer and Mathematical Sciences Building at the Eastern Shore campus features classrooms, technology labs and television and radio studios among other uses. The estimated cost went from \$69 million to \$71 million.

In other higher-education construction measures the board heard Wednesday:

- Coppin State University also received grants for its new Science and Technology Center, an \$80 million building that began construction in 2013. The funds, which total more than \$1.4 million, are for scientific equipment.

- In addition, an era in off-campus housing at the University of Maryland College Park will come to an end after the board voted to demolish the last of the semi-detached residences known as "Knox Boxes" on Knox Road in College Park. Students rented the houses since they opened in 1953. The last of the buildings, owned by the university, were no longer usable due to deterioration, officials said. The remainder of the "Knox Boxes" were already destroyed following their purchase by a private developer.

The board also delayed voting on a \$20 million maintenance contract to Motorola regarding radio equipment for Maryland first responders. Kopp and others on the board again cited a lack of clarity in the contract's description on the Board of Public Works agenda. The contract ensures Motorola will fix any dysfunctional equipment until the contract expires in 2017.

Giant Launches It's Own Line of Internationally Inspired Foods

Enjoy Bold Italian and Asian Flavors at Home by Shopping Giant's World Menu Line

By PRESS OFFICER
Comptroller of Maryland

Landover, Md. — Giant Food, LLC is inviting customers to bring tastes from around the world to their dinner tables in just minutes with the launch of its brand new World Menu line. These internationally inspired products, including many Italian and Asian favorites, feature quality ingredients and easy preparation to offer a new take on take-out.

"Giant is proud to offer our customers a variety of international, gourmet meals at our everyday, affordable prices," said Dean Wilkinson, vice president of sales and merchandising at Giant Food. "Our new World Menu line showcases unique flavors and simple preparation, providing an easy alternative to takeout options for customers with busy lives."

Customers can find more than 50 World Menu products

throughout the store, including a large assortment in the frozen department. With the World Menu Italian line, you can bring the bold flavors of Italy home with a trip to your local Giant. Starting with classic pastas, cheeses and herbs—all imported straight from Italy—the products feature fresh, peak quality ingredients like broccoli rabe, spicy red peppers and wild forest mushrooms. Products include a variety of frozen pastas, eggplant parmiggiana, broccoli rabe risotto and spicy arrabbiata, among others.

With World Menu, you can also invite the flavors of Asia to your table with Asian-inspired frozen meals, featuring tender seafood, chicken and pork. These dishes are paired with fresh vegetables and savory sauces for mouthwatering flavors. Items include potstickers, egg rolls, Mandarin orange chicken, shrimp lo mein, Gen-

eral Tso chicken, sesame chicken with brown rice and Japanese fried rice, in addition to other varieties.

For customers looking for new flavors to liven up their favorite sauces and pasta dishes, Giant also offers a selection of World Menu seasonings in the spices aisle. Flavors include bruschetta mix (salt, garlic, black pepper and chili pepper), arrabbiata mix (tomato, garlic, chili pepper, parsley and black pepper) and amatriciana mix (onion, tomato and chili pepper).

Like all Giant's Own Brand products, World Menu items have been subject to a rigorous testing program, which includes customer feedback to ensure that the grocer is consistently delivering on quality and value. For more information on World Menu products, stop into your local Giant or visit www.giantfood.com.

About Giant Food of Landover, Md.

Giant Food LLC, headquartered in Landover, Md., operates 168 supermarkets in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, and employs approximately 20,000 associates. Included within the 168 stores are 159 full-service pharmacies. Giant opened the first supermarket in the nation's capital on February 6, 1936. Giving back to the community is a cornerstone that was instilled by the founders more than 79 years ago. The company's core areas of giving include hunger, education, health and wellness, and supporting service members and military families. In 2014, Giant's monetary and in-kind contributions exceeded \$14.9 million, and the nation's capital grocer helped partners provide more than 88 million meals. For more information on Giant, visit www.giantfood.com.

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COMMENTARY

Cong. Chris Van Hollen House Democratic Minority Whip



Van Hollen Urges President to Require Government Contractors to Disclose Campaign Finance Spending

Washington, DC – Today Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen wrote to President Obama to urge him to require government contractors to disclose their campaign finance spending once the bidding process is complete and they have been awarded a contract. In the face of continued obstruction by Republicans in Congress, he argued the Administration must act.

“You have the power to require effective disclosure from those who have received government contracts. It is essential that we use every means available to lift the veil that obscures the identity of those who are secretly bankrolling elections. Compelling government contractors to disclose their contributions would be an important first step. I urge you to act now on this important issue,” Congressman Van Hollen wrote.

Van Hollen is the author of the DISCLOSE Act, which has been the primary legislative vehicle in Congress to bring increased transparency to outside spending in our elections. He also leads the effort to increase disclosure in several lawsuits that are pending on the federal level.

The full text of the letter follows.

March 26, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:
I am writing to urge you to issue an Executive Order to require government contractors to disclose their campaign finance spending once the bidding process is complete and they have been awarded a contract.

Ever since the Citizens United decision opened the door to the spending of secret money to influence federal elections, hundreds of millions of dollars has been channeled into our elections. The Supreme Court in Citizens United by an overwhelming 8 to 1 vote, however, stated that requiring disclosure of campaign finance activities by outside spending groups is constitutional.

Refusing to disclose the sources of money used in political campaigns denies the American people basic information of who is trying to influence their votes. It is long past time to address this problem.

As you know, I introduced the DISCLOSE Act in the House of Representatives shortly after the Court issued the badly reasoned opinion in Citizens United. This bill requires all outside groups making expenditures in federal campaigns to disclose the source of the contributions they are using to fund their campaign-related spending. The DISCLOSE Act bill passed the House in 2010. The Senate companion bill fell one vote short of getting the 60 votes needed to break a filibuster and pass the Senate. Since then, I have reintroduced the DISCLOSE Act in every subsequent Congress. Unfortunately, House Republican leaders have refused to allow a vote on my bill.

However, you have the power to require effective disclosure from those who have received government contracts. It is essential that we use every means available to lift the veil that obscures the identity of those who are secretly bankrolling elections. Compelling government contractors to disclose their contributions would be an important first step. I urge you to act now on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Marc Morial, President and CEO National Urban League



The State of Black America—By the Numbers: Part 1, Education

“What the people want is very simple: they want an America as good as its promise.”
— Texas Congresswoman Barbara C. Jordan

There’s no other way to say it. Black America is in crisis.

Over the past year, we have been bombarded with headlines that continue to drive home the longstanding challenges faced by Black and Brown communities in our nation. From the killings of unarmed Black males at the hands of police officers to the introduction of new voter suppression laws that make it more difficult for people of color to exercise their constitutional right to vote, it is clear that for many in our nation, equality under the law remains dangerously out of reach.

But beyond the headlines, anecdotes and agenda-fueled debates lie the real numbers – all facts, no chaser.

Last week, the National Urban League released the 2015 State of Black America® report – “Save our Cities: Education, Jobs + Justice.” The report is the 39th edition of the National Urban League’s annual analysis of Black and Latino equality in America, and for the first time, this year’s report is available in an all-digital format available at www.stateof-blackamerica.org, where visitors can find the e-book, Web Series, select data, videos, articles and other frequently updated features (as well as download a free copy of the 2015 State of Black America® report until March 31st).

This year’s report again includes the Equality Index™, in its 11th year for the Black-White Index and its sixth year for the Hispanic-White Index – measuring how well Blacks and Latinos are doing in comparison to their white peers in five categories: economics, education, health, social justice and civic engagement.

What we’ve found is that while strides have been made in our communities, tremendous gaps continue to leave us with a crisis in edu-

cation, jobs and justice. There are tremendous challenges before us, but the good news is that they are not insurmountable. For the next few weeks – and beginning with education, I will explore the findings of the 2015 State of Black America®, and better still, suggest solutions to these challenges.

As our nation enjoys historically low dropout rates, the highest high school graduation rates in history and more students of color studying on college campuses, we must also contend with the reality that school districts serving the highest percentage of low-income households spend fewer state and local dollars in those districts than ones that have fewer students in poverty. In addition, a lack of consistent education standards and equity and excellence at scale means that the quality of education that our children receive is far too often dependent on their zip code or how much money their parents make. Without a new formula for school funding that puts the dollars where the need is greatest, the education achievement gap will grow to the detriment of our nation as we educate a workforce incapable of meeting the challenges of tomorrow.

To underscore the National Urban League’s commitment to education and our belief that quality education is a key driver to opportunity, for the first time in the report’s history, we have included a state-by-state Education Equality Index™ and ranking. This index examines state-level racial and ethnic disparities in K-12 education, documenting Black and Hispanic achievement gaps in all 50 states and the District of Columbia in comparison to white students. Key findings from the Education Index include:

- The smallest gaps were commonly found in states with relatively small minority populations and where test scores were relatively

See **Education**, Page A5

The Train at Watkins Park



Open to the Public

PHOTO CREDIT: PG PARKS & RECREATION

THE TRAIN AT WATKINS PARK

ANTIQUE CHESAPEAKE CAROUSEL & MINIATURE TRAIN? Watkins Regional Park? 301 Watkins Park Drive? Upper Marlboro, MD ?301-218-6761? The park features an authentic, hand-carved, hand-painted, 80-year-old carousel. Featured on the Carousel are 45 animals with a rare combination of kangaroo, jackass, goat and seahorse. Do not miss the train as it passes through the lovely, wooded surroundings. The carousel and train are open Memorial Day-Labor Day, Tues-Sun, 10-7 p.m. (\$)

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Don't Leave Children Short

Congress is about to strike a deal that takes care of seniors and doctors but leaves low-income and “at risk” children short. Congress’ annual struggle to avoid cuts in Medicare reimbursement rates so physicians will continue to give seniors the care they need is widely considered must-pass bipartisan legislation. Known as the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) or “doc fix,” this annual process often provides a vehicle for moving other legislative health priorities. Last year it included one year of funding for the important Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program. While Congress has long discussed passing a permanent “doc fix” — leaders in the House of Representatives have now released an outline for doing it and plan to act on it next week. They hope the Senate will follow and act before the current “doc fix” expires March 31st.

This is great news for seniors who we support but why is Congress leaving children behind by extending funding for the successful bipartisan Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) for only two years? The cost of the “doc fix” is about \$200 billion, while a two-year extension of CHIP and home visiting funding is less than \$6 billion. Yet in the House proposal this increase required an “offset” — meaning it had to be paid for, while the “doc fix” that is more than 30 times more expensive does not. This is profoundly unjust to children whose lives are equally important.

A clean four-year CHIP funding extension and four years of funding for home visiting must be included in any final “doc fix” package. Certainly the price tag is not the obstacle. Funding for CHIP and home visiting for four years is expected to add up to less than \$12 billion to serve millions of vulnerable children, a critical investment in the health of lower-income children.

Today, more than 8 million children depend on CHIP for health coverage. Together with Medicaid, CHIP has played a vital role in bringing

the number of uninsured children to the lowest level on record. Simply put, CHIP is a bipartisan success story. But if funding is not extended quickly, up to 2 million children could become uninsured, and millions more would have to pay significantly more for less comprehensive coverage. This would reverse the progress made over the past two decades and create a health coverage gap among children in working families. The vast majority of governors, both Democrats and Republicans, share our concerns about CHIP funds expiring abruptly. They are concerned about higher costs and inadequate benefits for children, budget challenges to cover children without CHIP, and an increase in uninsured children if CHIP funding ends.

The Children’s Defense Fund strongly supports a clean four year extension of CHIP through 2019 because:

- The new health insurance exchanges need at least four years to make changes to ensure children have comparable pediatric benefits with costs to families no higher than in CHIP today. It is highly unlikely these improvements will be enacted and implemented by 2017.

- CHIP coverage saves money for states and the federal government. It is more efficient than private health insurance, costs less than subsidized exchange coverage and provides the comprehensive coverage that gives children and families access to the pediatricians, specialists and special facilities children need.

Four years of funding for the Maternal and Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting program is also a bargain. It brings quality home visiting to children and parents in every state and the District of Columbia and has bipartisan roots. Quality voluntary home visiting programs implement a two-generation strategy in which preschool children under age five and their parents benefit by being connected to community resources. MIECHV will end March 31st if funding is not extended. A four year extension will allow states to expand their programs and reach many more children.

Rigorous research studies have found that quality, evidence-based home visiting programs produce measurable, long-term outcomes for children and families, includ-

See **WATCH**, Page A12

The Prince George's Post

The Prince George's Post
P.O. Box 1001 15207 Marlboro Pike
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772-3151
Phone 301-627-0900 Legal Fax • 301-627-6260
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Contents © 2015, The Prince George's Post

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General Manager/ Legal Advertising Manager Brenda Boice	Senior Editor Legusta Floyd
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	Web Manager Kyler Quesenberry

Prince George's County, Md. Member National Newspaper Publishers Association, and the Maryland, Delaware, District of Columbia Press Association. The Prince George's Post (ISSN 10532226) is published every Thursday by the New Prince George's Post Inc., 15207 Marlboro Pike, Upper Marlboro, Md. 20772-3151. Subscription rate: 25 cents per single copy; \$15 per year; \$7.50 senior citizens and students; out of county add \$1; out of state add \$2. Periodical postage paid at Southern Md. 20790. Postmaster, send address changes to Prince George's Post, P.O. Box 1001, Upper Marlboro, Md. 20772-3151.

BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Organized Sports Should Be Fun, Not High Stress

As spring days grow warmer and longer, outdoor activity increases for our children. This usually means it's also time for more organized sports programs.

Baseball, softball, soccer, track, rugby, lacrosse, or swim team are but some of the opportunities for kids to be active and have a good time.

One unfortunate side effect is that organized athletic activities can sometimes lose their focus on teaching children a sport and letting them enjoy the experience. Instead, kids can find themselves facing pressure and more stress as winning becomes over-emphasized.

Professional sports clearly have an excessive emphasis on winning. This isn't surprising considering the million dollar salaries in many sports and the need to deliver a winning team to paying fans.

The problem arises when that same emphasis is passed on to kids who really should be out developing or honing their skills and having lots of fun.

Parents, often without realizing it, can also add pressure on their child to perform well and to be a "winner." It's not only out of control parents fighting or abusing coaches and officials. Some parents, with the best of intentions, may be placing such a high value on athletic achievement that their child may feel like a failure unless he or she is winning and making Mom and Dad proud.

If you find that your family's life revolves around your children's sports activities, and that winning or losing plays a major role in how you react to your child, you may be contributing to your child's stress. When you're getting upset or angry because your child's team loses, or tease your child for not winning, or find yourself pushing your child to train harder and not be "lazy," you may very well be causing problems without even realizing it.

We all want our children to do well but that doesn't mean, especially in terms of sports, that they have to win all the time. When you communicate that to your children, even subtly or unintentionally, you're putting them under pressure that no young person needs.

If you suspect that an over-emphasis on sports, or on winning, might be affecting your family, talk to your school counselor or an outside professional counselor who can offer suggestions for getting sports into their proper perspective.

Athletics should be a positive, enjoyable activity for our children, not a situation where stress is a constant and winning is everything.

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

Proudly Serving Prince George's County Since 1932

Recognition from A1

Coit Hendley III — Eleanor Roosevelt High School

Barbara Hughes — High Point High School

Bianca Johnson — Parkdale High School

Ella McCarty — Chillum Elementary School

Christy Neff — University Park Elementary School

Freda Perry — High Point High School

Leanne Puglia — Riverdale Elementary School

Talitha Simeona Moon — Office of Talent Development

Yau-Jong Twu — Eleanor Roosevelt High School

Marlen Walderman — H. Winship Wheatley Early Childhood Center

Maya Yamada — Eleanor Roosevelt High School

As a 2014 recipient of the Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education (EGATE) School Award, Greenbelt Elementary School demonstrated superiority in student identification, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and program management and evaluation.

"I want commend principal Monica Gaines and the entire team at Greenbelt Elementary School on this achievement, as well as thank our new nationally-certified teachers for their commitment to professional growth, high standards in instruction, and improvement in learning outcomes for our students," said Dr. Kevin M. Maxwell, Chief Executive Officer for PGCPs.

"It's a job well done and a great demonstration of the caliber of teachers we employ and the type of quality instructional options available to students and families in PGCPs," Dr. Maxwell added.

About PGCPs: Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPs), one of the nation's 25 largest school districts, has 208 schools and centers, over 125,000 students and nearly 18,000 employees. With an annual budget of \$1.795 billion, the district serves a diverse student population from urban, suburban and rural communities. PGCPs is nationally recognized for its innovative programs and initiatives, including the expansion of Advanced Placement courses and partnerships with businesses and institutions of higher learning.

Comptroller Franchot Urges Taxpayers to File Electronically as April 15th Deadline Approaches

Free Assistance Available at 12 Branch Offices Throughout the State

By PRESS OFFICER
Comptroller of Maryland

Annapolis, Md. — With the tax-filing deadline just over two weeks away, Comptroller Peter Franchot today urged taxpayers who have yet to submit a return to considering using the agency's free online tax filing system, iFile or another electronic method.

"Electronic filing is the safest, easiest and fastest way to prepare and file a tax return," Comptroller Franchot said. "Best of all, if you choose direct deposit, you'll get your refund in only a few days."

Comptroller Franchot reminds taxpayers to use all avail-

able preparation and filing resources at the agency's website www.marylandtaxes.com or receive in-person assistance from staff in Annapolis and 12 local branch offices to meet the April 15th deadline.

"With the deadline nearing, the Comptroller's Office can help make tax filing quick, easy and painless," the Comptroller said. "If anyone is uncertain about how to file their taxes, they should visit one of my 12 branch offices to have their tax return prepared and filed free of charge."

In addition to Annapolis, the agency has local offices in Baltimore, Cumberland, Elkton, Frederick, Hagerstown, Lan- dover, Salisbury, Towson, Upper

Marlboro, Waldorf and Wheaton. Complete addresses of branch offices can be found at www.marylandtaxes.com. Offices are open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

To best serve each taxpayer, those seeking assistance in Annapolis or at one of the branch offices must bring the following items with them:

- W2 forms
- Form 1099 and a
- Completed federal return.

To date, more than 1.5 million taxpayers have filed their personal tax returns electronically with more than 96,500 filing via paper. Based on 3.04 million returns filed last year, about half

of taxpayers have filed so far this tax season.

The agency's call center offers extended hours Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. through April 15, returning to normal business hours from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. thereafter. To check the status of a refund by phone, please call, 1-800-218-8160 or 410-260-7701. Refund status can also be obtained by visiting the agency's website at marylandtaxes.com.

For more information on electronic filing or any other tax-related matter, please go to the Comptroller's website or call 410-260-7980 in Central Maryland or 1-800-MD-TAXES (1-800-638-2937) outside of Central Maryland.

Budget from A1

The governor's budget cut programs for social services, such as those for pregnant women and people with developmental disabilities, which also drew the Democrats' ire. These were all reinstated to some degree in the latest version of the budget.

The new spending plan would address the structural deficit over two years in order to balance the budget but also pay for programs, said state Senator Richard Madaleno, D-Montgomery.

"We also wanted to try to deal with the long-term problem, and our goal was to deal with that over two years. So deal with at least 50 percent this year and the rest next year."

The House Appropriations Committee voted to take about \$70 million out of a \$150 million planned pensions payment. They rummaged through the budget to cut what they could, finding up to \$250 million total to redistribute. The Senate followed this plan.

However, the "bugaboo" for some Republicans was that a good portion of this money came from money designated for employee pensions, said state Senator Andrew Serafini, R-Washington, though he agreed that these kinds of fixes were still necessary.

Hogan said in a statement that he was concerned about how the

Democratic-controlled General Assembly was reallocating money to cover the shortfall.

"As the budget process moves to conference committee, my administration will be seeking assurances from leadership in the legislature to ensure that pension funding will be addressed in a responsible way," he said.

With a Republican in Government House after two terms under Democrat Gov. Martin O'Malley, GOP senators all supported the budget bill.

"This is the first year I've voted for the budget in nine years," state Senator Bryan Simonaire, R-Anne Arundel said. "In the past, it was recorded that one budget was baling wire and bubble gum because we were robbing and stealing from dedicated funds," Serafini said. "It's not a long-term successful strategy. We're still having to do some of that, unfortunately."

This budget accelerates the state's plan to switch pension funding from a corridor plan to an actuarial system, which is approved by bond rating agencies and should help keep the state's triple-A bond rating, said state Senator Douglas Peters, D-Prince George's. The new plan for the pension fund is to put in a required payment recommended by the actuarial system, plus a supplemental payment of up to \$75 million each year.

Tunnel from A1

flexibility. This will allow WSSC to shut down other portions of the distribution system for major infrastructure projects, pipe inspections or during emergency situations like water main breaks and help minimize any disruptions to our customers.

As economic development and population growth continue in Montgomery and Prince George's counties so does the demand for water. The 5.3 mile long water line has the capacity to carry 100 million gallons of water daily, greatly increasing water pressure and supply to both counties, ensuring the delivery of water to residents for decades.

The newly installed water main runs along the north side of the beltway connecting two

The Senate's version of the budget also includes a 1.5 percent annual growth cap on education spending — not including the supplemental "GCEI" funding — until 2020.

The cap reflects the governor's original budget, which increased education spending by about 1 percent.

"Education for K-12 is to grow at a certain formula," Serafini said. "The governor didn't cut spending, he just said we're not going to grow as much."

"(The House) didn't put any caps in their growth, I believe," Kasemeyer said.

Maryland's reliance on federal government spending, which has been shrinking in recent years, means there will likely not be room for many tax cuts without significant program cuts in future years, Madaleno said.

"I think the governor will have a difficult time convincing the General Assembly to cut taxes because it will inevitably mean less for the priorities that we stand for, investments in education, infrastructure, better jobs, and a clean environment," he said.

"The recovery is very clear. But it doesn't feel that way to a lot of people," said state Senator Roger Manno, D-Montgomery.

Manno said that the economy was growing and the structural deficit was manageable.

"Reserve judgment until April 13th, but so far, it looks

like we've restored K-12 and our pensions are still solvent," Manno said. "We're doing very well, but a lot can happen in the next three weeks."

State Senator James Mathias Jr., D-Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester, was not present to vote.

Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller Jr., D-Calvert, Charles and Prince George's, said that while the committees had voted to fund their agendas, the governor still had to approve it. He encouraged the legislature to have a good working relationship with the executive branch.

"He can eliminate them, you see. But there's an understanding also from the governor that we're going to look at his agenda and move some of his agenda forward," Miller said.

On Thursday, state Senator Justin Ready, R-Carroll, proposed an amendment to the budget that would allow parents to opt their children out of participating in state-mandated PARCC tests, both in an effort to save money and to fight the Common Core, a national educational standard, which he said he disagrees with. This amendment was voted down, with Ready agreeing to talk to the Maryland State Department of Education about producing reports on the effectiveness of PARCC.

existing water mains at I-270 and Tuckerman Lane to another in Rock Creek Park at Stonebrook and Beach Drive.

WSSC worked closely with county officials and the Maryland Park and Planning Commission throughout the project in order to minimize community and environmental impacts. Instead of using a traditional cut-and-cover method, WSSC used an alternate plan which led to the design and implementation of tunnel boring for the construction of this tunnel. The tunnel, which runs within solid bedrock between 90 and 280 feet below ground, is an illustration of the impressive engineering feat.

WSSC broke ground on this project in 2009, initially fo-

cus on building two shafts to provide access for the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM). The main access shaft at Connecticut Avenue was completed first in early 2010, followed by the Stonebrook shaft and a third one at Tuckerman Lane. In July of 2010, the TBM, also known as "Miss Colleen" took center stage and began chewing through 4000 feet of rock which would eventually create the tunnel for the 84" pipe.

The tunnel boring process was completed in two phases, digging a west and east tunnel. The much anticipated "hole through" of the second tunnel occurred the morning of April 26, 2013.

Education from A4

low for each group — white, Black or Hispanic.

• Higher graduation rates for Black and Latino students were also found in states where these groups are a smaller share of the population.

• On average, larger gaps were found in states with large urban areas home to large populations of people of color living in highly segregated

neighborhoods with high rates of concentrated high poverty.

• With inequitable resourcing and the disproportionate impact of factors such as poverty and teacher quality, African American and Latino children consistently fair worse in reading/math proficiency.

We have also included essays that feature commentary from leading figures and thought leaders in politics, the corporate arena, NGOs, acad-

mia and popular culture. This year's contributing authors who highlight education include Sacramento Mayor and President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Kevin Johnson, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia and best-selling authors "The Three Doctors" (Dr. Sampson Davis, Dr. Rameck Hunt and Dr. George Jenkins).

This report is more important than ever. It is important because armed with data, we

can all go back to our cities and create relevant plans to address stubborn problems. It is important because we, as a nation, cannot expect to sustain growth and compete globally while millions of our citizens are denied the opportunity to become productive citizens because of misguided policies or neglect. It is important because America can only be as good as its promise if that promise is kept to all Americans.

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OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review

“Unfinished Business”

Unfinished Business

Grade: C

ated R, a lot of harsh profanity, a lot of graphic nudity, some strong sexuality
1 hr., 31 mins

Sometimes when I'm writing I'll get stuck on a paragraph or a sentence, leave it half-developed, and come back to it later. But it has happened (more than once, I confess) that I've been under a tight deadline and, in my haste, have forgotten to return to the problematic section to polish it up before it went live.

Every scene in *Unfinished Business* feels like this. The entire movie gives the impression of having been sketched out hastily, a few place-filler jokes thrown in here and there, with the intention of coming back around later to nail down the final version. And then for some reason they filmed the rough draft. Rarely has a movie been given a more apt title than *Unfinished Business*.

It's the story of a frustrated St. Louis businessman named Dan Trunkman (Vince Vaughn) who starts his own sales company with two castoff colleagues: Tim McWinters (Tom Wilkinson), who's old and randy, and Mike Pancake (Dave Franco), who's young and dumb. After a year of flailing, they get the chance to make a deal that will secure the company's future. All they have to do is fly to Portland (Maine, not the good one), then unexpectedly to Berlin.

Three quirky dudes from three generations on a last-minute business trip together? Surely hilarity will have no choice but to ensue!

You'd think so, anyway. The screenplay is by Steve Conrad, whose previous credits include *The Weather Man*, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, *The Promotion*, and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* — all of which, like *Unfinished Business*, are about professional men learning important lessons about what matters most. (Family. It's always fam-



ROTTENTOMATOES

A hard-working small business owner (Vince Vaughn) and his two associates (Tom Wilkinson, Dave Franco) travel to Europe to close the most important deal of their lives. But what began as a routine business trip goes off the rails in every imaginable - and unimaginable - way, including unplanned stops at a massive sex fetish event and a global economic summit. (c) Fox

ily.) That's an unusually specific niche, but props to Mr. Conrad for making a career out of it.

What's baffling is that, despite so much experience with the subject, Conrad's screenplay is half-baked. It's full of setups that don't pay off; characters who add nothing; subplots that only make the story murkier. For example, in Germany, Tim takes Ecstasy and goes to a dance club. You think: An old guy on drugs? OK, now we're talking. (Wilkinson, a superb actor, could kill at a role like this in a better movie.) And then nothing. He stumbles around in a stupor for a bit. That's all. Not only does hilarity not ensue, the film doesn't even seem to try to MAKE it ensue.

In another scene, Dan's wife (June Diane Raphael) calls him and starts talking dirty, unaware that she's on speakerphone. Dan quickly tells her that Tim and Mike are there, and she abruptly changes the conversation. That's all. She's not really even embarrassed, since

she knows Tim and Mike personally and didn't say THAT much anyway. It's like the movie set up a comedy scenario and then shut it down before it could get started.

And the movie is FULL of stuff like this. A bit where Dan feels like he ought to give up his first class airline seat to a soldier in uniform, but also really wants to keep it — amusing, but why is it here? It doesn't tell us anything about Dan, nor does it move the story. All the details about his kids, a fat teenage son (Britton Sear) who's being bullied and a firebrand little girl (Ella Anderson) who doesn't like school — pointless. A gag where Tim orders a “sex maid” who goes to Dan's room by mistake, while a real maid (whose uniform happens to look exactly like the one the prostitute wears) goes to Tim's — again, vaguely funny, but abandoned before anything comes of it.

This is to say nothing of the things that happen that simply don't make sense: Dan bringing his

wife's running gear instead of his own, and then wearing it for his morning jog anyway; the trio seeing a reindeer in the road 100 yards ahead and not even applying the brakes (then swerving at the last second and flipping the car); a scene which strongly implies that dumb Mike literally does not know how to have sex; etc.

Directed by Ken Scott (who also made Vaughn's last bad movie, *Delivery Man*), *Unfinished Business* isn't usually excruciating, just disappointing. And in fact it has something going for it that almost makes it worth watching: Dave Franco. Mike Pancake is a legitimately funny character, timid and fearful, unsure of his words, yet always grinning and eager to please. It's a stellar performance of an underwritten character, and it moves Dave a few notches above James on the Francometer. The movie's writer and director could take a lesson from him on applying oneself wholeheartedly to one's work.

Bowie State from A1

be turned down; and more likely to receive smaller loans and pay higher interest rates on the loans that they do receive. If minorities owned businesses at a rate comparable to their share of the population, that would mean 2.3 million more minority-owned firms and 11.7 million more jobs.

“The recession hit all small businesses hard, but it hit minority-owned small businesses especially hard, and recovery has been uneven for different minority groups. The Small Business Administration and the Minority Business Development Agency have created various programs to improve access to capital. We will keep looking for ways to make government programs more effective, but we also have to look at the private sector. The solution is not just government-based. We need to make sure all the partners are sensitive to the needs of the small business, and especially the minority-small business, community.”

Witnesses at the field hearing included:

Alejandra Castillo, the National Director for the Minority Business Development Agency for the Department of Commerce. She is tasked with helping to create and sustain U.S. jobs by promoting the growth and global competitiveness of businesses owned and operated by minority entrepreneurs.

“This was a very important hearing that underscored many of the challenges that minority businesses face in accessing much needed capital,” said Director Castillo. “Our Agency's mission is to champion the growth in size and scale of our Nation's minority business community and we are unyielding in that pursuit. I'm thankful that Sen. Cardin invited MBDA to testify today and share how we are creating a critical pipeline of MBEs that are looking to grow, while also identifying a broad spectrum of capital and financing opportunities to support their business expansion.”

Antonio Doss, the Small Business Administration District Director for the Washington Metropolitan Area. He oversees the delivery of SBA's small business financing products, contracting programs, and entrepreneurial coaching services in Washington DC, Northern Virginia, and suburban Maryland, including Bowie.

“We have made progress on underserved lending, but we know more must be done to achieve our mission,” said Director Doss. “We are taking steps to do more by making SBA loans easier to access, quicker to process, more affordable, and less cumbersome to originate. One example is in FY 2014, we made loans more affordable by waiving fees on all 7(a) loans under \$150,000. As a result, minority lending

under \$150,000 increased 23 percent in FY 2014.”

Shelly Gross-Wade, the President and CEO of FSC First. Non-profit FSC First is a preferred alternative lender for SBA 504 Commercial Real Estate Loans, the SBA Community Advantage Loan Program, the State of Maryland Micro-Enterprise Loan Program, the City of Bowie Revolving Loan Fund, and the Prince George's County \$50 Million EDI Fund.

“I appreciated the opportunity to share ‘real world experiences’ from recent focus groups held in Prince George's County, and more specifically to demonstrate how when technical assistance is taken advantage of by minority business owners and operators it enhances their overall sustainability and ability to compete in the global marketplace,” said FSC's Gross-Wade. “It has been our experience that minority business owners benefit exponentially when the non-traditional lender, like FSC First, can deploy innovative and creative approaches to lending capital. We insure that the terms and conditions are designed more around the borrower's ability to repay and less on their past performance. In particular, we evaluate the lending opportunities based upon the overall economic impact that the business can achieve as a result of receiving the capital requested. Our loan proceeds can be used for any

business purpose and loan amounts range from \$5,000 to \$5.5 Million, regardless of whether we are making a microenterprise loan, a working capital loan or a commercial real estate acquisition loan. We pride ourselves on providing a holistic approach to lending — helping to increase awareness about the plethora of business resources available to thriving minority businesses.”

Carl Hairston, the Administrative Vice President and Regional Manager of M&T Bank's National Capital Business and Professional Banking Group for the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, Arlington, Alexandria, and McLean, Virginia. He oversees both the lending and servicing team that supports the branch network where he is responsible for the loan and deposit portfolios as well as the development of new business, and the Diversity Business Group responsible for developing opportunities in diverse communities.

Stanley Tucker, who is President and CEO of Meridian Management Group. Meridian Management Group is a professional asset manager for economic development and private equity funds. He has more than 30 years of diversified business experience, combining both lending and venture capital investing to develop socially or economically disadvantaged small businesses.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

Defeat: Major League Soccer Players Union Scores an Own Goal



The Major League Soccer Players Union did not organize to win its labor dispute with the league's ownership, and now players and fans will have to live with the results. With the official start of the season less than forty-eight hours away, the MLS Players Union, which repeatedly stated its willingness to strike for free agency, buckled and signed a crap deal. Yes, there is now “free agency,” but only for players 28 years or older who have already accrued a staggering eight consecutive years of MLS experience. This will benefit a fraction of players in a league where the average age is 28 as many come to MLS from leagues across the globe. Free agency should be an incentive to draw young stars to MLS. This accomplishes the opposite, locking in a structure that protects bosses and aging superstars looking for one last payday.

Also in the CBA, it was established that the minimum salary would be raised to just \$60,000 a year. This in a league where some franchises are listed as being worth as much as a quarter of a billion dollars.

It's a bum deal and it did not have to happen. Twenty-four hours before the CBA was signed, team reps voted 18-1 (with one abstention) to strike. Yet with Friday's opener looming, the union leadership caved without consensus to do so, and seven of the twenty reps voted to refuse the terms.

Sports Illustrated has several anonymous quotes from players, the common thread of all being words like “disappointed,” “upset” and this doozy: “Not only did this deal destroy the future of the American player, it barely helps the current group of players.”

This is what happens when you have a rank and file ready to strike and a young union leadership looking like Bambi's mom and pop staring into the headlights.

In the weeks leading up to this moment, you didn't need to be Marvin Miller to identify the deepening divergence between the players and the union. Player reps were going public, speaking with a bracing confidence about “unity,” “resolve” and doing whatever it took to make MLS more free for existing players and a magnet for young global talent at a time when soccer is on a major upswing in the United States. They spoke about a league where a couple of players make millions, while most made five-figure salaries. They said the league would never be the world-class operation that Commissioner Don Garber blathers about under such a structure. They spoke about this being their “Curt Flood moment.”

The union, meanwhile, operating from offices in Bethesda, Maryland, did not look ready for prime time. While the news of a possible strike was roiling the sports media landscape and the extensive world of soccer social media, its website was absent of any updates, perspectives, or explanations as to why it was making this stand. Its website's “press release” section hadn't been updated since 2014. Its “in the news” section included no news articles about anything related to the negotiations. And most puzzlingly, as player reps spoke publicly about their willingness to sacrifice the entire season in the name of the principle of free agency, the union homepage was a 2015 season preview.

In addition, there was zero effort by the MLSPU to reach out to the league's electric ultra fan clubs who undoubtedly would have supported the players in numerous cities. Imagine the District Ultras, the Sons of Ben, the Timbers Army, Tribal Rhythm Nation, Sektor Latino, the Kings of the North—to just name a few—holding their vibrant, colorful rallies outside the offices of management demanding that they settle. Any union going into a negotiation battle could only dream of such a set-up: a contract campaign of public support that's not only pre-organized but would be catnip for a soccer sports media twiddling their thumbs looking for something to cover. Would this have worked? According to our own queries, some would have absolutely answered that call. But the players union made no overtures and would not respond to our questions as to why. The results are there to see.

One could imagine Marvin Miller in heaven, arms crossed with steam coming out of his ears, saying the labor mantra, “If you want to avoid a strike, you damn well better prepare for one.” The union didn't and until 2020, the players, the fans and the future prospects of the league are the big losers. The penny wise, pound foolish, parsimonious, pig-headed plutocrats in power won the day, and we are all worse for it.

Calendar of Events

April 9 — April 15, 2015

Seniors: Trip to Amish Market

Date & Time: Thursday, April 9, 2015 10:30 am-3 pm
Description: Seniors will have an opportunity to shop at one of the largest Amish Markets in the area, where fresh meats and baked items are their specialty. Trip will leave from the Langley Park Senior Activity Center via Commission vans. Meals are at your own expense.

Cost: Resident: \$10; Non-Resident: \$12
Ages: 60 & Better
Location: Langley Park Senior Activity Center
1500 Merrimac Drive, Hyattsville 20783
Contact: 301-408-4343; TTY 301-446-3402

Spring In Full Swing: Ms. Pam Ward

Date & Time: Thursday, April 9, 2015 6:30-9:30 pm
Description: With spring is in full swing at the Ballroom, come see the phenomenal Ms. Pam Ward in concert with her Unplugged Flow Spring Concert. Ticket price includes refreshments and libations.

Cost: Resident: \$20; Non-Resident: \$25
Ages: 21 & up (please bring proper ID)
Location: Prince George's Ballroom
2411 Pinebrook Avenue, Landover 20785
Contact: 301-341-7439; TTY 301-446-6802

Xtreme Teens: Bocce Battle

Date and Time: Friday, April 10, 2015 7-10 pm
Description: Teens will learn a new game called Bocce. Get to the center to learn the rules and strategies to win at this game. We hope you come out!

Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Beltsville Community Center
3900 Sellman Road, Beltsville 20705
Contact: 301-937-6613; TTY 301-445-4512

Xtreme Teens: G.E.A.R Cookie Decorating

Date and Time: Friday, April 10, 2015 7-10 pm
Description: Craving a sweet treat? Bring your best ideas for a night of cookie baking and decorating.

Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
Ages: 10-17
Location: Berwyn Heights Community Center
6200 Pontiac Street, Berwyn Heights 20740
Contact: 301-345-2808; TTY 301-445-4512

Spring Bonnet Tea

Date and Time: Saturday, April 11, 2015 1:30 pm
Description: It's Spring time and the living is easy. Display your best spring hat, while enjoying a fine afternoon of tea. Participants can choose from prix fixe menu of fine finger sandwiches, scrumptious cakes and pastries, buttery scones, and your choice of two quality loose leaf teas, all served on china and tiered stands. Price of admission includes gratuity and self-guided tour of the mansion. Reservations and advanced payment required.

Cost: Regular Admission: \$29; Friends of Montpelier: \$25
Ages: 18 & up
Location: Montpelier Mansion/Historic Site
9650 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708
Contact: 301-377-7817; TTY 301-699-2544
montpeliermansion@pgparks.com

Tavern Night

Date and Time: Saturday, April 11, 2015 8 pm
Description: Join us for an evening of rousing entertainment by the 1812 sailors of Ship's Company! Afterward, partake in tavern-style food and beverages. Registration required by March 31.

Cost: Resident \$25; Non-Resident \$30
Ages: Ages 21 & up
Location: Riversdale House Museum
4811 Riverdale Road, Riverdale Park 20737
Contact: 301-864-0420; TTY 301-699-2544

Maryland Saddle Association

Date and Time: Saturday-Sunday, April 11-12, 2015 8 am
Description: The Prince George's Equestrian Center will host the Maryland Saddle Association horse show.

Cost: Free for Spectators
Location: The Show Place Arena, 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Contact: 301-952-7900; TTY 301-952-7998

Seasonal Selections: Happy Birthday Tommy Jeff!

Date and Time: Sunday, April 12, 2015, 12 noon-3:15 pm
Description: Using produce harvested from the garden and period recipes, Riversdale Kitchen Guild members will demonstrate 19th century open hearth cooking. The Guild will celebrate Thomas Jefferson by featuring some of the founding fathers's favorite recipes.

Cost: Free; regular fee applies for house tours
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: Riversdale House Museum
4811 Riverdale Road, Riverdale Park 20737
Contact: 301-864-0420; TTY 301-699-2544

Seniors: All Shades of Pink

Date & Time: Monday, April 13, 2015 10 am-12 noon
Description: Be a part of this exciting comfort blanket project for Breast Cancer Patients! Participants will learn how to crochet (for beginners and experienced) as they partake in this goodwill project. Not to worry, all instructions and supplies will be provided to crochet blankets. The more blankets created, the more breast cancer patients will receive this symbol of love and comfort during a difficult time in their life. Register early.

Cost: Free
Ages: 60 & better
Location: Langley Park Senior Activity Center
1500 Merrimac Drive
Hyattsville, MD 20783
Contact: 301-408-4343; TTY 301-446-3402

EARTH TALK ... A National Food Policy?

Dear EarthTalk:

What is the "National Food Policy" that environmentalists and foodies are asking President Obama to enact by Executive Order, and how would it affect American diets?

— Justin Brockway,
Los Angeles, CA

A November 2014 op-ed piece in The Washington Post entitled "How a National Food Policy Could Save Millions of American Lives" makes the case for President Obama to sign into law an executive order establishing a national food policy for managing the nation's food system as a whole.

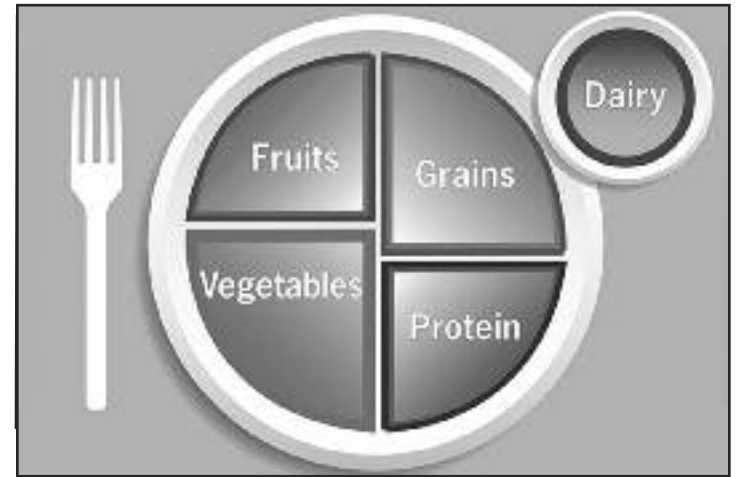
Authored by food writers Mark Bittman and Michael Pollan, along with Union of Concerned Scientists' Ricardo Salvador and United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, the op-ed states that because of unhealthy diets, a third of our kids will develop Type 2 diabetes—a preventable disease that was formerly rare in children.

"Type 2 diabetes is a disease that, along with its associated effects, now costs \$245 billion, or 23 percent of the national deficit in 2012, to treat each year," the authors note. "The good news is that solutions are within reach—precisely because the problems are largely a result of government policies." The authors cite Brazil and Mexico—countries they

consider "far ahead of the United States in developing food policies"—as examples for positive change: "Mexico's recognition of food as a key driver of public health led to the passage last year of a national tax on junk food and soda, which in the first year has reduced consumption of sugary beverages by 10 percent and increased consumption of water."

While the White House has not responded in any way to the suggestion thus far, the article's message that the current food system has caused "incalculable damage" remains alarming.

Whether or not to pass our own tax on junk food and soda in the U.S. has been the subject of much debate in recent years. Some say it's deceitful to suggest that a tax on sodas is necessary to curb obesity and Type 2 diabetes when numerous other unhealthy options like sugary caffeinated beverages, candy, ice cream, fast food and video games that promote sedentary behavior would still be widely available. A 2009 study published in the Journal of Public Economics suggests that soft drink taxation leads to a moderate reduction in soft drink consumption by children and adolescents; however "this reduction in soda consumption is completely offset by increases in consumption of other high-calorie drinks." Furthermore, in 2010, former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg stated that "an extra



CREDIT: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The federal government's MyPlate guidelines recommend that about half of the foods we eat should be fruits and vegetables, but critics point out that upwards of 60 percent of our farm subsidies go towards corn and other grains.

12 cents on a can of soda would raise nearly \$1 billion," which suggests that government officials expect people to continue buying soda despite the tax.

Even though passing a soda tax has proven to be controversial, The Washington Post op-ed clearly points out the federal government's contradictions concerning food. Existing federal guidelines for the U.S. diet, known as MyPlate, recommend

that half the food we eat should be fruits and vegetables, yet these foods are granted less than one percent of farm subsidies. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of subsidies go toward corn and other grains. The result, the op-ed states, is the "spectacle of Michelle Obama warning Americans to avoid high-fructose corn syrup at the same time the president is signing farm bills that subsidize its production."

CONTACTS: Michael Pollan, www.michaelpollan.com; Mark Bittman, www.markbittman.com; Olivier De Schutter, www.srfood.org; Union of Concerned Scientists, www.ucsusa.org; MyPlate, www.choosemyplate.gov.

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Frackturing from A1

State Senator Stephen Waugh, R-Calvert and St. Mary's, said after the session that Zirkin had not done his due diligence during a committee hearing to hear technical evidence about fracking.

"To say that an activity is inherently dangerous without taking in any evidence for or against is taking a moral judgment and making it a legal decision," Waugh said.

Waugh and Zirkin had a heated debate after the session

adjourned. Waugh said the fracking industry would be on the hook for millions of dollars in damages for incidents that occur anywhere near its activity, while Zirkin countered that negligence would have to be proved first.

Waugh also mentioned that the bill uses the terms "ultrahazardous" and "abnormally dangerous" to describe fracking, which he felt was unfair.

Zirkin said that legally, the two terms indicate a standard of strict liability, and that the bill would ensure that a company would be held liable if it fol-

lowed industry standards but its equipment malfunctioned.

Each bill will now cross over to the other chamber. If they are successful, they still will need the Republican governor's signature. Erin Montgomery, a spokeswoman for Gov. Larry Hogan, wrote in an email that "if fracking can be done in an environmentally safe way, then he would want to move forward with it."

The bills' opponents believe the legislation would ensure that no fracking company would want to come to Maryland.

"There's an invisible sign at the border that says gas companies aren't welcome," Beitzel said. "That sign became very visible today."

Zirkin said the logic behind that conclusion was flawed.

"If being held responsible for the problems you cause keeps you out, that's pretty important for the people of Maryland to realize," Zirkin said. "Because the only folks who should be worried about this bill are the people who are going to do damage to our people and to the environment."

EARTH TALK ... Solar's Uncertain Future

Dear EarthTalk:

What's going to happen to the U.S. solar industry when the federal solar investment tax credit expires next year?

—Victoria Chase,
Washington, DC

In the U.S., a new solar project was installed every three minutes in 2014, and jobs in the solar industry rose from 15,000 employees in 2005 to nearly 174,000 today. This substantial growth is in large part thanks to the Energy Policy Act of 2005's 30 percent Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for commercial and residential solar energy systems. In 2007, after only one year of implementation, the ITC led to the doubling of installed solar electric capacity. In 2008, Congress passed an eight-year extension of the ITC, allowing solar to become the fastest growing energy source in the U.S. Solar has also become much more affordable: The average installed cost per watt has dropped from around \$7.50 in 2009 to \$2.89 in 2013.

After December 2016, the ITC solar credit will drop from 30 percent to 10 percent and the residential credit will drop to zero—unless Congress extends this deadline. Large companies are currently making significant solar investments before the solar tax credit deadline arrives. In February 2015, Apple announced that it

would spend \$848 million over 25 years to buy 130 megawatts of electricity from First Solar's California Flats Solar Project in Monterey County. The project, which will occupy 2,900 acres of land in Cholame, California, is the solar industry's largest-ever corporate power purchase agreement.

"Apple's commitment was instrumental in making this project possible and will significantly increase the supply of solar power in California," said Joe Kishkill, First Solar's chief commercial officer. "Over time, the renewable energy from California Flats will provide cost savings over alternative sources of energy as well as substantially lower environmental impact."

Two weeks after Apple's announcement, Google announced that they would be making a \$300 million investment with SolarCity, America's largest solar provider, for residential solar projects across 14 states and the District of Columbia. The SolarCity fund, which totals \$750 million, is the largest of its kind ever created for residential solar power. "We're happy to support SolarCity's mission to help families reduce their carbon footprint and energy costs," said Sidd Mundra, Renewable Energy Principal at Google. "It's good for the environment, good for families and also makes good business sense."

Duke Energy has also played a major role in cata-



CREDIT: RUSS FERRIDAY, FLICKRCC

Visitors check out First Solar's array of photovoltaic panels outside of San Luis Obispo, California.

pulting solar energy in North Carolina, which ranked third among states during the third quarter of 2014 in installed capacity, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA). Duke Energy's \$500 million solar expansion plan includes their recent approval to build three solar farms in eastern North Carolina that will total 128 megawatts of capacity.

"These projects will help provide significant amounts of cost-effective renewable energy to benefit our customers," said Rob Caldwell, Duke Energy's senior vice president for distributed energy resources.

To allow solar to continue to soar, the 2016 U.S. Budget includes proposals "to reform and renew tax credits that incentivize the deployment of wind, solar, and carbon capture

sequestration technologies." Ken Johnson, chief spokesman for SEIA, says that his group plans to lobby Congress to extend the credit. "That's our top priority for this session of Congress," he said, adding that developers across the solar industry are "trying to do as much as possible before it drops to 10 percent in 2017."

CONTACTS: First Solar, www.firstsolar.com; Solar City, www.solarcity.com; Duke Energy, www.duke-energy.com; SEIA, www.seia.org.

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