

The Prince George's Post



A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER FOR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY Since 1932

Vol. 84, No. 43 October 27 — November 2, 2016 Prince George's County, Maryland Newspaper of Record Phone: 301-627-0900 25 cents

Security Experts Question Maryland's Online Ballot System

By ROBBIE GREENSPAN
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, MD—A new online ballot system and marking tool could weaken Maryland's voting security and make it the most vulnerable state in the nation, according to some cybersecurity experts.

On Sept. 14, the Maryland State Board of Elections voted 4-1 to certify a new voting system and marking tool for online ballots.

The new system will allow all Maryland voters the ability to both make selections on a computer and print absentee ballots from home, and send them into the State Board of Elections.

Nikki Charlson, the deputy state administrator of the Board of Elections, said the system and tool are as secure as possible.

"We are following all of the best practices for IT systems," she said.

Experts in cybersecurity and computer science have publicly stated they believe the potential risks with the new method of voting outweigh the benefits.

While Maryland voters can still have absentee ballots mailed or faxed to them, the new method allows any Maryland registered voter with access to the Internet the ability to request and download a ballot. These can be marked on the computer, but the selections are not recorded anywhere except on the printed ballots themselves.

All completed absentee ballots must be mailed to

Maryland election officials on or before the day of the election in order to be counted.

Four of the five members of the Board of Elections found the ballot delivery system and marking tool to be secure enough for Maryland voters.

Patrick J. Hogan, a Democrat, the vice chairman of the State Board of Elections, acknowledged the risks, but voted to certify the system and tool.

"There's no guarantees in life," he said at a Board of Public Works meeting on Aug. 17. "We've had four security reviews done of this online ballot marking tool and all have said it's secure."

Poorvi L. Vora, a professor of computer science at The George Washington University, said the security reviews are not definitive.

"You can do a test and not find anything wrong," she said. "That does not mean it is secure."

Kelley A. Howells, a Republican, was the lone board member to vote against the extension of the system and marking tool, saying she wanted to avoid unnecessary complexity.

Four computer scientists from outside the state, including Vora, put out a statement addressing the potential problems with the expanded use of online ballots and the new marking tool, specifically with voter verification.

To prevent fraud, Maryland voters are required to provide

See **BALLOT** Page A3



PHOTO COURTESY LORI C. VALENTINE
Left to right: Britta Vander Linden, EDC Chief of Staff; Tony Marshall, Ve Water Owner; Dr. Cynthia Morrison, Founder of Children First Community Urgent Care, LLC; Shelly Gross-Wade, FSC First President & CEO; Jim Coleman, EDC President & CEO; Darla Garrett, Maryland Department of Financing Program Manager; Nichelle Holmes, EDC Development Manager; Al Tillman, Ve Water Owner; Henry C. Turner, Marlton Golf Club Owner; Vann B. Jones, Marlton Golf Club Owner.

EDC's "Thirsty (for Business) Thursday" Draws Record Crowds for Economic Development Week

More Than 300 Thrilled That VLT FLEX Funding is Reaching Local Companies

By LORI C. VALENTINE
PGCEDC

UPPER MARLBORO, MD—On Thursday, the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) took its signature networking event "Thirsty (for Business) Thursday" (T4BT) to another level as more than 300 people came out to the Marlton Golf Club in Upper Marlboro to net-

work and to celebrate "Economic Development Week" in Maryland. EDC President and CEO Jim Coleman, partnering with FSC First President and CEO Shelly Gross-Wade highlighted the economic development achievements that are taking place in Prince George's County and announced the recent recipients of the County's \$2 million Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) Small Business FLEX Fund.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again; Prince George's County is on fire. The word is getting out that Prince George's County is the best place to do business," said Coleman. "Thanks to the leadership of County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III and great partners like FSC First, our small and minority businesses are thriving, our median household incomes are rising faster than the State's median household incomes, and we have

\$10 billion in development projects in the pipeline. It's truly morning in Prince George's County!"

This month's T4BT was also a celebration of Economic Development Week in Maryland, where each jurisdiction in the State recognizes the efforts of its economic development professionals. This year, the County celebrated with

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Three Prince George's Port Towns Receive Prestigious Sustainable Maryland Certified Award

By PRESS OFFICER
University of Maryland

COLLEGE PARK, MD—The Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland announced that the Towns of Bladensburg, Colmar Manor, and Edmonston were amongst the 14 Maryland municipalities honored at the Sustainable Maryland Awards Ceremony at the Maryland Municipal League's annual Fall Conference last Friday in Solomon's, Maryland.

"Every year, the Environmental Finance Center is proud to welcome more municipalities to the Sustainable Maryland community," said Dan Nees, director of the Environmental Finance Center. "The incredible growth of this program demonstrates that so many communities across the state are dedicated to healthier, more sustainable futures. The shared commitment of local elected officials, municipal staff and Green Team volunteers in these diverse towns and cities are a testament to Maryland's vision of resilience."



PHOTO COURTESY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
From left to right: Bladensburg's Code Enforcement Officer Shaun Rhinehart, Town Administrator Debi Sandlin, and Acting Police Chief Tracy Stone with the Sustainable Maryland Certified award at the Maryland Municipal League conference last week.

BLADENSBURG

Bladensburg was one of eight Maryland municipalities to originally become Sustainable Maryland Certified in 2013, and the Town successfully became re-certified again this year.

Highlights of Bladensburg's accomplishments include:

- Supported the creation of a 40-tree edible forest by

Bladensburg HS students, for the purpose of providing fresh fruit to the local residents

- Partnered with ECO City Farms to throw the Port Town's Food Day Celebration, at which over 500 people, many families from the local community, participated in many activities in-

See **AWARD** Page A5

Free Halloween Cab Rides Offered in PG County to Thwart Drunk Driving

By PRESS OFFICER
WRAP

UPPER MARLBORO, MD—As a means of making the Washington-metropolitan area's roadways a little less frightening this Halloween, free cab rides will be offered to would-be drunk drivers throughout Prince George's County, Maryland on the evening of Saturday, October 29th.

Offered by the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), the 2016 Hal-

loween SoberRide® program will be in operation at 10:00 pm on Saturday, October 29th and operate until 6:00 am on Sunday, October 30th as a way to keep local roads safe from impaired drivers during this traditionally high-risk period.

During this eight-hour period, area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may call the toll-free SoberRide® phone number 1-800-200-TAXI (8294) and be afforded a no-cost (up to a \$30 fare), safe way home. AT&T wireless customers can dial #WRAP for the same service.

Last year, 412 persons in the Washington-metropolitan area used WRAP's Halloween SoberRide® program rather than possibly driving home impaired. The charity also offers its SoberRide® program on St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day and the winter holidays this year starting on December 16th and operating through and including New Year's Eve.

Local taxicab companies throughout the Washington-

See **CAB RIDES** Page A3

Council Member Taberas Advances "Take Pride in Our Community" Initiative

By PRESS OFFICER
PG County Council

UPPER MARLBORO, MD—The Prince George's County Council, during session on Tuesday, October 18, introduced a trio of bills sponsored by Council Member Deni Taveras (D)—District 2, seeking to address public safety and health concerns in the County.

Council Bill 59-2016 would expand and clarify laws governing the use of an apartment for drug activity or prostitution. Under the legislation, landlords, owners, management staff, or tenants could be held liable if their property is used for drug activity or prostitution, including human trafficking. **Council Bill 63-2016** would prohibit the illegal sale of vehicles on County

roads, more commonly known as "curbstoning." **Council Bill 64-2016** addresses public health concerns related to the accumulation of garbage or litter following an eviction and mandates landlords to remove all garbage, litter and trash from the property within one business day.

See **PRIDE** Page A3

INSIDE

USDA to Purchase Surplus Cheese for Food Banks and Families in Need, Continue to Assist Dairy Producers

On Aug. 4, USDA announced approximately \$11.2 million in financial assistance to U.S. dairy producers enrolled in MPP-Dairy, the largest payment since the program began in 2014.

Community, Page A3

Exercise Your Rights: VOTE!

This is the first Presidential election in more than 50 years to take place without the full protection of the Voting Rights Act. This year, 14 states will have new voting restrictions in place for the first time in a presidential election. The new laws range from strict photo ID requirements to early voting cutbacks to registration restrictions.

Commentary, Page A4

Statement of Comptroller Peter Franchot Regarding Updated Revenue Estimates

"I'd like to begin by thanking Andy Schaufele for his outstanding work in preparing this report and to the entire Bureau of Revenue Estimates staff, along with the Revenue Monitoring Committee, for your tireless efforts in producing these estimates."

Business, Page A5

Movie Review:

The Magnificent Seven

Only fierce young widow Emma Cullen (Haley Bennett) stands out among the Rose Creek residents, the rest of whom are expendable (as are Bogue's men—there's a high body count). For that matter, some of the Seven get the short shrift, too.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

Did anyone ever figure out what has been killing all the bees, and is there anything we can do about it?

—Gerry Sanders,
Wichita, KS

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

New bus line Alexandria to National Harbor opens in time for MGM

The NH12 Metrobus was officially launched by County Executive Rushern Baker, Alexandria Mayor Allison Silberberg and other Metro and civic officials in ceremonies at National Harbor on Oct. 20. The bus began operation on Oct. 23 and runs from Huntington and King Street-Old Town Metro stations to Downtown National Harbor, MGM and Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center.

This new bus route provides service for the upcoming Marine Corps Marathon, the annual tree-lighting at National Harbor and the December opening of MGM National Harbor Resort.

As County Exec Baker said, "This route will also provide a new convenient amenity for visitors to National Harbor to visit friends and neighbors in Alexandria and Northern Virginia."

Nichols family loses another sister

Mary Ann Taylor, of Forestville, one of the 16 children of the late Lawrence and Mary Nichols of Allies Road in Morningside, died Oct. 8. She was 63.

Mary had worked for Prince George's County.

Her husband Greg and children, Billy and Angel, and several siblings preceded her in death. Survivors include sons Bobby Joe and Brian James—many Nichols boys have the initials BJ—Bobby's wife Trish, grandsons John and Alex, companion Jerry Whitters, and siblings Shirley, John, Jack, James, Helen, Jimmy, Dottie, Lydia and Judy.

Services were at Kalas in Oxon Hill. And now she's buried at Washington National Cemetery with other members of the Nichols family. The repast was at the Town Hall in Morningside where she grew up.

Former resident weathers Matthew

Hurricane Matthew made landfall south of Georgetown, South Carolina, on Saturday,

October 8 as a Category 1 hurricane, and proceeded up the east coast and inland through all of Horry County (where Myrtle Beach, Surfside Beach, Conway, etc. are located).

Former resident, Jody (Bowman) Nyers, lives in Conway. She wrote that she was "hunkered down" awaiting Matthew. Then some hours later she emailed that she and her family rode out the storm. While they lost power for a time, and the winds took down trees and branches, and they had 3.5" of rain at their house, they did not sustain serious damage to homes, cars or lives.

Roads washed out and beach erosion was high. Clean-up began, and also prayers that they never again have anything like Matthew.

Made in Maryland

Did you know that Maryland has a scented-candle company? It is Chesapeake Bay Candle, headquartered in Rockville with a factory in Glen Burnie.

It all started about two decades ago in an Annapolis basement with wax poured into soup cans. Since then, Chesapeake has sold more than 350 million candles, mostly in the U.S., often at Target, T.J. Maxx, Avon, Bed Bath & Beyond and Kohl's. They employ more than 130 people, with sales of \$60 million.

Founder of the company Mei Xu says her company is one of the few to start manufacturing in Maryland over the past 20 years. She is proud of that.

Coming up

Oct. 27–Nov. 3: Early Voting is underway. In our area, the closest place is the Suitland Community Park School on Regency Lane. Hours: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Voting is for President, U.S. Senator, District 4 Representative in Congress, Court Judges, Board of Education for District 7, and several Questions.

Tues., Nov. 8: Election Day. Finally! Polls will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you are in line by 8, you can still vote. As for me, it looks as though I'll vote at the former Skyline School.

Thurs., Nov. 30: Deadline for delivering your newly-created Gingerbread House to Darnall's House Museum in Upper Marlboro. For information about registration, rules and awards, call the Museum or visit history.pgparks.com. Show dates are weekends Nov. 25–27, Dec. 2–4 and 9–11.

Changing landscape

After decades of being cluttered with obstructions and damage by that rare earthquake in 2011, the Main Hall of Union Station has been restored to the grandeur travelers first marveled at 109 years ago. An Oct. 13 ceremony in the Hall marked the end of the 5-year, \$20 million restoration. I'm looking forward to visiting it.

Morningside Memories: Two Octobers

In October 1976 Morningside Chief of Police Matthew Rosch died suddenly. I remember calling Matt to be one of the judges for the annual Halloween Costume Contest. He told me he couldn't because he was on his way to babysit his grandchild. He died an hour or two later. He had been Mayor in 1954–55 and was active with the Morningside Recreation Council.

In October 1978 the new Town Hall was completed at 6901 Ames Street. A year later it was dedicated as the Matthew P. Rosch Municipal Center.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Diane Cvitko, Oct. 28; my grandson Isaac Gallegos, Oct. 29; Denise Williams, Kim Miller and my daughter Kathleen Shearer, Oct. 30; Don Eisenberg, Oct. 31; Carolyn Follin and Morningside Councilman Jim Ealey, Nov. 1; Carl McKlveen, Nov. 2; my son-in-law Luke Seidman and Flossie Keck, Nov. 3.

Happy 14th anniversary to Michael and Maria (Blankenship) Jinks on Nov. 1.

Happy Halloween to all my readers

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Audrey Johnson 301 888 2153

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Bowie State University students go global. Twenty-eight Bowie State University students studied in China over the past year with full scholarships from the Chinese government as part of the HBCU-China Initiative. These students spent a full semester in academic classes at a Chinese university. Another ten students participated in a two-week cultural immersion experience this past summer. Bowie State University is one of the founding members of the HBCU-China Network that includes 42 other schools.

CHRISTMAS CRAFT & VENDOR FAIR

Please join other crafters by participating in our Christmas Craft & Vendor Fair Saturday, December 3, 2016 from 8:30 AM–2:30 PM. (crafters/vendor set-ups 5:30 PM–7:30 PM, Friday December 2nd 7:00 AM–8:30 AM, Saturday, Dec 3rd). To reserve your space or get more information please email: Newhopeevent@gmail.com or call 301-627-0028. Limited number of tables for rent or bring your own table.

Location is the Family Life Center at New Hope Fellowship-Nottingham Myers United Methodist Church. The address is 15601 Brooks Church Road, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772.

EARLY VOTING ELECTION 2016

Mark your calendar because the Presidential General Early Voting Election dates are Thursday, October 27 to November 3, 2016. There are nine Early Voting sites. All Early Voting sites will open 8:00 AM–8:00 PM daily (including Sunday). One early voting site is EV07 Baden Community Center, 13601 Baden-Westwood Road, Brandywine, Maryland.

TRASH TO TREASURE GREEN CRAFT FAIR

Watkins Nature Center presents their 8th Annual Trash to Treasure Green Craft Fair Saturday, November 12, 2016 10:00 AM–4:00 PM at Watkins Nature Center on 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774 in Watkins Regional Park. Admission is free.

Come and explore local artists and crafters who create

treasures. These treasures are made from at least 50 % recycled, organic, fair trade or sustainably-harvested materials. Learn about ways to create recycled crafts with members of local non-profit and environmental groups, and ways to get involved in your community.

Jewelry, knitwear, recycled wood carvings, paintings, candles, and other items will be on sale. Get a book or give a book at the Book Exchange booth. Throughout the event food and beverage vendors will be selling their fare. You will be able to purchase a raffle ticket and win one of several items donated by the vendors, including gift cards and merchandise.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Happy Birthday to Gwendolyn Deville, Stephanie Eugene, Pamela Baker, Derrell Bell, Dwayne Bell, Grace Bryant, Jonnetta Dent, Gloria Dotson, Arthur Duckett, Sr., Derrick Pinkney, George Saunders, Mark Taylor, William Taylor, Jr., Lakeisha Thomas, Mary Contee, Phillip Hill and Madeline Pinkney who are celebrating their birthdays in November.

Neighborhoods

More Than 130 Attend 'Grief in the 21st Century' Conference

PASADENA, MD—It was a full house in Anne Arundel Community College's Cade Room 219 as the school in Arnold, Maryland, and Chesapeake Life Center presented "Grief in the 21st Century," Sept. 23.

The cutting-edge conference sponsored by the John & Cathy Belcher Institute was led by experts in current grief research and clinical interventions that support those living with loss in today's ever-changing environment. One hundred thirty-five people attended the event.

The full-day event began with keynote speaker Dr. M. Katherine Shear, the Marion E. Kenworthy Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Center for Complicated Grief at Columbia School of Social Work presenting on *Grief: The Story of Love after Loss*. This was followed by five different breakout sessions and culminated with a viewing of *Grief Out Loud*, a short documentary created by grieving teens as part of their grief journey.

The response from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many applauding keynote speaker Dr. M. Katherine Shear. Many also enjoyed the diversity of sessions that included how people seek grief support from spaces on the internet to dealing with loss of a loved one due to substance abuse. "This has been one of the best seminars I've attended in a long time," one attendee wrote in their evaluation. "I hope it will be an annual event."

Throughout the year, Chesapeake Life Center offers opportunities for professional development. For a list of upcoming opportunities to learn and earn continuing education units, visit <http://www.chesapeakelifecenter.org/professional-education> or call 1-888-501-7077.

Doctors Community Hospital Designated as High Performing by U.S. News & World Report

LANHAM, MD—In its 2016/2017 rankings, *U.S. News & World Report* recognized Doctors Community Hospital as a high performing hospital for heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Yearly, *U.S. News & World Report* gathers nationwide hospital data, measuring the number of patients treated and comparing outcomes to rank hospitals throughout the country. Its 2016/2017 rankings acknowledged Doctors Community Hospital for performing above the national average in the treatment of heart failure and COPD.

"We have been committed to making sure that our patients get the right care, at the right time and in the right place for more than 40 years. This honor recognizes our dedication to making Prince George's County a healthier community," said Philip Down, president of Doctors Community Hospital.

In Prince George's

County, chronic diseases like heart failure and COPD are among the leading causes of death.¹ In fact, about one out of every four deaths in the county is caused by heart disease.² "These are complex conditions, and we need to help people manage them more effectively," shared Dr. Sunil Madan, chief medical officer and chief population health officer at Doctors Community Hospital. Nationwide, these types of health issues result in about 75 percent of yearly healthcare funds being used to treat chronic diseases.³

"Our goal at Doctors Community Hospital is to help people better understand and optimally manage chronic conditions. One example is our specialized Heart Failure Clinic. Our team educates people about healthy lifestyles while providing high-quality and comprehensive services: nutrition education, physical therapy, medical care and social work," explained Madan. "Supporting the long-term health of people can significantly improve their wellbeing and reduce avoidable hospitalizations—keeping more community members healthy and reducing healthcare costs."

Down continued, "From our recognition by U.S. News & World Report to being designated as a primary stroke center by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System, we are honored to continue our tradition of providing exceptional and lifesaving health care to area residents."

1 <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9590>, *Prince George's County Health Report, 2014*
2 <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9590>, *Prince George's County Health Report, 2014*
3 <http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/9590>, *Prince George's County Health Report, 2014*

Doctors Community Hospital is a premier medical and surgical hospital located in Lanham, Maryland. With a mission of being dedicated to passionately caring for the health of patients and the community, the hospital has provided high-quality as well as comprehensive health care to residents of Prince George's County and the region for 40 years.

BGE Provides Tips to Help Customers Fall Into Savings

Customers should take action now to save energy and money this winter

BALTIMORE, MD—It may be the beginning of the fall season, but Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE) says now is the best time for customers to take the necessary steps to save energy and money this winter. By following a few simple tips and making a few easy energy efficiency improvements, cus-

tomers could save 20 percent or more on their winter heating bills.

- Keep it sealed. A drafty house lets warm air escape and is much more costly to keep warm—especially during cooler weather. Use caulking around doors, windows and any openings for utility services. Locks on your windows can make them tighter and more resistant to drafts. Keep your fireplace damper closed when the fireplace is not in use.

- Upgrade your insulation. Insulating your home can significantly reduce your heating costs, while increasing the comfort of your home. Reducing air leaks—in floors, walls, ceilings, ducts, fireplaces, doors, windows and vents, and around plumbing—could cut 10 percent from an average household's monthly energy bill.

- Check ducts for air leaks. Look for joints that should be connected but have separated. Leaky ductwork can increase your utility bill significantly.

- Warm up your system. Service your heating system at the beginning of each heating season. A well-maintained system will last longer, operate more efficiently and save you money.

- Manage your thermostat. Keep thermostats set at a constant, comfortable level. You can save about 2 percent on your heating bill for every degree you lower your thermostat.

- Be prepared for cooler weather. Remove screens and air conditioners from windows and install storm windows.

- Shorter days and longer lights. Don't forget to adjust outdoor lighting timers as the nights grow longer. Take the time to replace older incandescent bulbs with BGE discounted energy efficient LED and CFL bulbs.

Looking for customized solutions to help you save energy and money? BGE offers rebates for these and other home efficiency improvements through the BGE Smart Energy Savers Program®.

The BGE Smart Energy Savers Program is a suite of programs that enable customers to control energy use, leading to more efficient use of electricity and lowering energy bills. The programs have provided \$413 million in rebates to BGE customers and have also helped 1.7 million residential and business participants save more than 2.5 million MWh of electricity. Collectively, the programs help contain the cost of energy and improve reliability by reducing peak demand and slowing the growth in energy consumption. Energy-saving solutions are available to renters, homeowners, large and small business customers, nonprofits and institutional customers, and more information can be found at BGESmartEnergy.com. These programs support the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act.

COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Nathaniel Sillin

Stay Warm, Save Energy and Lower Your Utility Bill This Winter

Do you turn the thermostat a notch higher or put on an extra sweater when it gets cold? It's a common household debate as family members try to maintain a balance between comfort and savings during the winter. It's also a debate you may be able to put to rest by investing in energy-saving maintenance and upgrades.

You can start with a home energy audit, an inspection that focuses on finding areas where your home wastes energy. Professional auditors can cost \$300 to \$800 depending on the type of audit, but you could consider tackling an audit and some of the changes yourself. Doing so could make your home more comfortable, lower your ecological footprint and save energy and money.

See if you qualify for state-funded weatherization assistance. Look into state-based financial assistance programs before going at it alone. Contact your state's weatherization agency to review eligibility guidelines, find a local service provider and start an application. If approved, you could receive a professional energy audit and improvements. On average, about \$4,000 worth of energy saving-related work was completed over one or two days for the 2015 program year.

If you can't or don't want to pay for a professional audit and don't qualify for assistance, consider conducting a do-it-yourself (DIY) audit.

A DIY energy audit can help you identify ways to save money and stay warm. A thorough inspection of your home can uncover opportunities for improvement, and you be able to rent an infrared camera to help you spot trouble areas. Look over the DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's guide to conducting a DIY home energy audit, and create a log of your findings as you go. Keep in mind, where you live can impact what fixes you want to focus on, the type and amount of insulation you'll need and even your heating system.

Typical trouble spots and simple solutions. The following are common trouble spots and potential improvement you might want to make.

- **Keep the cold outside air out.** The DOE estimates that you can save 5 to as much as 30 percent on your energy bill by just reducing drafts. Check for leaks around your doors, windows, plumbing, cabinets and other potential outlets. Also look for dirty spots on your wall, ceiling and floors as that could indicate air or moisture is getting in. Use foam sealant to fill in large gaps you find and caulking or weather stripping for smaller leaks. Covering drafty windows and doorways with storm windows or doors could also be a worthwhile investment.
- **Consider adding more insulation.** The insulation in your walls and ceiling may not meet today's recommendations. Reinsulating or supplementing what you have could help your home stay warm, or cool, and might not be as difficult as you imagine in easy-to-access attics or basements. However, you may want to check with a professional who can recommend what type of insulation to use and warn you of potential ventilation, fire or moisture hazards during and after installation.
- **Regularly inspect your heating systems.** Heating systems can cost thousands of dollars to replace. While it may not be a DIY job, you may be able to prolong your system's life by hiring a professional HVAC contractor to inspect and tune up your system before each winter. Some utilities also offer free in-home inspections of gas appliances. A job you can take on is checking the air filter and replacing it to the manufacturer's specifications or when it looks dirty. You could also check for, and seal, holes, leaks and poor connections in the ducts.

Weigh the costs and benefits before investing your time or money in a winterization project. Some of the items on your checklist could be no-brainers, but others might require more thought.

Bottom line: A home energy audit can help you identify ways to improve your energy efficiency and make your home more comfortable. Whether you hire professionals, apply for government assistance or do it yourself, preparing before winter hits means you can enjoy a warm home without stressing over the energy bill.

Community Food Drive

November 5, 2016

8745 Branch Avenue, Clinton, MD

The Prince George's County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will host a Community Food Drive on Saturday, November 5, 2016 from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm at the Clinton, Maryland Walmart located at 8745 Branch Avenue. Please bring non-perishable food items to donate and share with those in need. For more information, e-mail HSW@pgcacadst.org.



USDA to Purchase Surplus Cheese for Food Banks and Families in Need, Continue to Assist Dairy Producers

Department Also Will Extend Margin Protection Program for Dairy Enrollment Deadline

By PRESS OFFICER
USDA

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced plans to purchase approximately 11 million pounds of cheese from private inventories to assist food banks and pantries across the nation, while reducing a cheese surplus that is at its highest level in 30 years. The purchase, valued at \$20 million, will be provided to families in need across the country through USDA nutrition assistance programs, while assisting the stalled marketplace for dairy producers whose revenues have dropped 35 percent over the past two years.

"We understand that the nation's dairy producers are experiencing challenges due to market conditions and that food banks continue to see strong demand for assistance," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "This commodity purchase is part of a robust, comprehensive safety net that will help reduce a cheese surplus that is at a 30-year high while, at the same time, moving a high-protein

food to the tables of those most in need. USDA will continue to look for ways within its authorities to tackle food insecurity and provide for added stability in the marketplace."

USDA received requests from Congress, the National Farmers Union, the American Farm Bureau and the National Milk Producers Federation to make an immediate dairy purchase. Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935 authorizes USDA to utilize fiscal year 2016 funds to purchase surplus food to benefit food banks and families in need through its nutrition assistance programs.

USDA also announced that it will extend the deadline for dairy producers to enroll in the Margin Protection Program (MPP) for Dairy to Dec. 16, 2016, from the previous deadline of Sept. 30. This voluntary dairy safety net program, established by the 2014 Farm Bill, provides financial assistance to participating dairy producers when the margin—the difference between the price of milk and feed costs—falls below the coverage level selected by the producer. A USDA web tool, available at

www.fsa.usda.gov/mpptool, allows dairy producers to calculate levels of coverage available from MPP based on price projections.

On Aug. 4, USDA announced approximately \$11.2 million in financial assistance to U.S. dairy producers enrolled in MPP-Dairy, the largest payment since the program began in 2014.

"By supporting a strong farm safety net, expanding credit options and growing domestic and foreign markets, USDA is committed to helping America's dairy operations remain successful," said Vilsack.

While USDA projects dairy prices to increase throughout the rest of the year, many factors including low world market prices, increased milk supplies and inventories, and slower demand have contributed to the sluggish marketplace for dairy producers.

USDA will continue to monitor market conditions in the coming months and evaluate additional actions, if necessary, later this fall.

Since 2009, USDA has worked to strengthen and support American agriculture, an industry that supports one in 11 American jobs, provides Amer-

ican consumers with more than 80 percent of the food we consume, ensures that Americans spend less of their paychecks at the grocery store than most people in other countries, and supports markets for home-grown renewable energy and materials. USDA has also provided \$5.6 billion in disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; expanded risk management tools with products like Whole Farm Revenue Protection; and helped farm businesses grow with \$36 billion in farm credit. The Department has engaged its resources to support a strong next generation of farmers and ranchers by improving access to land and capital; building new markets and market opportunities; and extending new conservation opportunities. USDA has developed new markets for rural-made products, including more than 2,500 biobased products through USDA's BioPreferred program; and invested \$64 billion in infrastructure and community facilities to help improve the quality of life in rural America. For more information, visit www.usda.gov/results.

Pride from A1

These bills are a part of Council Member Taveras' Quality of Life legislative package, included in the District 2 "Take Pride in Our Community" initiative, promoting safer, cleaner neighborhoods in Prince George's County.

Council Member Taveras says residents deserve to live

in communities that are clean and safe, and serve as a source of pride.

"We want residents to take pride in their community and stay engaged in the process of improving their neighborhoods. The 'Take Pride in Our Community' campaign provides important community tools to achieve that goal while sending an im-

portant call to action to enhance the quality of life in all our neighborhoods throughout the County. The bills introduced today offer a path to working better together to address some of the most pressing public safety and health concerns in Prince George's County."

The Council will hold public hearings on CB-59-2016, CB-

63-2016 and CB-64-2016 during the scheduled Council session on Tuesday, November 15, 2016.

Council Member Taveras encourages residents to sign the "Take Pride in Our Community" pledge and join efforts already underway to improve our neighborhoods and heighten community pride in Prince George's County.

Cab Rides from A1

metropolitan area provide this no-cost service to local residents age 21 and older who otherwise may attempt to drive home after drinking.

SoberRide® is offered in the District of Columbia; throughout the Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George's; and throughout the Northern Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, (eastern) Loudoun and Prince William.

"The scary fact is that over half (52%*) of all U.S. traffic deaths during Halloween involve

drunk drivers," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's President.

Sponsors of this year's Independence Day SoberRide® campaign include AAA Mid-Atlantic, Anheuser-Busch, Brown-Forman, Constellation Brands, Diageo, District of Columbia Association of Beverage Alcohol Wholesalers, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility, Giant Food, Glory Days Grill, MillerCoors, Red Top Cab of Arlington, Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington, Volkswagen Group of America and the Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association.

Participating taxicab companies include: Alexandria Yellow Cab; Barwood; Fairfax Yellow Cab; Loudoun Yellow Cab; Northern Virginia Checker Cab; Red Top Cab; Silver Cab of Prince George's County; Yellow Cab of D.C.; and Yellow Cab of Prince William County.

Since 1993, WRAP's SoberRide® program has provided 65,219 free cab rides home to would-be drunk drivers in the Greater Washington area.

Founded in 1982, the non-profit [501(c)(3)] Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) is a coalition of di-

verse interests using effective education, innovative programs and targeted advocacy to end alcohol-impaired driving and underage drinking in the Washington, DC metro area. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with historically keeping the metro-Washington area's alcohol-related traffic deaths lower than the national average.

More information about WRAP's SoberRide® initiative can be found at the website www.soberride.com.

Ballot from A1

the last four digits of their Social Security number, their driver's license number and the issue date of their license plate or Motor Vehicle Administration ID number in order to access the ballot on their computer.

Rebecca Wilson, the co-director of Save Our Votes, a non-partisan organization working to increase voter security, spoke against the certification at the meeting on Sept. 14 and said it's not secure enough. People can access that information if they really want it, she said.

"Driver's license numbers can be derived from an algorithm," she said.

Alan De Smet is a software engineer who created a website that can determine driver's license numbers in certain states, particularly states that use an algorithm to determine the numbers.

Using his website, anyone with access to the Internet can

determine most Maryland driver's license numbers with only a person's full name and day and month of birth.

"My description of the algorithm itself, including the source code to my software, is free speech," he said. "That I make it available to use online shouldn't change anything."

Buel C. Young, a spokesman for the Motor Vehicle Administration, said the administration is aware the algorithm is online.

"In the technological age, there is always going to be someone making advances toward replicating information," he said.

De Smet said the best solution to improve Maryland's license number security is to assign driver's license numbers in a meaningless way.

"Any high-quality random number generator would do the job," he said. "Something as simple as assigning numbers

sequentially would certainly be better."

Wilson also said Social Security numbers are not secure.

"The last four digits of the Social Security number, you may as well consider those public because of breaches of the federal employees' database, the University of Maryland (breach)," she said. "There have been large-scale compromises of Social Security numbers in Maryland which we know are on the black market."

On Feb. 18, 2014, hackers stole more than 300,000 personal records from the University of Maryland's personal information database.

The personal data—including Social Security numbers—of more than 22 million federal employees, contractors, applicants and family members was breached, likely starting in 2014, federal officials announced in 2015.

The four computer scientists said the license issue date, the third verification needed to obtain the online ballot, is accessible to "tens of thousands of state employees and local law enforcement agencies."

Charlson said employees sign an agreement not to use information they have access to for any unauthorized reason.

According to Barbara Simons, the chair of the Board of Directors of Verified Voting, Maryland is particularly vulnerable to voter fraud.

Simons, one of the computer scientists who opposing the use of the online voting system and marking tool, said Maryland has three main security risks: no signature check of mail-in ballots is conducted; any citizen can request an absentee ballot without excuse; and an absentee ballot can be obtained and marked online.

COMMENTARY

Cong. Chris Van Hollen
House Democratic Minority Whip



Van Hollen Demands Answers and Improvements From the VA After Veterans Crisis Hotline Failures

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen joined Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO) and 38 House colleagues in demanding improvements to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Crisis Line. The Department's Office of Inspector General recently found significant problems with caller response and quality assurance, with multiple inefficiencies leading to long waits or unanswered calls.

In a bipartisan letter to Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson, the Members wrote, "Our nation is in the midst of a veteran's suicide emergency as roughly 20 veterans commit suicide every single day. Given these alarming and tragic statistics, we write to express our deep concern with recent reports of failures of the Veterans Crisis Line and to request an update on progress made by the VA to address these issues."

They continued, "Veteran suicide is a complex problem that reaches beyond the VCL, but in their most critical hour, we must make sure that veterans are receiving the support they need."

The full text of the letter to Deputy Secretary Gibson is below:

Dear Deputy Secretary Gibson,

As you know, our nation is in the midst of a veteran's suicide emergency as roughly 20 vet-

erans commit suicide every single day. Given these alarming and tragic statistics, we write to express our deep concern with recent reports of failures of the Veterans Crisis Line and to request an update on progress made by the VA to address these issues.

The breakdowns of the VCL were outlined in the recent report from the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VAOIG) which details significant problems with caller response and quality assurance of the VCL. This report found multiple inefficiencies within the VCL that led to veteran's calls going to voicemail and being placed on hold. In addition, it identified instances where callers did not receive immediate assistance and a general lack of quality assurance. Overall the VAOIG report made seven recommendations to the VA in regards to the VCL.

In addition to issues raised in the VAOIG report, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently conducted a review of the VCL and found that the VA is not meeting its call response time goals, and that roughly 73% of calls are answered at the VCL headquarters, while the remaining calls are sent to backup facilities. Furthermore, this study found that the VA has not

See **VETERANS** Page A5

Marc Morial, President and CEO
National Urban League



Exercise Your Rights: VOTE!

"In a democracy such as ours, the vote is precious, it is almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool we have. Those who sacrificed everything—their blood and their lives—and generations yet unborn, are all hoping and praying that Congress will rise to the challenge and get it done again."

—Congressman John Lewis.

In less than a month, the nation will conclude what is likely to be remembered as one of the most contentious Presidential campaigns in modern history.

The campaign has been fraught with racially divisive rhetoric as the nation continues to struggle with issues of racial hostility and social inequity, as demonstrated by the wave of violence that has taken so many lives over the last year.

A lack of social and economic opportunity is at the root of the unrest. The troubling divisive rhetoric that has characterized the 2016 Presidential race has fed the unrest. And only a historic, targeted mobilization of resources can address the unrest.

National Urban League has a plan to elevate urban communities through targeted public investment, called the Main Street Marshall Plan.

The National Urban League has a plan to hold police and communities accountable for unjustified violence against unarmed citizens, called the 10 Point Justice Plan for Police Reform and Accountability.

But plans on paper, written in the most compelling prose, with the most prescient rationale, mean nothing if we do not put in place responsible, forward-thinking governmental representatives with the power to put these plans into action.

The responsibility to put these plans into action lies with this generation.

That responsibility boils down to just one almighty action: We must vote.

The National Urban League is part of a non-partisan Election Protection coalition formed to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. Election Protection provides Americans from coast to coast with comprehensive voting information on how they can make sure their vote is counted through a number of resources including a voter helpline 866-OUR-VOTE.

If you or anyone you know experiences any irregularity while trying to register or vote, please call 866-OUR-VOTE. But please, vote.

If injustice outrages you, if this recent cycle of violence grates at your inner core as a human being, then we must vote.

If we want to fund urban infrastructure and build schools instead of juvenile detention facilities, build libraries and community centers instead of prisons, we must vote.

If we want universal early childhood education ... we must vote.

If we want a federal living wage, tied to inflation, we must vote.

If we want to fund urban infrastructure and build schools instead of juvenile detention facilities, libraries and community centers instead of prisons, we must vote.

If you want to see our tax dollars go to rebuilding West Baltimore and Inglewood, Chicago and Athens, Ohio, and Boone, North Carolina, as they have in Baghdad and Kabul, we must vote.

If we want to see our urban youth working at summer jobs instead of floundering in hopelessness, we must vote.

If we want to see the dream of a college education within affordable reach for every student in America, we must vote.

If we are to see justice done in the killings of our brothers and sisters at the hands of police and self-appointed vigilantes, we must vote.

If we want to end the scourge of violence within African-American neighborhoods, we must vote.

If we want to erase the AR-17 and the AK47 - the weapon of choice for terrorists and mass killings—from our streets, we must vote.

If we want no fly, no buy and universal background checks, we must vote.

If we are to honor the martyrdom of Andrew Goodman, Mickey Schwerner and James Chaney, we must vote.

If we want a compassionate system of immigration reform that leads to dignity and citizenship, we must vote.

If we want continued, robust funding for the Urban League's highly effective programs, we must vote.

See **VOTE** Page A5

Carroll County Farm Museum



Open to the Public

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS PHOTO BY: MIKE VAN ELLS

CARROLL COUNTY FARM MUSEUM

The Carroll County Farm Museum, located in Westminster, Maryland, provides the public with the opportunity to experience mid-nineteenth century rural life. The Museum grounds include original farm structures, such as the Farmhouse and a bank barn, built in 1852-53. Other buildings include a 1700s Log Barn, Smokehouse, Broom Shop, Saddlery, Springhouse, Living History Center, Wagon Shed, General Store exhibit, Firehouse, and a One-room Schoolhouse. Period artifacts and antiques complete the rural experience for visitors. The Farm Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. except New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 ages 10-18 and 60 & over, age 9 and under is free. For more information call 410-386-3880.

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



The Early Childhood Infrastructure Our Children and Nation Urgently Need

Both presidential candidates have talked about the importance of infrastructure to our country's future. New investments in buildings, roads and bridges are a key foundation for our economic success. Even more important to that success is building our human infrastructure—a foundation for preparing our nation's children for the future. As we work to build a strong foundation for our growing economy, we must also invest in a strong foundation for our children if they are to experience future success in school and in life and be able to contribute to the long-term success of our economy and our nation.

Whether children will have a strong foundation is in large part determined by the social and physical environments in which they grow up. The first five years of a child's life are the time of greatest brain development. If young children's basic needs are met by experiencing consistent, nurturing interactions with loving adults, they are far more likely to meet their full potential. The United States has not made the necessary investments to support young children and families after the seismic shift from stay-at-home moms and two parent families to the current reality of two-parent-working families, or often single working moms with young children today. The major advances in what we now know about early childhood brain development make these investments more urgent. Our aging early childhood infrastructure is in dire need of repair. While we wait for critically needed investments, there has been important progress.

Just last month, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued two sets of standards and regulations that will contribute significantly to building the sound foundation all young children need including new supports for their parents. The final Head Start Program Performance Standards, required by the bipartisan Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, will help en-

sure all Head Start programs provide high quality, comprehensive services that lead to strong outcomes for children. HHS also published new rules to help states implement the bipartisan Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization Act signed into law by President Obama in November 2014, which focused new positive attention on basic health and safety protections and quality care for children in federally-supported child care programs. While additional guidance was long overdue, both build on increased knowledge about the impact high-quality child care can have and are part of the infrastructure needed to help ensure children get the solid foundation they need.

The new Head Start Performance Standards apply to both Head Start and Early Head Start, programs known for their comprehensive health, mental health, and nutrition services and parent engagement. Most importantly, they recognize children don't come in pieces and that comprehensive services are central to the programs' mission. They provide additional

support for teachers to ensure they have the training and skills they need to provide high-quality care and education. They explicitly prohibit expulsions and severely limit suspensions of children from Head Start programs, recognizing the disproportionate rate at which children of color are suspended from preschool programs. They set a goal for all programs to serve children for a full school year and full school year by 2020. Currently only a third of Head Start preschool programs provide full-day, full school year services. The new performance standards also make it easier for programs to actively recruit and serve homeless children and children in foster care.

The final regulations for the Child Care and Development Fund take steps to ensure critical protections and quality care for children. Requiring annual monitoring of licensed and license-exempt providers and that all child care staff complete a comprehensive background check are important new health and safety measures. States must now guar-

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The Prince George's Post

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Contents © 2016, The Prince George's Post

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Legal Advertising Assistant Robin Boerckel	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

Spousal Abuse Should Never Be Tolerated

Domestic violence is more common than many people realize. The National Coalition Against Domestic Abuse estimates that more than 10 million women and men are the victims of some form of physical violence from an intimate partner each year.

But while physical violence to a spouse or partner may be what most of us consider domestic abuse, the reality is that it can take many forms. Unfortunately, when the abuse is not physical there are many cases where the person being abused isn't aware of how unhealthy the relationship is and that help is needed.

If you are in an abusive relationship you probably feel like you're constantly walking on eggshells in the relationship, always afraid of voicing your opinions, worried about going home, and anxious about what will happen when you walk through the door or answer the phone.

There are a number of actions that indicate an abusive relationship. Hitting, pushing, slapping or shaking are types of physical abuse that are the easiest to recognize. But abuse can also take many other forms. If your partner calls you names, forces you to have sex you do not want, blames you for every little problem or makes you beg for money, you are being subjected to domestic abuse.

In abusive relationships there can also be threats of harm to you, your children, your family and friends and even to your pets. These types of domestic abuse take place because the relationship isn't based on love, but rather on the power and control one person has over the other.

Correcting or leaving such a relationship can be difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, but today there is a great deal of help available. Most communities have shelters for battered women that provide protection from the abuser as well as temporary housing, meals, clothing and safety. They also can provide medical help and counseling for the abused person.

There is also the National Domestic Violence Hotline which provides free, confidential information to help someone being abused on escaping from that relationship. The Hotline can be reached at 1-800-799-7233 (TTY number is 1-800-787-3224). Experts advise calling rather than going to an online website, since in many cases the abuser will be monitoring computer usage.

That phone call to either a national hotline or local shelter is an important first step in taking action to end an abusive relationship before it's too late.

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

Vote from A4

If our vision is an America with liberty, justice and economic opportunity for all, we must vote.

If we are to change the heart of this nation, we must vote.

And if we are to achieve all this, through our vote, we must continue to fight with everything we have to protect our vote.

This is the first Presidential election in more than 50 years to take place without the full protection of the Voting Rights Act. This year, 14 states will have new voting restrictions in place for the first time in a presidential election. The new laws range from strict photo ID requirements to early voting cutbacks to registration restrictions. Those 14 states are: Alabama, Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

It's no accident that the states most likely to pass new voting restrictions were those with the highest African-American turnout in 2008, those with the highest Hispanic population growth between 2000 and 2010, and those formerly covered under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act before it was struck down by the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder*. Of the 11 states with the highest African-American turnout in 2008, six have new restrictions in place. Of the 15 jurisdictions previously covered by Section 5, nine have new restrictions in place and four of them enacted restrictions directly after the *Shelby County* decision: Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas.

Make no mistake, there are people in power who do not want African-Americans, young people, senior citizens and other vulnerable populations to vote. We cannot let them stop us.

Statement of Comptroller Peter Franchot Regarding Updated Revenue Estimates

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Comptroller

ANNAPOLIS, MD—The following are remarks, as prepared for delivery, by Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot from September 21, 2016, at a meeting of the Board of Revenue Estimates in Annapolis.

"I'd like to begin by thanking Andy Schaefe for his outstanding work in preparing this report and to the entire Bureau of Revenue Estimates staff, along with the Revenue Monitoring Committee, for your tireless efforts in producing these estimates.

"As Comptroller and chairman of the Board of Revenue Estimates, I continue to advocate for fiscal restraint and prudent budgetary decisions as our State continues to experience slow economic growth and as our revenue intake continues to be below what used to be expected.

"During my travels across Maryland, I've met countless Marylanders, hardworking small business owners, investors, and entrepreneurs. For many of them, this economic recovery has not felt like a recovery at all.

"As Mr. Schaefe noted, today this Board will be voting to write down our previous revenue projections for Fiscal Year 2017 by \$365.1 million and for Fiscal Year 2018 by \$418 million.

"In total, we are reducing our revenue projections by \$783.1 million for the current and next fiscal years. These are significant reductions in our estimates, and reflect the volatility that Maryland's economy continues to experience.

"Today's write-down reflects the stagnant growth in our economy, which is reflected by reduced revenue generated from individual income taxes, corporate income taxes and sales and use taxes.

"The numbers and figures in the report that were meticulously compiled by Mr. Schaefe's team tell the story of what's happening in communities and towns throughout our state, in the 'Real Maryland Economy' where families and business owners have to spend within their means and make tough financial decisions every day.

"The budgets, spending bills, and fiscal policies enacted in this town have a real impact on people's financial well-being, which is why policymakers must continue to exercise vigilance and restraint and make certain that we don't continue to impose greater financial burdens on Marylanders who are already struggling in this tepid economic recovery.

"While I am pleased that our State continues to reduce our unemployment rate and more Marylanders are securing jobs, the reality is that higher paid and higher skilled jobs from before the recession are being replaced with lower skilled and lower paid ones, so the unemployment numbers aren't telling the full story.

"BRE's estimates, for example, indicate that for this calendar year, the average wage in Maryland is projected to increase by only 2.1 percent.

"These revenue figures show many Maryland workers are bringing home the same or less pay as their living costs are rising, leaving them with less disposable income to spend in our economy. And that in turn means that far too many businesses—particularly small and locally-owned businesses that are the backbone of the Maryland economy—are struggling to survive at a time when consumers are reining in their discretionary spending, which is evident in the lethargic growth of sales tax highlighted in this estimate.

"Without a doubt, this continues to be the slowest economic recovery of our lifetimes, and it is unrealistic for us to expect a return to pre-recession levels of economic growth in the short term future.

"The mere fact that we are still using the term 'recovery' more than seven years after the depths of the Great Recession demonstrates just how challenging and extraordinary these economic times remain.

"Given the continued uncertainty ahead, we need to avoid adding more debt to the taxpayers' credit card with the hope of future revenue growth, and reject proposals that would take more money out of the pockets of consumers who are already reluctant to put money back into the Maryland economy. As state policymakers, we have to establish a stable and predictable business climate where consumers have disposable income and the confidence to spend it -- and where employers are comfortable investing capital and creating high-paying jobs.

"If we heed this report within the proper context by maintaining a cautious mindset... we can focus on essential priorities without incurring unaffordable future obligations, and equally as important, we can continue to re-invest confidence back into the Maryland economy. It's a tough scenario, for sure. But we can get past this, if we all work together in partnership".

Veterans from A4

established sufficient monitoring and performance indicators for calls that are sent to backup call centers.

Over the past year the VA has attempted to make significant changes to the VCL to improve its service to veterans. Specifically, VA responded to the 7 recommendations of the VAOIG with specific improvements to each recommendation and a completion date for each improvement. These improvements include new employee orientation, an updated call monitoring program, and establishing a formal quality assurance process and more.

Given your agency's commitment to remedy these issues and the overwhelming public interest in holding the VA accountable to its responsibilities, we respectfully request a detailed response to the following questions by October 15, 2016. Since the

VA has been pursuing reforms in this area over the past year and has identified September 30 as the latest target date for improvements to the VCL in its VAOIG response, we believe this is sufficient time for the VA to respond.

- 1) Has VA completed all of the improvements related to the seven VAOIG recommendations on schedule, including the improvements whose target for completion is September 30?
- 2) As the VAOIG report points out, the number of calls into the VCL has drastically increased in recent years. Will the changes made by the VA be sufficient to handle these calls in years to come if this trend continues? What changes will the VCL need to make in order to handle increased calls in the future?
- 3) VA officials have stated to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs that it is their goal to have every call to the VCL by a veteran in crisis answered promptly by an experienced responder at the by the end of this year. Is the VA on track to meet this goal?

4) Did the VA add any further updates of improvements to the VCL in response to the GAO report in June of this year? If so, what improvements has VA made?

We know the individuals at the VA would agree that veteran suicide is a critical issue that has become worse in recent years. With a veteran committing suicide nearly every 72 minutes and veteran suicide rates far surpassing those of civilians it is evident that the VA must do more to ensure our veterans are receiving the time critical care that they need. Veteran suicide is a complex problem that reaches beyond the VCL, but in their most critical hour, we must make sure that veterans are receiving the support they need. That is why we are seeking answers to these questions, to ensure that VA is taking the necessary strides to provide that critical support, and we look forward to your response.

Award from A1

cluding, dancing, planting seeds, picking pumpkins and learning about healthy food

- Installed a solar array for town hall that reduced CO2 emissions by 23 tons, and reduced energy demands by 5.997 MW annually, and costs by over \$3500 annually.

- Purchased five new police vehicles with Eco-V* and 6 cylinder motors (more efficient than their previous V8 engines), which increased the fleet's game mileage by about 3.5 miles/gallon for sedans and 6 MPG for SUVs.

- Purchased 11 solar-powered Big Belly Trash Compactors for use by the public, with the intent to reduce litter.

"Bladensburg is proud to be a leader in protecting our environment by adopting sustainable policies that will protect our environment for future generations," said Bladensburg Mayor Walter James.

For detailed information about Bladensburg's sustainability initiatives, please contact Debi Sandlin, Town Administrator at 301-864-0812 or ddandlin@bladensburg.net

COLMAR MANOR

Colmar was Sustainable Maryland Certified for the first time in 2016.

Highlights of Colmar Manor's accomplishments include:

- Adopted a "bee-friendly" ordinance that restricts the use of pesticides within the town.



PHOTO COURTESY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
From left to right: Kim Knox, Port Town Community Partnership; Edmonston Mayor Tracy Gant; and Edmonston Town Manger Rod Barnes with the Sustainable Maryland Certified award at the Maryland Municipal League conference this week.

- Installed sixty 20 kilowatt solar panels on the community center's roof, which reduces building's monthly energy use by 10%.

- Created and promoted a series of green business workshops for contractors and residents on the topics of installing pervious paving and rain gardens, and planting and maintaining fruit and nut trees.

- Adopted Sustainable Purchasing Policy to provide guidance for the purchase of municipal materials and services.

For detailed information about Colmar Manor's sustainability initiatives, please contact Carrie Biggs, Green Team Chair, at 202-415-1147 or cbiggsadams@gmail.com

EDMONSTON

Edmonston was one of eight Maryland municipalities to originally become Sustainable Maryland Certified in 2013, and the Town successfully became re-certified again this year.

Highlights of Edmonston's accomplishments include:

- Sponsored the development of 5 free Little Library stations as a part of the national Little Free Library program, that provides free library books for residents to borrow and return

- Planted and now maintains 3 public fruit orchards throughout the community, which will

See AWARD Page A6

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301 627 0900



PHOTO COURTESY THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
From left to right: Colmar Manor Councilmember Melinda Mendoza; Councilmember Vivian Jackson; Mayor Sadara Barrow; Port Towns Community Partnership's Kim Knox with the Sustainable Maryland Certified award at the Maryland Municipal League conference last Friday.

OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review

The Magnificent Seven

The Magnificent Seven
Grade: B+
Rated PG-13,
some profanity and a lot of
strong violence, more than
PG-13 films usually have
2 hrs., 3 min

Except for some slightly more graphic violence and language than its forebears used to get away with, the new version of *The Magnificent Seven* is a Western in the old-fashioned style. That's mostly a compliment, though not entirely. With its shootouts and showdowns, its dramatic saloon entrances (and window-smashing saloon exits), its rousing musical score that hints at but isn't Elmer Bernstein's iconic original, the film has the comfortable feel of something familiar. (Well, duh. It's a remake.) But it also shares with many Westerns from the first half of the 20th century a lack of subtext. There's nothing on this film's mind beyond what's explicitly spelled out in its simple, morally black-and-white plot. After a few decades of new Westerns that explored, subverted, and questioned the old tropes—often while still indulging in them, so it was a win-win—to see one that's blithely uninterested in self-examination is a little disappointing.

But only a little. Director Antoine Fuqua, reuniting with his *Training Day* stars Denzel Washington and Ethan Hawke, sets his sights on fun, and he has good aim. In 1879, representatives from the mining town of Rose Creek hire a righteous warrant officer named Chisolm (Washington) to gather a posse to defend the town from Bartholomew Bogue (Peter Sarsgaard, enjoying his villainy), who's threatening to kill any resident who won't sell him their land for pennies. Chisolm, who fought for the Union, rounds up silver-



ROTTENTOMATOES

Director Antoine Fuqua brings his modern vision to a classic story in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures' and Columbia Pictures' *The Magnificent Seven*. With the town of Rose Creek under the deadly control of industrialist Bartholomew Bogue (Peter Sarsgaard), the desperate townspeople, led by Emma Cullen (Haley Bennett), employ protection from seven outlaws, bounty hunters, gamblers and hired guns—Sam Chisolm (Denzel Washington), Josh Farraday (Chris Pratt), Goodnight Robicheaux (Ethan Hawke), Jack Horne (Vincent D'Onofrio), Billy Rocks (Byung-Hun Lee), Vasquez (Manuel Garcia-Rulfo), and Red Harvest (Martin Sensmeier). As they prepare the town for the violent showdown that they know is coming, these seven mercenaries find themselves fighting for more than money.

tongued Confederate sharpshooter Goodnight Robicheaux (Hawke); glib gunfighter and card-trick magician Faraday (Chris Pratt); Mexican outlaw Vasquez (Manuel Garcia-Rulfo); old trapper and Indian-killer Jack Horne (Vincent D'Onofrio); Asian blade expert Billy Rocks (Byung-hun Lee); and an Indian named Red Harvest (Martin Sensmeier).

It's a multicultural group, as Robicheaux points out—though it's noteworthy that he identifies Chisolm not as “the black guy” but as the Union representative, even though the Mexican, Indian, and “Oriental” are called out as such. Chisolm's race is never mentioned in the film, despite his being a black man in a position of authority in a story set just after the Civil War. This *Magnifi-*

cent *Seven* is the opposite of *The Hateful Eight*, both in title and philosophy, and is thus even less realistic than Tarantino's postbelum revenge fantasia.

The dialogue, written by Nic Pizzolatto (HBO's *True Detective*) and Richard Wenk (*16 Blocks*), has a snappy energy that sustains it. Chris Pratt serves as comic relief, bickering with (for example) Vasquez over whose grandfather killed whom at the Alamo, and claiming not to remember drunkenly fighting a very short man because “I thought you were a leprechaun.” Robicheaux teaches the townspeople how to shoot while suffering from what we'd call PTSD over his own war experiences. Chisolm rides tall in the saddle and maintains order among his

“troops” (“a bunch of strays” someone calls them), and leaves one with the distinct impression that Denzel should be in more Westerns.

Only fierce young widow Emma Cullen (Haley Bennett) stands out among the Rose Creek residents, the rest of whom are expendable (as are Bogue's men—there's a high body count). For that matter, some of the Seven get the short shrift, too. But when the town is finally besieged, Fuqua stages the action thrillingly, delivering the crowd-pleasing, six-shooting adventure and heroism that have entertained audiences since the dawn of cinema. It's not great—it's no *The Magnificent Seven*—but it'll satisfy any varmint hungry for some Old West justice.

Award from A5

provide free fruit to residents once trees mature.

- Supports local farmers market each Saturday from June to October.

- Entered into an agreement with Washington Gas to purchase 100% wind energy for the city's 44 streetlights.

- Installed a 23000 kilowatt solar PV System to benefit Town Hall; cost savings are estimated at \$42/month.

- Adopted a Green Purchasing Policy in order that all procurement decisions made embody the Town's commitment to sustainability.

- Designated a Tree City USA since 2014.

According to Edmonston Mayor Tracy Gant, “The Town of Edmonston truly believes that ‘green is not just our color, it is our way of life’. I believe it is vital for our residents to learn how to protect our environment through sound sustainable efforts. The Sustainable Maryland program provides towns across Maryland the expertise to assist with achieving long-lasting policies that will impact our communities for generations.”

For detailed information about Edmonston's sustainability initiatives, please contact Rod Barnes at 301-699-8806 or rbarnes@edmonstonmd.gov

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sustainable Maryland Certification: To achieve certification, municipalities are required to form a Green Team comprised of local residents, community leaders, municipal staff and officials; complete a variety sustainability-related Actions worth a total of at least 150 points (including two mandatory actions and two of six priority actions), and submit the appropriate documentation as evidence that the Sustainable Maryland Certified requirements have been satisfied. The Sustainable Maryland Action Menu can be seen here: <http://sustainablemaryland.com/actions-certification/actions/>

The complete list of 2016 newly certified and re-certified (denoted by *) communities includes:

- *City of Annapolis (Anne Arundel County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- *Town of Bladensburg (Prince George's County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- *City of Bowie (2016 “Sustainability Champion” for highest point total award; Prince George's County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- Town of Colmar Manor (Prince George's County)

- *City of College Park (Prince George's County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- *Town of Edmonston (Prince George's County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- *City of Frederick (Frederick County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- *City of Gaithersburg (Montgomery County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- City of Havre de Grace (Harford County)

- *City of Hyattsville (Prince George's County; first certified in 2013, re-certified in 2016)

- Town of Middletown (Frederick County)

- Town of Ocean City (Worcester County)

- City of Salisbury (the first municipality to be certified in Wicomico County)

- Town of Thurmont (Frederick County)

According to Mike Hunninghake, Program Manager for Sustainable Maryland, “The annual Sustainable Maryland Certified awards are a testament to the passion and dedication of volunteers, municipal staff and elected officials on our Green Teams, and the innovative projects and plans they have completed towards improving the quality of life in their communities and reducing our collective footprint on the planet. This year, we are especially pleased by the successful re-certification of the first four Sustainable Maryland Certified municipalities from 2013, which speaks volumes about both the value communities place on our certification designation, and the sustainability of the municipal Green Team/Action Plan framework we have created here in Maryland.”

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

The Unbearable Bigotry of Mike Ditka



Onetime Chicago Bears football coach Mike Ditka has not been in charge of an NFL team for 25 years, but the business of being “Iron Mike” has never stopped booming. He's the tough-as-nails head football coach who's always ready to shill for any product within arm's distance or play himself in a Will Ferrell movie. When on ESPN, he is forever armed with a sharp rant and is perhaps their only talent—other than maybe Chis Berman—who can pass gas on live television and make it come off as lovable. That's just Ditka being Ditka.

But there is another side to Mike Ditka. He's the guy who was accused of sending players back into games with concussions. He's the guy who was described this way by former Bears safety Dave Duerson: “Mike was not one who gave a damn about the players or their injuries when he was coaching.” Duerson later took his own life, and in death was diagnosed the brain disease CTE.

Ditka is the guy who berated his own Bears players for not crossing a picket line when the NFLPA was on strike in 1987. He's the guy today who—after a lifetime of supporting right-wing candidates—shills for another dubious product: Donald Trump.

And now, true to form, he's coming out against Colin Kaepernick's anthem protests. On Friday, he said on the *Shan & RJ* radio show, “I think it's a problem. Anybody who disrespects this country and the flag. If they don't like the country they don't like our flag, get the hell out. My choice is, I like this country, I respect our flag, and I don't see all the atrocities going on in this country that people say are going on,” Ditka said. “I see opportunities if people want to look for opportunity. Now, if they don't want to look for them then you can find problems with anything, but this is the land of opportunity because you can be anything you want to be if you work. If you don't work, that's a different problem.”

Mike Ditka, as mentioned, is a Trump endorser—and he is parroting the candidate who in August said that Kaepernick should “maybe should find another country to live in.” Trump undoubtedly knows that this kind of statement is a racist dog whistle, that when you tell someone who is descended from the enslaved people that built the United States to shut up or find another country, you are telling them—in classic KKK fashion—to “go back to Africa.” This is as true today as it was when a member of Congress said it to singer and civil-rights icon Paul Robeson, and Robeson's response is still the correct one. He said:

Because my father was a slave, and my people died to build this country, and I am going to stay here, and have a part of it just like you. And no Fascist-minded people will drive me from it.

Whether Ditka is aware that “find another country” is racist is unclear, but there is absolutely nothing in his history that would allow for him to get the benefit of the doubt.

Ditka's comments share similarities in content and tone with not only Trump but also another elderly ex-coach who likes playing a tough guy on television: disgraced former Indiana University basketball coach Bob “The General” Knight. These braying bullies have appointed themselves as the arbiters of patriotism. Yet when Trump, Ditka, and Knight had the chance to serve in Vietnam, they didn't. They used whatever means were at their disposal—deferments, foot injuries, coaching Army basketball—to get out of it. Their lives mattered.

I have no problem with anyone who didn't serve in that horrific war. My great hero is Muhammad Ali, who resisted the draft in Vietnam. But these guys act like they're George Patton when they're not even George W. Bush.

It's galling that, in Ditka's mind, Trump's trashing of this country is somehow patriotic, yet Kaepernick's critiques justify his exile. It is galling that Ditka is blissfully unaware that there are legions of black former players who feel that he didn't respect their health, their minds, or their humanity. Now his critique of Kaepernick feels like another chapter in a life of degrading black people who do more than just say, “Yes, Coach.”

There has been a call for Mike Ditka to be fired from ESPN for his comments. I don't agree, partially because there is no more nauseating thought than “First Amendment martyr Mike Ditka.” He shouldn't be fired, but he should be debated. He should have to spew his views not in the confederate confines of talk radio but to the face of ESPN colleagues Herman Edwards or Charles Woodson or Bomani Jones or Jemele Hill. Make him say that to the face of someone who has had to live while being black in this country, someone unafraid to push back. I suspect that Ditka would respond to this the way bullies always respond when challenged. When bigoted bullies are armed only with their racist ideas, they never stand their ground.

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Calendar of Events

October 27 — November 2, 2016

Xtreme Teens: Fashion Design

Date and Time: Thursday, October 27, 2016, 4–6 pm
 Description: Tonight teens will learn how to sew on the sewing machine. They will use patterns and take measure to make their own wearable garments.
 Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
 Ages: 10–17
 Location: Mount Rainier Nature Center
 4701 31st Place, Mt Rainier, MD
 Contact: 301-927-2163; TTY 301-699-2544

Xtreme Teens: Halloween Glow Party

Date and Time: Friday, October 28, 2016, 5–9 pm
 Description: Come party with us for Halloween. Teens, tonight you are invited to our glow Halloween party. Dress in your best costumes, bring a friend and enjoy snacks, fun games, music, and much more. Prizes for best costume.
 Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
 Ages: 10–17
 Location: Mount Rainier Nature Center
 4701 31st Place, Mt Rainier, MD
 Contact: 301-927-2163; TTY 301-699-2544

Haunted Hangar

Date and Time: Friday, October 28, 2016, 7–9 pm
 Description: Wear your costume and join in the Halloween fun at the annual Haunted Hangar event. Arts, crafts, hayrides, and spooky fun are waiting for kids and families.
 Cost: \$5/person (includes museum admission)
 Ages: All Ages
 Location: College Park Aviation Museum
 1985 Corporal Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD
 Contact: 301-864-6029; TTY 301-699-2544

Xtreme Teens: Halloween Costume Party

Date and Time: Friday, October 28, 2016, 7–10 pm
 Description: Join us for a night of costumes, music, games, and prizes. Tonight we are having a Halloween Party. Come dressed in your best costumes and have fun!
 Cost: Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID
 Ages: 10–17
 Location: College Park Community Center
 5051 Pierce Avenue, College Park, MD
 Contact: 301-441-2647; TTY 301-699-2544

Concert: Cyrille Aimeé

Date and Time: Friday, October 28, 2016, 8 pm
 Description: Vocalist Cyrille Aimeé is a winner of the Montreux Jazz Festival's International Vocal Competition, the Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition, and the 2015 Down-Beat Critic's Poll ("Rising Star—Female Vocalist"). Raised primarily in France, Aimeé quickly fell in love with gypsy music and their way of life, a continuing inspiration to this day.
 This engagement of Cyrille Aimeé is funded through the Mid Atlantic Tours program of Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.
 Cost: \$30/person; 10% discount for Montpelier members & seniors
 Ages: All ages
 Location: Montpelier Arts Center
 9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel, MD
 Contact: 301-377-7800; TTY 301-699-2544

Farm Fest Extravaganza

Date and Time: Saturday, October 29, 2016, 10 am
 Description: Farm Fest runs annually and benefits local organizations that are involved in helping the community. This family-oriented, charitable western event involves cowboys, cowgirls and their horses coming together and performing routines and stunts to show support for worthy causes.
 There will be local performers, vendors, pony rides, and lots of fun for the entire family.
 Cost: Free for spectators
 Location: The Show Place Arena
 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue, Upper Marlboro, MD
 Contact: 301-952-7900; TTY 301-699-2544

Ales and Spooky Tales at the Tavern

Date and Time: Saturday, October 29, 2016, 6–8 pm
 Description: Adults can enjoy spirits of a different kind while listening to chancies and ghost stories. Guests can also enjoy a Halloween-themed buffet and drinks. Reservations and payment required in advance.
 Cost: Resident: \$35; Non-resident: \$42
 Ages: Ages 21 & up
 Location: Darnall's Chance House Museum
 14800 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD
 Contact: 301-952-8010; TTY 301-699-2544

Xtreme Teens: Haunted Experience

Date and Time: Saturday, October 29, 2016, 7–10 pm
 Description: Bring a friend and join us for an unforgettable Halloween haunted experience.
 Cost: \$1/person
 Ages: 10-17
 Location: Langley Park Community Center
 1500 Merimac Drive, Hyattsville, MD
 Contact: 301-445-4508; TTY 301-699-2544

Gothick Evening: A Curious Collection of Characters

Date and Time: Saturday, October 29, 2016, 7:30 pm
 Description: Tread carefully as your follow a guide and listen to eerie tales inspired by the sites and characters - ancient ruins, fortune teller, wolves, and more - depicted in the painting collection. End the evening with a cup of warm cider by the fire. Registration required by October 24.
 Cost: Resident \$15; Non-Resident \$19.50
 Ages: Ages 12 & up
 Location: Riversdale House Museum
 4811 Riversdale Road, Riversdale Park, MD
 Contact: 301-864-0420; TTY 301-699-2544
 riversdale@pgparks.com

EARTH TALK ... What's Killing All the Bees?

Dear EarthTalk:

Did anyone ever figure out what has been killing all the bees, and is there anything we can do about it?

—Gerry Sanders, Wichita, KS

By now, we've all heard about bees dying across the U.S. and around the world. This isn't just bad news for beekeepers: these amazing insects pollinate upwards of two-thirds of our food crops—all at no cost to farmers or consumers. All we need do is keep them around, which is proving to be more and more difficult.

A third of all beehives in the U.S. have disappeared in the last decade alone, a situation that has been dubbed Colony Collapse Disorder. Experts say several factors are at play. First, global warming has changed weather patterns so profoundly that bees have been unable to adapt fast enough. Flowers now bloom so early or late that they don't coincide with the active season of pollinators, so when bees emerge from hibernation the flowers they need for food have already bloomed. Another threat is habitat loss: development, urbanization and monoculture farming are decimating natural areas bees need to thrive. And a new generation of parasites is infiltrating hives and impeding chemical communication between bees.

But perhaps the biggest threats to bees are some of the pesticides

routinely used in agriculture, particularly neonicotinoids. Commonly referred to as neonics, this increasingly popular class of insecticides is meant to eliminate pests, but has been proven to have an equally devastating impact on bees. Today, seeds are engineered with neonics from the start, so this harmful chemical is present in the plant, pollen and nectar. This chemical, approximately 6,000 times more toxic to bees than DDT, devastates bee central nervous systems and makes it impossible for them to relocate their hives. Those bees that survive a first encounter aren't off the hook. They remain dazed and inefficient. Neonics have an addictive quality similar to that of nicotine for humans, so surviving bees inevitably return to treated flowers until their death.

Policy changes must address this issue by rewarding farmers for sustainable practices and banning neonicotinoids for use as pesticides. Unfortunately, big agricultural companies like Dow Chemical and Syngenta make huge profits selling neonics and as such are reluctant to withdraw them. The European Union took steps to ban the use of neonics in member countries in 2013, although that ruling is currently under review. Meanwhile, in the U.S., a few cities and states have taken at least symbolic action to reduce neonics, but without a federal ban on the books such piecemeal efforts can't do much to help.



CREDIT: CORY BARNES, FLICKRCC

Activists would like the U.S. government to ban a class of insecticides called neonics that they blame for wiping out the bees that pollinate a majority of our food crops.

In Spring 2016, Jeff Merkley (D-OR) introduced a bill in the U.S. Senate calling for new policy initiatives and interagency coordination to restore and enhance pollinator habitat across the U.S. Key provisions of Merkley's Pollinator Recovery Act include setting aside three million acres of public land as expanded acreage for "forage and habitat" for pollinators, grant funding for R&D to develop crops to resist pests without neonics, financial incentives and technical assistance for farmers that adopt pollinator-friendly practices, and expanded health monitoring and population tracking for bees and other key pollinators.

Concerned Americans should urge their Senators to co-sponsor or support the Pollinator Recovery Act. After all, protecting bees isn't just important to environmentalists but to anyone who enjoys avocados, almonds or any

of the countless fruits, vegetables or nuts pollinated by our little black and yellow friends.

CONTACTS: Greenpeace "Save the Bees" Campaign, www.greenpeace.org/usa/sustainable-agriculture/save-the-bees; Merkley Unveils New Proposal to Help Restore Pollinator Populations Across the U.S., <https://www.merkley.senate.gov/news/press-releases/during-national-pollinator-week-merkley-unveils-new-proposal-to-help-restore-pollinator-populations-across-the-us>.

EarthTalk® is written and edited by Roddy Scheer and Doug Moss and is a registered trademark of E - The Environmental Magazine (www.emagazine.com). Send questions to: earthtalk@emagazine.com.

EDC from A1

a resolution from the County Council recognizing Prince George's County's Economic Development Corporation, FSC First, and the Conference and Visitors Bureau are important components of Maryland's economic success.
 Guest speaker, Shelly Gross-Wade capped off the evening by announcing to the over-capacity crowd that Children First Community Urgent Care, LLC is the first local business to receive funding from the VLT Small Business FLEX Fund. The FLEX Fund is part of the State's Small, Minority and Women-Owned Business Account that

provides 1.5% of the proceeds from video lottery terminals in targeted areas surrounding Maryland casinos. FSC First is one of Maryland's two minority VLT fund managers and assists businesses that cannot qualify for any other FSC First loan programs, but have a sound business plan, proven operation principals and realistic growth potential. Companies at the event were anxious to learn more about the FLEX Fund and the other loan tools that FSC First has at their disposal.

Ensuring each FLEX Fund Awardee's continued success is a team effort. FSC First teamed with Keller Williams Commercial Real Estate Broker Lorenzo

Wooten to secure a home for Children First Community Urgent Care, LLC.

"The EDC does a great job at putting businesses together," said Wooten. "I come to these events every month and meet clients for whom I am able to provide real estate solutions. I was able to find space for Children First Community Urgent Care, LLC but they needed funding. I introduced them to FSC First and she became a VLT FLEX Fund awardee."

The Marlton Golf Club, which has a unique and storied history, was the perfect location for this month's event.

"My business partners and I purchased the Marlton Golf Club in April of 2015," said Vann B.

Jones, Owner and CFO of the Marlton Golf Club. "Our vision is to make the Marlton the destination of choice for the community and surrounding neighborhoods. We are more than just a golf course as we have live entertainment, Sunday Brunch and are preparing to build a world-class performing arts center. We are privileged to own one of just four black-owned golf clubs in the country and are happy to host events like Thirsty (For Business) Thursday."

Thursday night's event was graciously sponsored by FSC First, the Marlton Golf Club, Ve Water and E. Roger Financial Group and featured a Putt and Drive Challenge.

Ballot from A3

"This combination of factors makes the Maryland absentee voter system the most insecure in the country," she said.

While other states also use online ballots and mail-in voting, Maryland is the only one of those states that does not use signature verification.

Both Oregon and Washington state use mail-in voting only, but require signatures on the mailing envelope. They can be checked against a database of signatures the state collects, including from driver's licenses.

Washington verifies signatures for 3 to 10 percent of all ballots, according to David Ammons, communication director for the office of the Secretary of State in Washington.

Oregon checks every ballot, said Molly Woon, communications director for the secretary of state in Oregon.

"If the signatures do not match, the voter is contacted by county officials and comes in for a confirmation scan and comparison," Woon said.

The General Assembly, which meets in the spring, would have to vote on signature verification, so it will not be in place for the 2016 elections, Charlson explained.

Some experts, including Vora, also do not believe the new system can keep ballots confidential when they are marked digitally.

"Ballot secrecy cannot be protected when votes are entered into personal computers on the Internet," she said.

"Giving Back to the Community" The Mural Day Event Saturday, October 29, 2016 9am-4pm Suitland High School

Members of the community will complete the mural that will hang at Bradbury Heights Elementary School.

The event will kick off at 9 am with a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony hosted by Radio One Personalities, the Prince George's County Executive team, representatives from Path To Greatness and other community dignitaries. Throughout the day, children from the community and event attendees will be painting the mural and participating in a variety of fun activities that will be provided.

Prince George's County Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI), the Prince George's County Arts and Humanities Council, the Path to Greatness Foundation and Radio One Washington, D.C. Present the "Giving Back to the Community" Mural Project

Local artists were called upon to participate in the PG County Mural contest by submitting designs based on the theme "Giving Back to the Community." The winning design will be awarded a \$1,000 prize and the artist will work with PG County and the community in the implementation and completion of the final art work.

FOAM FREE IN PGC

As of July 1, polystyrene (commonly referred to as Styrofoam™), polystyrene loose fill packaging (also known as "packing peanuts") and other foam articles are no longer permitted for sale or use in Prince George's County.

Foam Packaging that Cannot Be Sold or Used (visit environment.mypgc.us/foamfree for exemption information)

- Food containers
- Plates
- Hot and cold beverage cups

There are many non-foam packaging alternatives. To view a list of vendors that offer comparable products and learn more about being "Foam Free in PGC" visit, environment.mypgc.us/foamfree or contact County Click at 3-1-1.

Prince George's County Department of the Environment and Planning
Office of Central Services