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Maryland Becomes First State to Lower Gas Prices With **Fuel Tax Moratorium**

By STEPHEN NEUKAM AND E. A. BREEDEN

Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 18, 2022)— Maryland drivers got immediate relief at the pump Friday afternoon when Republican Gov. Larry Hogan signed into law a 30-day gas tax moratorium, after the legislation was fast-tracked this week by unanimous votes in the General Assembly.

The law, which went into effect immediately, suspends the state's nearly 37cent gas tax. Prices at the Eastport Shell gas station in Annapolis dropped by 36 cents from \$4.29 to \$3.93 just minutes after the bill signing.

"This bipartisan action will provide some relief from the pain at the pump,' Hogan said at the bill signing. "This, of course, is not going to be a cure-all, and market instability will continue to lead to fluctuations in prices."

Jen Gaynor of Catonsville was one of the first customers to buy gas at the reduced price at the Eastport Shell station.

"I was pretty happy to see \$3.93 pop up, because I do need gas," Gaynor said. "Otherwise, I'll need AAA to get me back to Catonsville."

Gaynor said she fills her 13-gallon tank about twice a week, which means she will save about \$40 with the lower price.

Hogan was joined at the signing by



PHOTO BY E. A. BREEDEN/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Gov. Larry Hogan, with House Speaker Adrienne Jones, D-Baltimore County, to his left and Senate President Bill Ferguson, D-Baltimore to his right, signs into law a bill to lower Maryland gas prices by placing a 30-day moratorium on the state's gas tax.

Senate President Bill Ferguson, D-Baltimore, and House of Delegates Speaker Adrienne Jones, D-Baltimore County, who worked with the governor to introduce and pass the bill in just over a week.

"We are showing that Maryland leaders know that when there are problems that Marylanders are facing, we come together and we fix them," Ferguson said.

Maryland became the first state to sus-

pend its gas tax in response to soaring fuel prices. Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp was expected to sign a similar bill Friday. The Georgia moratorium would suspend the state's 29-cent tax until May 31.

At least 17 other states are considering

See MORATORIUM Page A2

Council Chair Calvin S. Hawkins, II, **Expresses Appreciation for Strong Capitol Hill Support** for Relocation of **New FBI Headquarters to Prince George's County**

Federal Delegation Announces Major Step Forward for New, Consolidated FBI Headquarters in Omnibus FY 2022 Funding Package

By KAREN D. CAMPBELL

Prince George's County Council Media

The Prince George's County Council is deeply grateful for the leadership of U.S. Congress Members representing the state of Maryland and their strong and steadfast advocacy for relocation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) headquarters to Prince George's County. Two of the three relocation sites under consideration, Landover, and the Greenbelt Metro in the City of Greenbelt, are in Prince George's County.

On Tuesday, March 15, 2022, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05), Senators Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Congressman Anthony Brown (MD-04) secured the inclusion of language to advance the process for a new, consolidated FBI headquarters in the Omnibus FY2022 funding package signed into law this week by President Biden.

The language focuses the site selection process to the three sites previously identified after an exhaustive process by the General Services Administration (GSA) and the FBI during the Obama Administration—Greenbelt, Landover, and Springfield—and requires the GSA to choose among them as expeditiously as possible. After the site is selected, GSA would have 180 days to send a report to Congress that would allow Congress to authorize the construction of the FBI facilities at the site.

We thank our federal partners for continuing to work together to welcome the FBI headquarters to a new home and expand economic opportunity in Prince George's County.

Soaring Gas Prices Push Maryland Drivers to Alter **Travel, Spending Decisions**

By JOE RYAN

Capital News Service

BALTIMORE (March 17, 2022)—Hunter Williams stopped at a BP gas station in south Baltimore this week to add a little bit more to the tank. Normally, Williams, in town from Ohio to visit his daughter, would spend \$40 and have a nearly full tank.

But not this time. With prices at near records, Williams was more cautious and opted for \$20 worth of fuel. He only got four

Williams is like a lot of motorists these days. He said he finds himself making tougher financial decisions now and driving less.

"You know, I can't take a routine run to the grocery store anymore like that just because of gas prices, "he said. "Now I've got to do Instacart," a service that picks up groceries and delivers them to purchasers' homes.

Gas prices in Maryland have risen to near record highs. The average price of gas in the state has increased by 65 cents in the past 30 days, according to AAA, from \$3.56 for regular gas to the current average of \$4.21.

Drivers interviewed by Capital News Service said those costs are forcing them to make tough decisions about how they spend their money, from travel to fuel purchases to recreation.

The good news is the state's motorists are expected to get some immediate help beginning Friday. Republican Gov. Larry Hogan is expected then to sign into law a 30-day moratorium on the state's 37-cent gas tax. The law goes into effect immediately with his signature, so motorists should see a same-day reduction in fuel prices, if gas station owners pass the savings onto drivers.

Russell Geist said he is feeling the pinch of higher fuel prices in his personal life and in his busi-

Geist owns Metropolitan Landscaping Management Inc., where he needs gas for the company's work trucks and gas-powered equipment in use every day.

Higher gas prices, Geist said, have made an already difficult situation worse.

"I work for residents who are already being squeezed by all of this inflation," he said, "and I have to inflate my prices as well, because it costs me more to do busi-

Plus, Geist said, the equipment he uses requires fuel that is a mix

of higher octane gas and oil. The higher octane gas is on average 44 cents more expensive than regular, according to AAA.

Gas prices have been rising since January as relations between Russia, a major global source of crude oil, and Ukraine became un-

However, prices spiked after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Between the weeks of Feb. 28 and March 7, U.S. gas prices rose by 13%, according to an analysis of data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and between March 7 and March 14 prices shot up again by another 5%, the agency's data shows.

Still, as Linda Ramirez pumped \$15 worth of gas into her car in Bethesda, she said it was worth higher prices to help Ukraine.



JOE RYAN/CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE

Russell Geist, filling up a gas can at an Exxon gas station in College Park [last] Tuesday, said the increased prices have forced him to raise customer prices at his landscaping business.

"I believe it's a good idea, because they're helping Ukraine as it's suffering," Ramirez, 22, said, "But ... (the government) should always look out for us as well."

Geist also said increased gas prices are worth it to support Ukraine, but he said the government could still do more to help lower costs.

"I don't think we're totally utilizing all the ways we can help to keep the prices down," he said.

Williams said there's not much he can do to reduce his fuel burden because of his location.

"My job, everything is 10 to 15 minutes away," he said. "So, I was like, man, that takes a toll on a man."

Governor Hogan Announces Donation of Critically-Needed Ventilators to Ukraine

50 Portable Ventilators to Front Line Hospitals

By SHAREESE CHURCHILL Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 21, 2022)—Governor Larry Hogan today announced that the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has donated 50 Astral portable ventilators to treat patients at front line hospitals in Ukraine. Donated to the Paul Chester Children's Hope Foundation (PCCHF)—a Dickersonbased grassroots medical organization that provides

surgical care to people in developing countries the ventilators will support the treatment of children and adults who have been wounded during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"The State of Maryland continues to stand in solidarity with President Zelensky and the people of Ukraine," said Governor Hogan. "We are proud to make this donation to help save lives and aid the Ukrainains in the fight against Russian aggression."

"Contributing medical equipment to help treat

during and after this terrible, senseless crisis." The Maryland Department of General Services (DGS) provided logistical and other support. The

wounded Ukrainians in this great time of need is

the least we can do," said MDH Secretary Dennis

R. Schrader. "I commend Dr. Chester and his team

for all their efforts to help Ukrainian doctors and

nurses provide critical medical services to the citizens

retary Schrader, Delegate Kipke, and the Maryland

Department of General Services for their generosity

and kindness," said Dr. William Chester, PCCHF

co-founder. "Without the help of truly dedicated in-

dividuals in the state and the assistance of the Mary-

land Society of Anesthesiologists, this would not

have been possible. These ventilators will save lives

"I am beyond grateful for Governor Hogan, Sec-

of Kyiv, Lviv, and other worn-torn areas."

portable ventilators are scheduled to depart the United States today, and should arrive at front line hospitals throughout Ukraine later in the week.

"Like everyone, I'm horrified to see the tragic destruction and devastation in Ukraine because of the relentless attacks and invasion by Russia," said Delegate Nicholaus Kipke. "We all want to do what we can to help people who are hurting there, which is why when I was approached by my friend Dr. Bill Chester about his efforts to send advanced level medical supplies to help in Ukraine I reached out immediately to the governor's office to help."

"These ventilators will help provide the additional support needed for the citizens of Ukraine," said DGS Secretary Ellington E. Churchill, Jr. "General Services continues to do everything in our power to help aid the nation of Ukraine during their time of need."

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To Be Equal: Women's History **Month Sees Historic Progress for** Black Women in America ...

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Governor Hogan Announces Elimination of Four-Year Degree Requirement for Thousands of **State Jobs**

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Governor Hogan Proclaims 2022 as "The Year of Harriet Tubman" in Maryland

The state celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of the nation's most renowned freedom fighter.

Out on the Town, Page A6

TOWNS and NEIGHBORS

Brandywine-Aquasco

BULLDOGS WOMEN'S TENNIS DUO

Bulldogs Women's Tennis Duo earn CIAA weekly honors. Charlotte, N.C.-Bowie State's Tamia Byrom and Aria Mason of the women's tennis team earned the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Weekly Honors announced by the league office Tuesday afternoon March 8, 2022.

Byrom, a native of Upper Marlboro, Md., was named this week's Food Lion Player of the week after she rolled to 6-2 decision with partner and sophomore Natayla Rones (Springdale, Md.) at the No. 2 doubles while turning in a 6-1, 6-1 performance at the No. 3 singles in the Bulldogs 5-2 win at Elizabeth City State Saturday, March 5.

Meanwhile Mason, a native of Canton, Mich., tabbed the Food Lion Rookie of the Week after earning her first career win with a 7-6, 6-0 decision at the No. 2 singles in the winning effort. The Bulldogs win over Elizabeth City State marked the first season opener victory of the program since 2016. For the most up-todate information on Bowie State University Athletics and its thirvarsity sports teams, please www.bsubulldogs.com.

GIRLS OF TECH, WOMEN IN TECH

You are invited to join us virtually for a GET TOGETHER of girls and women in tech March 31, 2022. Register online. Location: Virtual, Maryland. Contact: Dr. Loubna Dali. Her email address is Idali@bowiestate.edu. Categories: Academics, Women's History Month.

DREAM GIRLS

R&B hits the stage as three women move their way to the top as they tackle love, heartache, and stardom April 21, 2022. Location: Fine & Performing Arts Center, Main Stage Theater, 14000 Jericho Park Road Bowie, Maryland 20715.

Categories: Fine and Performing Art. Contact: Elena Velasco for more information email: evelasco@bowiestate.edu, website: https://www.bowiestate.edu/academics/colleges/ college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/fine-andperf. A University System of Maryland Member Institution. Contact: webmaster@bowiestate.edu

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY FEATURING WINNING

Toyan Espeut ('93) is a prominent leader in the technology industry. She has led high performing sales teams for start-ups and publicly traded software companies locally in Silicon Valley and Seattle. Toyan also serves on the Technology Business Management (TBM) Council where she promotes women and diver-

by Audrey Johnson 301-922-5384

sity in tech along with educating students on STEM career paths. Her tip for success: "Know your value and how to apply that value in solving a problem. When you do, you can literally create your own opportunities."

Stephanie L. Bynum ('92), affectionately known as Pastor Stephanie, is co-founder and pastor of Shekinah Glory Deliverance Church in Fort Washington, Maryland. Under her leadership, she started Radiant Unstoppable Believers Inspiring Encouraging Sisters (RUBIES) Ministry, with a mission to teach, inspire, encourage, help, train, and assist all women. She is a mentor, speaker, and teacher who encourages others to live a life of purpose.

Pastor Stephanie is also employed as an IT specialist with the Department of Defense; an adjunct professor at Bowie State University; owner of ADT Cleaning Solutions; and a successful real estate agent in Maryland for more than 15 years. She is married to Apostle Dwight Bynum and they have three adult children.

Angela Dingle ('97) published "Discovering Your Girl Powers," a business leadership book based on research and successful leader's insights. In it, Angela offers ten strategies for building confidence, charisma, and credibility. "This book offers some great advice for tapping into leadership skills that GOES beyond simply being business savvy."-D. Wheeler.

Kisha Houston ('00) published Succeed Anyway, a new book about overcoming mental illness, relationship issues, and low self-awareness to succeed anyway. "I had to learn to go through the fire, the pit, and be brought up from the valley of the shadow of death."

Regina Robinson ('00): with more than 15 years of experience, Regina Robinson is sought after as an expert and thought leader in the field of education. She is a global speaker, best-selling author, and college coach. Regina provides education strategies and accountability for middle school through college students, as she empowers them to connect their vision to a future plan of action. Regina prides herself on providing families with step-by-step guidance to "Winning the Game of College Admissions" in their efforts to identify the right college fit socially, academically, and financially.

AUCTIONS LIVE & SILENT

St. Thomas Church located at 14300 St. Thomas Church Road, Upper Marlboro, Maryland presents a Silent Auction April 2, 2022, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Come join us for an afternoon of Fun and Excitement. Registration and preview open at 12:30-1:30 p.m. Live auction begins at 1:30 p.m. Registration for the Silent Auction closes at 2:30 p.m. and bidding closes at 3:30 p.m. Some of the items include vintage items, collectibles, jewelry, furniture, crystal, home décor and more.

Around the County

Community in the Courthouse—March 29

Please join State's Attorney Aisha N. Braveboy and #TeamPGSAO for the next Community in the Courthouse as we celebrate Women's History Month in Prince George's County on March 29.

This will be a virtual event via Zoom and streamed live on Facebook. If you would like to attend, please visit: tinyurl.com/MarchCIC2022. WHEN: March 29, 2022, 6-7:30 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: commaffairs@co.pg.md.us.

Local Students Selected to University of Minnesota Twin Cities Dean's List

Students honored for academic success during the 2021 fall semester

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL, Minn. (March 18, 2022)—The following students have been named to the 2021 fall semester Dean's List at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, the university announced today. To qualify for the Dean's List, a student must complete 12 or more

letter-graded credits while attaining a 3.66 grade point average. Brandywine, MD: Mackenzie Hemming, Senior, Col of Educ/Hu-

Laurel, MD: Kathleen Godshall, Junior, College of Liberal Arts

Bible & Leadership Institute—2022 Spring Semester

Classes will be held online, via Zoom

DATE: Saturdays, beginning Saturday, April 23, 2022, to June 11, 2022 VENUE: Accokeek First Church of God online, via Zoom 301-283-2116 / www.accokeekchog.org

Rose Armstrong, Admin. Assistant, adminasst@accokeekchog.org 301-885-8124 (cell)

DESCRIPTION: The Spring semester of our Bible & Leadership Institute is offering the following classes:

The Truth About World Views (Evangelism and Outreach) led by Minister Lisa Kirby: Saturdays from 9–10:15 a.m.

Biblical Beliefs (Bible and Theology) led by Pastor Paula Collins: Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

Registration is open from now to April 23, 2022. To register and learn more about our entire course offerings and benefits, send an email to: adminasst@accokeekchog.org. Or call or text Rose Armstrong at 301-885-8124.

Our certified instructors are Pastor Paula Collins and Minister Lisa Kirby.

DURATION: Eight (8) week semester Fees for all classes: \$45.00 (includes tuition and textbook) ALL ARE WELCOME!!

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

The Barn itself may date to the early 1900s. It was once the Democratic Club. It was also a casino with blackjack and roulette on the first floor and slot machines on the second.

George Perry bought the property in 1943 and officially established The Village Barn, Inc., which became the oldest operating country music establishment in the D.C. area with house bands, such as The Cimarrons, The Jimmy Case Band, The Campbell Brothers Band, and others. The last to play there was The Young Country Band.

But Morningside lost a major landmark when fire gutted The Village Barn on the night of April 3, 1993. The Town also lost one of its major charity

The Village Barn worked hand-in-hand with the Morningside Sportsmen's Club, Morningside Volunteer Fire Department and VFW Post 9619 in a number of charity fund-raisers. The most successful was for Nicky Goode, a local boy who needed a liver transplant. The Barn raised much of the \$90,000 that made the transplant successful.

In addition to country music, the Barn offered food and drink. Tom Alexander sent me a menu (date unknown) from which you could order a fried shrimp dinner for 85¢, a Bud for 30¢, and The Village Barn Deluxe Pizza for \$2.00.

But two tragic shootings happened at The Village

In 1972 an irate husband shot his wife to death on the dance floor, right in front of the bandstand, while she was dancing with another man. (Does anyone know who the shooter was and what kind of time he served?)

fired a gun through the rear window of the Barn into the celebrating crowd. The bullet struck Jeanette Marie Fowler. She died two weeks later, on Jan. 14. As far as I know, her murder is still unsolved. Now, the site of The Village Barn on Suitland

In 1987, on the stroke of New Year's, someone

The final days of The Village Barn (continued) Road, next-door to the VFW, is a vacant, fenced John Mudd hosted a gala at their West Laurel home from Miami Edison H.S., he worked as a fingerprint and scrubby lot. And it may become a carwash.

Perhaps the carwashing should be accompanied by country music.

Town of Morningside

Morningside's meetings coming up in April: Work Session, April 12, and Regular Town Meeting, April 19, both in the Municipal Building, beginning at 7 p.m. For information, call 301-736-2320.

Mark your calendar for the Bunny Breakfast & Egg Hunt on Sunday, April 16, 9 a.m. to noon. There'll be more about this in next week's column.

Neighbors & other good people

Anthony G. Puzzilla has a new book out, Hope Triumphs over Chaos, The La Plata Tornado of April 28, 2002. If you remember that awful event, you'll want his book. It can be pre-ordered beginning March 23, purchased at Amazon beginning April 2, or at Martin's Service Station, 209 Charles Street in

Carl Desmarais, formerly of Barto Avenue, emailed, "We live in Vienna, VA but many times when we travel into Prince George's I take my family around all the places/homes of friends and tell them again and again about how great it was growing up in Camp Springs."

Bee Duncan, who lived for years on Auth Road, died Feb. 27. She was an active parishioner at St. Philip's and among those presented with the St. Philip the Apostle Service Award in 1997. Her husband M.Sgt. John W. Duncan USAF (retired) died in 2010. Survivors include sons Skip and Gregory and grandchildren.

I would like to honor our graduates by listing them, their school, and their plans. Call or email me (muddmm@aol.com) with your grads. I'll run them in May or June.

I had a fun birthday weekend when I turned 93 on March 12. Daughter Sheila and her husband

on Saturday night, and ten of us did the Kennedy classifier for the FBI before joining the Air Force Center on Sunday for Jesus Christ Superstar.

Changing landscape

The Senate has voted to end daylight saving time, by unanimous consent. But it still must get it through the House and be signed by President Biden.

Maryland has moved its gubernatorial primary elections three weeks later, to July 19, to allow time to resolve a legal challenge.

D.C. officials joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to unveil a statue in the Capitol of the architect who designed the federal district, Pierre L'Enfant—giving D.C. two statues in the building, like all the states.

The National Capital Planning Commission is reimaging Pennsylvania Avenue—America's Main Street—to be grander with fewer car lanes, more parkland, pop-up markets and cafés, art displays and lively events year-around. It could be our own Champs-Élysées.

Landscape really changed in 1987

As I was doing research, I pulled out my Jan. 15, 1987, Enquirer-Gazette column. Among the items I wrote about that week were the closing of Morningside School and Benjamin D. Foulois, both to become magnet schools. I also reported that the Lamp Post Inn, a longtime fixture on Suitland Road, had been demolished and the land cleared "for what may be a small shopping center." And the storefront Suitland Branch Library on Silver Hill Road closed "to be replaced by a big new library on Old Silver Hill Road near Shakey's." Well, the big new library is there. But Shakey's is gone.

Leon Glaze, who was chased by a bear at

Eldie Leon Glaze, 87, of Temple Hills, who ran Central Sterile Supply at Andrews, died March 7. He was born in Nauvo, Ala. After graduation

by Mary McHale 301-735-3451

in 1954. He served all over the world, including Newfoundland, Canada, where he met his wife, Fay. They wed Aug. 30, 1958. He retired as MSgt with 22 years' service, eventually settling in Temple Leon, as he preferred to be called, went back to

work at Malcolm Grow Medical Center where he ran the Central Sterile Supply in the hospital. After retiring for good, he volunteered once a week in the pharmacy at Andrews. He loved vacations and travel with his family. He was chased by a bear at Yellowstone, narrowly escaping, and saved his son Michael from a rattlesnake at the Badlands.

Leon and Fay were married 60 years before she died in May 2019. Survivors include son Michael, daughter and son-in-law Wendy and Jeff Martin and two grandchildren. Visitation and service were at Lee Funeral Home with burial at Cheltenham.

COVID report: Prince George's can be proud!

"Thanks to the teamwork of Prince George's County residents, our COVID-19 Community Level is low and our vaccination rate is among the highest in the nation," said Prince George's County Health Officer Dr. Ernest Carter. The demand for testing and vaccines has decreased, but both are still readily available at locations Countywide. For information or updates, go to health.mypgc.us/Coronavirus.

Happy Birthday to Morningside Code Enforcement Officer Gina Foster, March 26; Walter Dimes, March 27; Robert Hay, Jr. and David Righter, March 28; Ben Surratt and Kimberly Smith, March 29; Akwete Bedewi, March 30; Sylvia Barbour and Mark Cummings, March 31. Happy anniversary to Terry & Gina Foster, March

26, and to Antoinette & Charles Mattison, March

Moratorium from A1

a tax moratorium, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Maryland's gas tax holiday is one of the rare incidences when such legislation has been enacted since policy makers and politicians began debating the idea more than 25 years ago.

Now, drivers across the state will wait and see how much of an affect the bill has on prices at the pump.

Comptroller Peter Franchot, a

Democrat running for governor, tried to put to bed concerns about price gouging, as consumer advocates this week raised concerns that gas stations might pocket the tax break intended for drivers.

Franchot, who was the first to propose the gas tax holiday idea in the state last week, said he did not expect there would be any trouble getting gas stations to cooperate with dropping their prices.

"I kept hearing that from people saying, 'The gas stations aren't going to pass it on," Franchot said at a press conference after the bill was signed. "Yes, they are. They are patriotic just like everybody else in the state."

Two competing gas stations on opposite corners in Annapolis reflected confusion around prices in the law's early going.

At the Shell station on the corner of Forest Drive and Bay Ridge Avenue in Annapolis, the price for regular gas had dropped to \$3.91. Meanwhile, at the Exxon station across the street at Forest and Hillsmere drives the price stood

at \$4.19.

The Exxon gas station attendant, Parass Paudel, said he does not make changes to the price of gas without the owner's instructions, and the owner had not been at the station Friday.

"The owner is responsible for everything," Paudel said.

The moratorium comes after lawmakers on both sides of the aisle attempted to amend the bill this week to make the tax suspension longer.

Legislators argued that the tax

moratorium should be extended to 90 days, but the amendment was defeated in both chambers.

Franchot thanked Hogan and legislative leaders for "indicating their openness to extending this gas tax holiday."

Hogan said previously he wanted the holiday to be longer, but settled on one month in a compromise with legislators.

While prices dropped at stations in Annapolis, lobbyists for gas stations and fuel providers this week cautioned that people should temper expectations about the impact of the gas tax holiday and that drivers should not expect an immediate 37-cent drop.

Gas prices have been rising since January as relations between Russia, a major global source of crude oil, and Ukraine became un-

Prices spiked after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Between the weeks of Feb. 28

See MORATORIUM Page A7

COMMUNITY



Cardin Meets With Supreme Court Nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson

BV PRESS OFFICER Cardin Communications

WASHINGTON March 15, 2022)—U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.) met Tuesday with U.S. Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, currently a member of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Judge Jackson's hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee will be held next week. Senator Cardin chaired Judge Jackson's first confirmation hearing in 2009 when she was a nominee for the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

"It was a real pleasure to meet with Judge Jackson today. I'm familiar with her background and many of her rulings. She also is a former Maryland resident. We had much to talk about—she has many connections to our state," said Senator Cardin after the meeting.

"Judge Jackson is eminently qualified. We talked about her personal experience and her commitment to equal justice under the law, especially for those

who have difficulty accessing our legal system. We discussed the importance of an independent judicial branch of government and protecting the rights of individuals against powerful special interests. I was impressed with Judge Jackson throughout our conversation. Our meeting reinforced how critical it will be to have her on the Supreme Court."

"Judge Jackson deserves consideration by all members – Democrats and Republicans. I hope she gets many Republican votes," Senator Cardin added.

Health Department Announces Updates to Covid-19 Vaccination and Testing **Locations in Prince George's County**

Sports and Learning Complex Vaccination Clinic, Temple Hills Community Center Testing Site, two state-run testing sites in the county are closing

By GEORGE LETTIS **Prince George's County Health Department**

LARGO, Md. (March 16, 2022) —The Prince George's County Health Department is announcing the following updates to COVID-19 vaccination and testing locations in the County:

County-operated COVID-19 vaccine clinics

The Wayne K. Curry Sports and Learning Complex mass vaccination clinic will close after Friday, April 8.

County-operated COVID-19 testing sites

The Temple Hills Community Center will no longer offer COVID-19 testing services after Friday, March 25.

State-operated COVID-19 testing sites

University of Maryland Laurel Hospital public testing site shut down Friday, March 11.

Doctors Community Hospital/Washington Education Zone testing site in Lanham close[d] after Thursday, March 17.

"Thanks to the teamwork of Prince George's County residents, our COVID-19 Community Level is low and our vaccination rate is among the highest in the nation," said Prince George's County Health Officer Dr. Ernest Carter. "The demand for testing and vaccines has decreased, but both are still readily available at locations Countywide. With many community partners providing most of the testing and vaccine services to residents, the Health Department can begin to reduce its capacity at this point in the pandemic while being ready to ramp up again if necessary."

The County continues to operate and support free COVID-19 testing sites at the Bunker Hill Fire Station in Brentwood, the First United Methodist Church in Hyattsville, and the Roseu Medical Center in Laurel. Visit health.mypgc.us/ COVIDtesting for testing updates and an interactive mapping tool to find other testing sites near

Free at-home rapid test kits and KN95 masks are available for pick up at multiple library branches and Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission community centers in the County, while supplies last.

The Health Department highly encourages residents 5 and older to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible and to get tested if they have symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. In addition, residents that are eligible for a booster shot should get one as soon as possible. For more information or updates about COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, including a complete list of clinics operating in the County and the State of Maryland, visit health.mypgc.us/ Coronavirus.

Washington, D.C. Area Students Win **Top Prizes in C-SPAN Video Documentary Competition**

** Silver Spring Middle Schoolers Win Grand Prize ** Students express how the federal government impacts their lives

By PRESS OFFICER C-SPAN

WASHINGTON (March 16, region for the documentary, students across the country parnounced that students in Silver Spring, Rockville, Potomac, Bethesda, Poolesville, Germantown and Bladensburg, Maryland as well as Washington, D.C. are winners in C-SPAN's national 2022 StudentCam competition.

The 2022 grand prize winners are twins Tyler and Dermott Foley, students at Eastern Middle School in Silver Spring. The Foleys will receive \$5,000 for the documentary, "What Happened to Gibson Grove?," about highways, racial injustice and the fight to save America's Black cemeteries. This documentary will air on C-SPAN at 6:50 a.m. ET and throughout the day April 21.

Evelyn Shue and Ida Chen, students at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville and

Winston Churchill High School in Potomac, will receive \$3,000 as first prize winners in the East "Something in the Water," about the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974. This documentary will air on C-SPAN at 6:50 a.m. ET and throughout the day April 19.

following Prince George's County students are honorable mention prize winners and will receive \$250:

Madison Harvey and Gidey Gezae, students at Elizabeth Seton High School in Bladensburg for the documentary, "Greater Evil: The Baltimore Wheelabrator Incinerator."

The competition, now in its 18th year, invited all middle and high school students to enter by producing a short documentary. C-SPAN, in cooperation with its cable television partners, asked students to explore a federal policy or program and address the

theme: "How does the federal government impact your life?"

In response, more than 3,000 ticipated in the contest. C-SPAN received over 1,400 entries from 41 states, Washington, D.C., Morocco and South Korea. The most popular topics addressed were:

- Environment & Pollution
- Health Care & Mental Health (9%)
- COVID-19 & Recovery (7%)
- Immigration (5%) 2nd Amendment & Firearm
- Legislation (4%) C-SPAN is funded by Amer-

ica's cable television companies, who also support StudentCam. In Silver Spring, Rockville, Potomac, Bethesda, Poolesville, Germantown, Bladensburg and Washington, D.C., C-SPAN is available locally through Com-

Maryland Passes Historic and Equitable Energy Efficiency Legislation

By PRESS OFFICERS NRDC, NHT, GHHI

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 21, 2022)—The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation today that will deliver healthier housing and significant annual energy savings to the state's most cost-burdened households.

HB 108 and SB 524, sponsored by Delegate Lorig Charkoudian and Senator Brian Feldman, will require the state to specifically provide energy-efficient upgrades for the hundreds of thousands of low-income residents, where an unfairly large share of the energy-cost burden

The following is a statement from Deron Lovaas, Senior Policy Advisor for NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council):

"This desperately needed legislation will ensure that the Marylanders who live in the most dangerous conditions and pay the highest percentage of their income on energy bills, will no longer be left behind.

"This first in the nation legislation will ensure that everyone has access to the many benefits of energy efficiency, lowering energy bills for the most vulnerable while creating safer homes."

The following is a statement from Raymond Nevo, State & Equity Policy Manager at the National Housing Trust: "This legislation could have

significantly reduced the health disparities my family and I endured growing up. Most see affordable housing as just four walls and a roof, but it is so much more. This legislation gives those most in need a chance to live in their homes with dignity."

The following is a statement from Ruth Ann Norton, President, and CEO of the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative:

"The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative commends the leadership of Delegate Lorig Charkoudian and Senator Brian Feldman for the successful passage of House Bill 108 and Senate Bill 524, Public Utilities - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Programs - Energy Performance Targets and Low-Income Housing. Passage of this historic legislation not only creates a national model but more importantly puts Maryland one step closer to making tangible progress on energy equity and setting forth a plan to protect our climate and the health and wellbeing of our state's most vulner-

"This legislation will ensure that critical weatherization investments are made in housing in the state's most under-resourced communities which will create more stable, affordable, and healthier homes."

Background:

Beginning in 2008, the Em-POWER Maryland program required investments in efficiency upgrades for businesses and homes across Maryland, but the program benefits of lower energy costs and improved safety have predominately applied to upperand middle-class residents. The policy failed to provide adequate funding for Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which manages the energy efficiency programs for low-income residents.

HB 108 and SB 524 will require the state to provide funding to achieve 1% annual energy savings for low-income households by 2026. This funding will lower energy bills for 32,000 low-in-

See ENERGY Page A4

TOWN OF BERWYN HEIGHTS NOTICE OF A PROPOSED REAL PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

The Town Council of the Town of Berwyn Heights proposes to increase real property

- 1. For the tax year beginning July 1, 2022, the estimated real property assessable base will increase by 5.4%, from \$386,863,752 to \$407,701,652.
- 2. If the Town of Berwyn Heights maintains the current tax rate of \$0.545 per \$100 of assessment, real property tax revenues will increase by 5.4% resulting in \$113,567 of new real property tax revenues.
- 3. In order to fully offset the effect of increasing assessments, the real property tax rate should be reduced to \$0.5171, the constant yield tax rate.
- 4. The Town of Berwyn Heights is considering not reducing its real property tax rate enough to fully offset increasing assessments. The Town proposes to adopt a real property tax rate of \$0.545 per \$100 of assessment. This tax rate is 5.4% higher than the constant yield tax rate and will generate \$113,567 in additional property tax revenues. A public hearing on the proposed real property tax rate increase will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 13, 2022 at the Council Chamber in Town Hall, 5700 Berwyn Road. It will also be broadcast on Berwyn Heights cable TV channels and streamed on the Town website at www.berwynheightsmd.gov/town-council/pages/watch-councilmeetings. Residents can comment by joining the meeting in person, calling 301-474-9570 and e-mailing Mayor Dewey at adewey@berwynheightsmd.gov.

The hearing is open to the public, and public testimony is encouraged. Persons with questions regarding this hearing may call 301-474-5000 for further information.

Give a Shout-Out to Involved Dads At the Inaugural Kids First! Daddying Film Festival

Student Submissions Deadline Approaching

By PRESS OFFICER **KFDFF**

CHEVY CHASE, Md. (March 15, 2022)—There is one month left until the call for entries deadline for the inaugural KIDS FIRST! Daddying Film Festival (KFDFF). The KFDFF provides a stage for students, 1st grade through college undergrads, to express themselves about the importance and impact of fathers/father figures in their lives. KFDFF encourages kids to create and submit 1- to 5-minute short films or videos for FREE with the theme "A Letter to My Father/Fa-

ther Figure." Finalists will receive a \$250 award and have their film/video screened during the virtual Festival the week leading up to and including Father's Day

WHO: DADvocacy Consulting Group's Daddy Appleseed Fund and KIDS FIRST! Film Festivals are reaching out to parents, teachers, students, librarians, and youth/family-focused organizations to help boost student submissions.

WHEN: Submissions due Friday, April 15. The KFDFF runs

June 13–20. WHERE: Students may submit short films for FREE at Film-Freeway's KFDFF https://filmfreeway.com/KIDS-FIRSTDaddyingFilmFestival

MORE INFO: KFDFF winners will receive a generous scholarship (amount TBD) and an "Atticus," which symbolizes Atticus Finch from Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird. Finch, an iconic single dad, represents several ideal daddying qualities. Specifically, he is attuned to his children's feelings and ideas and takes the children as seriously as they take themselves. Winners will be selected by public online vote during Festival week.

COMMENTARY

Marc Morial

President and CEO, National Urban League



To Be Equal:

Women's History Month Sees Historic Progress for Black Women in America, But Work Remains to **Achieve Full Equality**

"From the first settlers who came to our shores, from the first American Indian families who befriended them, men and women have worked together to build this nation. Too often the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed. But the achievements, leadership, courage, strength, and love of the women who built America was as vital as that of the men whose names we know so well ... Understanding the true history of our country will help us to comprehend the need for full equality under the law for all our people.'

—President Jimmy Carter, proclaiming the first National Women's History Week

This goal can be achieved by ratifying the 27th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states that 'Equality of Rights under the Law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

When labor activist Theresa Malkiel established the first official Women's Day in 1909, only four states and four U.S. territories granted women the right to vote. The 14th Amendment, which guarantees equal protection under the law, did not apply to

Two years later, some European countries joined the United States in the observance of International Women's Day. The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in 1975, and in 1987 Congress designated March as Women's History Month for the first time.

Throughout much of America's history, the advancements of women's rights applied only to white women. The National Women's History Alliance, which was instrumental in establishing Women's History Month, declared: "despite our best intentions, we have not done enough to challenge racism within the sphere of women's history. In the past we have failed to effectively speak out against racism in our collaborative spaces.'

So, it is especially significant that the first Black woman nominated to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, Ketanji Brown Jackson appear[ed] before the Senate Judiciary Committee on Monday as the first step in the confirmation process. This Women's History Month also has seen the confirmation of the first Black woman to head Office of Management and Budget, Shalanda Young, and the confirmation of Lisa Cook, the first Black woman to serve on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, is imminent. Beginning with his historic selection of Kamala Harris to serve as Vice President, President Biden has appointed a record number of women—and women of color—to key roles in his administration and nominated more Black women to the federal courts than any president in history.

National Urban League and the Urban League have long shared this commitment to gender equality. From Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth to Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer, women have been the driving force in the fight for equal rights. The National Urban League was co-founded by philanthropist and social activist Ruth Standish Baldwin in 1910. More than half of our 91 affiliates are led by dynamic women CEOs, and nearly 70 percent of the National Urban League's senior vice president and vice president positions are held

Women's History Month is not only a celebration of women's achievements of the past, but of women who are making history today. Among the honorees at the National Urban League's most recent Women of Power Awards were Stacy Abrams, who confronted voter suppression in Georgia and inspired an estimated 800,00-plus new voters to register through her efforts; immunologist Kizzmekia S. Corbett, whose research was central to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines and treatment; and Amanda Gorman, who inspired the nation as the youngest poet to read at a presidential inauguration and became the first National Youth Poet Laureate.

As we celebrate the progress women—especially Black women—have made in recent years, it's important to recognize the work we have yet to do. The United States has the highest maternal mortality rate among developed countries, and Black women are about three times more likely to die during pregnancy or shortly after birth than white women, yet reproductive rights are under attack across the nation. Women still are paid only 84 cents for every dollar paid to men, and Black women are paid only 63 cents for every dollar paid to white men.

President Obama once said there is no greater form of patriotism than the belief that "it is in our power to remake this nation to more closely align with our highest ideals." Achieving and protecting the equal rights of all women is among the most sacred of those ideals.

Marion Wright Edelman

President Emerita, Children's Defense Fund



ChildWatch:

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson: **Breaking Another Barrier**

Supreme Court, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson gave erations of Americans." a moving speech describing her journey from her
It was a lovely tribute to the brilliant and trailearly childhood as the daughter of public school teachers to her nomination to the highest court in the nation. She ended by sharing a coincidence she said "meant a great deal to me over the years": "As it happens, I share a birthday with the first Black woman ever to be appointed as a federal judge: the Honorable Constance Baker Motley. We were born exactly 49 years to the day apart. Today, I proudly stand on Judge Motley's shoulders, sharing not only her birthday but also her steadfast and courageous commitment to equal justice under law. Judge Motley's life and career has been a true inspiration to me as I have pursued this professional path. And if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed as the next Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, I can only hope that my life and career, my love of this country and the Constitution, and my commitment to upholding

At the White House event where President Biden the rule of law and the sacred principles upon which introduced her as the nominee for the United States this great nation was founded will inspire future gen-

> blazing Judge Motley and the principles that have served as a guiding light for both of them. It was also a clear reminder that as the first Black woman to be nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court, Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is breaking a new barrier and adding to the long, painfully slow, but unstoppable legacy of African American women securing justice in the courtroom for ourselves and others.

> This is a legacy that stretches back to women like Elizabeth Freeman, an enslaved Massachusetts midwife and nurse who successfully sued for her own freedom in 1781 after she heard Massachusetts's newly ratified state constitution read aloud, and realized its declared rights to freedom and equality for all should apply to her too. In the decades that followed other Black women occasionally received justice in the courts as plaintiffs, including Sojourner

Truth, who in 1828 sued to have her five-year-old son returned to her after he was illegally sold and taken from New York to Alabama. In 1872 Charlotte Ray graduated from Howard University School of Law, and she became the first Black woman lawyer in the U.S., the first woman admitted to the District of Columbia Bar, and the first woman admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the District of

Ray eventually had to give up her law practice because she could not secure enough clients. But as the first African American woman lawyer she laid a path that was followed by others like Jane Bolin, the first Black woman to graduate from Yale Law School, who became the first Black woman to serve as a judge in the U.S. with her appointment to the New York City Domestic Relations Court (later Family Court) in 1939. Judge Bolin, in turn, paved the way for Judge Motley to become the first Black woman federal judge in the U.S. in 1966, and then Judge Motley became the role model for future Black female federal judges like Ketanji Brown Jackson. Now Judge Jackson deserves to be swiftly confirmed as U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Jackson, where she is poised to serve as a role model for the next generation.

In a nation that has never made it easy for Black women to break any barriers, it is little surprise that some of the same racism and sexism Judge Jackson's predecessors all faced is still very present today. She was a national speech and debate star and student body president in high school, but was still told by a school counselor that applying to Harvard would be setting her sights "too high." She applied anyway, and graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College. She then received her law degree cum laude from Harvard Law School, where she was an editor

of the prestigious Harvard Law Review, and has served as a Supreme Court law clerk, a federal public defender, in private practice, as a trial court judge, as vice chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission, and is currently serving on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, considered the second most powerful court in the nation. Despite all this she is still facing predictable complaints from some of the same familiar quarters that she is somehow "not qualified." But President Biden knew better; the Senators from both parties who have already voted to confirm her for three previous positions know better; and above all, Judge Jackson knows better. She is very well aware of who she is and on whose shoulders she

In his White House introduction, President Biden explained that when he began searching for a replacement for retiring Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer he promised "the process would be rigorous, that I would select a nominee worthy of Justice Breyer's legacy of excellence and decency—someone extremely qualified, with a brilliant legal mind, with the utmost character and integrity, which are equally as important . . . who will bring to the Supreme Court an independent mind, uncompromising integrity, and with a strong moral compass and the courage to stand up for what she thinks is right. For too long, our government, our courts haven't looked like America. And I believe it's time that we have a Court that reflects the full talents and greatness of our nation with a nominee of extraordinary qualifications and that we inspire all young people to believe that they can one day serve their country at the highest level." I agree! Our nation has never yet lived up to its professed creed of justice for all, but Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson is prepared to be the next Justice for all that we need right now.

Brown, Hoyer, Ruppersberger, Sarbanes, Mfume, Raskin and Trone Request Investigation Into Bias in **Maryland National Guard**

Black and women officer candidates were dismissed at significantly higher rates

WASHINGTON (March 18, 2022)—Congressmen Anthony G. Brown, Steny H. Hoyer, Dutch Ruppersberger, John Sarbanes, Kweisi Mfume, Jamie B. Raskin and David Trone (all D-MD) called on the National Guard Inspector General to investigate bias in the Maryland National Guard.

According to Maryland Army National Guard Data from 2017 to 2021, Black Officer Candidate School candidates were almost twice as likely to be dismissed as white candidates. During the same time period, female candidates were dismissed

70% more often than their male counterparts.

"The reserve and active duty components must be able to operate as one armed force to meet our security objectives as a nation," the Members wrote. "It is critical that the implementation of US Army and National Guard policies and procedures within the Maryland National Guard are in conformity to expected standards and with full respect for the rights of the individuals who so choose to answer the call to serve.

The Members continued, "As such, we request

that you conduct an investigation into the general consistency of the implementation of US Army and National Guard policies and regulations within the [Maryland Army National Guard Officer Candidate School] program. In the course of such an investigation, we ask that you identify the root causes of any racial disparities in acceptance, dismissal, and graduation rates of officer candidates.

We further request that you recommend corrective action based on any findings of your investigation to ensure consistent implementation of all policies and regulations in the [Maryland Army National Guard Officer Candidate School]."

In 2021, Members were made aware of various allegations covering a range of racial and gender bias in the Maryland Army National Guard Officer Candidate School, from individuals being forced to wear symbols of enslavement, to the subjective dismissal of candidates, to subtle yet persistent discrimination. The Maryland Army National Guard has substantiated a portion of these allegations.

The Prince George's Post

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Energy from A3

come households each year and lower energy bills for all 450,000 low-income Marylandersin 13 years. At the current funding rate, it would take 130 years to reach all these house-

Nationally, low-income households spend 8 cents of every dollar on energy costs. But in Maryland, low-income households spend 13 cents of every dollar-and in some cases, it can be as high as 42 cents.

NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers,

scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world's natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Bozeman, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org and follow us on Twitter @NRDC.

National Housing Trust creates and preserves affordable homes to provide opportunity, advance racial equity, reduce economic disparities, and strengthen community resilience through practice and policy. Visit us at www.nhtinc.org and follow us on Twitter @NatlHs-

Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) is dedicated to addressing the social determinants

health equity through the creation of healthy, safe, and energy-efficient homes. By delivering a standard of excellence in its work, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing and unjust policies for children, seniors, and families to ensure better health, economic, and social outcomes for lowincome communities of color. As the nation's leading healthy housing organization, GHHI provides evidence-based direct services, policy support, and technical assistance to partners across the country on innovative financing and integrated health, housing, and energy models. Visit us at www.ghhi.org and follow us on Twit-

ter @HealthyHousing

of health and the advancement of racial and

BUSINESS AND FINANCE

Governor Hogan Announces Elimination of Four-Year Degree Requirement for Thousands of State Jobs

Maryland Launches First-in-the-Nation Initiative to Recruit Experienced, Non-Degree Candidates

By SHAREESE CHURCHILL
Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 15, 2022)—Governor Larry Hogan today announced the launch of a multi-pronged, first-in-thenation workforce development initiative to formally eliminate the four-year college degree requirement from thousands of state jobs. Spearheaded by the Maryland Department of Labor and the Maryland Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the state will work with partners to recruit and market these roles to job seekers who are "Skilled Through Alternative Routes" (STARs).

The governor was joined for today's announcement by Secretary Tiffany Robinson of the Maryland Department of Labor and Byron Auguste, the CEO and co-founder of Opportunity@Work, a nonprofit workforce development organization that will work with DBM to specifically identify Maryland "STARs" in the IT, administrative, and customer service sectors.

"Through these efforts we are launching today, we are ensuring that qualified, non-degree candidates are regularly being considered for these career-changing opportunities," said Governor Hogan. "This is exactly the kind of bold, bipartisan solution we need to continue leading the nation by giving even more Marylanders the opportunities they need to be successful."

The State of Maryland employs more than 38,000 individuals and DBM estimates that more than half of those jobs can substitute relevant experience, training, and/or community college education for a four-year degree. There are more than 300 currently open state government jobs that no longer require a four-year degree, all of which are now listed on "Stellarworx," Opportunity@Work's innovative STARs talent marketplace.

STARs are age 25 or older, active in the labor force, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and have developed their skills through alternative routes such as community college, apprenticeships, military service, boot camps, and most commonly, on-the-job. Opportunity@Work estimates that there are currently

more than 70 million STARs in the United States.

"There are over 1 million Marylanders who do not have bachelor's degrees, but do have skills for jobs that are in demand by both the State of Maryland and other employers," said Auguste. "These Maryland workers are STARs —Skilled Through Alternative Routes—such as community college, military service, workforce training, on-the-job learning and more. By launching this initiative and sourcing STARs talent on Stellarworx, Governor Hogan and his administration are making clear that Maryland values all the skills of its diverse workforce. This will enable more Marylanders to work, learn and earn to their fullest potential and is a promising model for other states and employers to fol-

Of the 2,869,000 workers in Maryland today, more than 1.3 million, or 47%, are considered STARs. Nationally, 61% of Black workers, 55% of Hispanic workers, 66% of rural workers of all races, and 61% of veterans are STARs.

Two Years Into the Pandemic, Underbanked Small Businesses Still Struggling to Build Back

Even as most federal relief programs have closed, many small businesses are still feeling the economic effects of the pandemic—with underbanked communities being hit the hardest. The Southern Opportunity and Resilience Fund is helping reverse this trend by providing low-cost funding and support to small businesses.

By PRESS OFFICER SOAR Fund

(March 15, 2022)—After two years of retooling and resilience, small businesses still face a difficult recovery, with nearly 80% of small businesses reporting continued negative effects and 63% reporting a reduction in revenue compared to 2019. Minority-owned businesses have been hit the hardest, with Black-, Asian-, and Latino-owned businesses being significantly more likely to report being in "fair or poor" financial conditions compared to white-owned businesses.

At the same time, federal relief programs like the Paycheck Protection Program and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program have closed. This leaves small businesses—particularly those in underbanked communities—struggling to find affordable capital.

The Southern Opportunity and Resilience (SOAR) Fund, created by community lenders, is designed specifically as a long-term resource to combat this trend through low-interest loans and free business support for the smallest of small businesses across the South. To date, the SOAR program has deployed nearly \$23 million to more than 470 businesses and currently has \$40 million still available.

"The SOAR Fund isn't a stopgap relief program. It is a long-term investment in the South's future to help build an economic recovery that is equitable, broad, and driven by the region's entrepreneurs," said Chris Caines, Senior Impact Manager at Community Reinvestment Fund, USA, which is hosting the Fund's online platform. "Community development financial institutions, or CDFIs, have a proven track record of providing trustworthy capital to underbanked small businesses. The SOAR Fund enables them to expand their scale and make a lasting, structural change in who has access to small business funding."

Long-standing inequities in small business lending often mean the small businesses most in need of financing are unable to access the funds they need to thrive and grow. Even before the pandemic, minority-owned small businesses were routinely denied funding at higher rates than their white-owned peers. The smallest of small businesses also face barriers to accessing funding because traditional financial institutions often do not make small-dollar loans.

Building an equitable economic recovery requires filling these gaps, which is exactly what the SOAR Fund is doing. Of funds distributed to date, 78% of loans have gone to business owners who self-identify as a woman or a person of color, with 52% going to Black-owned businesses. Nearly 90% of the loans went to businesses with 10 or fewer full-time equivalent employees, and 82% of recipients have annual revenues less than \$500,000.

For many small businesses, even a modest loan can go a long way—not only helping to cover necessities like rent and payroll, but also opening doors to investments that lead to growth and job creation.

Calvert Impact Capital is arranging and LISC Fund Management is managing the Fund. Community Reinvestment Fund, USA is the technology service provider for the program.

The SOAR Fund offers lowinterest loans and free support to businesses and nonprofits with 50 or fewer full-time equivalent employees in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. Businesses can apply online and be matched to one of 12 participating community lenders in less than five minutes at www.thesoarfund.org.

Social Security Matters

Ask Rusty:

Please Help Us With Social Security Planning

By RUSSELL GLOOR, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: Would you please advise on my wife and my Social Security planning? I'm 69 & 2 months, my wife is 66 & 2 months, so we both hit full retirement age. We both plan on starting to take SS next month. My benefit would be about \$3,300 per month, and my wife's benefit would be about \$1,900 per month. Spousal benefits confuse me. Should I start Social Security now so my wife can get a spousal benefit from me? Is that even possible? Or is it better for each of us to get our own? *Signed: Uncertain*

Dear Uncertain: From what you've shared, it doesn't appear that your wife will be entitled to a spousal benefit because her own benefit at her full retirement age (FRA) is more than half of your FRA benefit amount. If your age 69 benefit is about \$3300 then your FRA (age 66) benefit amount was about \$2660). Half of your FRA amount (\$1330) is less than your wife's FRA amount (\$1900), so no spousal benefit will be available to your wife.

In your specific circumstance, both you and your wife should consider your individual objectives in deciding when to claim Social Security. If you plan to claim next month at age 69, you will get a benefit which has increased by about 26% due to the Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) you've earned since you reached your FRA of 66. Claiming at her FRA, your wife will get the full SS retirement benefit she has earned from a lifetime of working.

Although your current strategy is a good one, because you were born before 1954 and haven't yet filed you have another option. If your wife claims her SS first, you will be eligible to file a "Restricted Application for Spousal Benefits Only." You could use the restricted application to collect a spouse benefit from your wife (half of her FRA benefit amount) while allowing your personal benefit to grow for another 9 months to maximum at age 70.

If financially feasible and your longevity suggests, both you and your wife might consider waiting even longer to get a higher benefit, but that is a personal choice which you each need to make. Claiming now at age 69 will reduce your payment by about 6% from your age 70 maxi-

mum. Since your wife isn't eligible for a spouse benefit but has reached her FRA, she might also consider delaying a bit longer if her financial needs and her estimated longevity suggest that is wise. Like you, she can delay claiming until she is 70 when her benefit would reach its maximum (about 30% more than it is now).

If you'd like to get a personal estimate of your life expectancy, I suggest using this link: https://socialsecurityreport.org/tools/life-expectancy-calculator/. The reason life expectancy is important is this: if you live at least to "average" life expectancy, you'll collect more in cumulative lifetime benefits by waiting longer and maximizing your SS benefit. According to Social Security, "average" life expectancy is about 84 for a man and 87 for a woman in good health in their 60s. But using the tool above to estimate your personal longevity should further assist with making your claiming decision.

The 2.4 million member Association of Mature American Citizens [AMAC] www.amac.us is a vibrant, vital senior advocacy organization that takes its marching orders from its members. AMAC Action is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing the membership in our nation's capital and in local Congressional Districts throughout the country. And the AMAC Foundation (www.AmacFoundation.org) is the Association's non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting and educating America's Seniors. Together, we act and speak on the Association members' behalf, protecting their interests and offering a practical insight on how to best solve the problems they face today. Live long and make a difference by joining us today at www.amac.us/join-amac.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website (amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org.



OUT on the TOWN

Governor Hogan Proclaims 2022 as "The Year of Harriet Tubman" in Maryland

Commemorates 200th Anniversary of Harriet Tubman's Birth, Fifth Anniversary of Opening of Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center

By SHAREESE CHURCHILL

Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (March 12, 2022)— Governor Larry Hogan today officially proclaimed 2022 as "The Year of Harriet Tubman" in Maryland as the state celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of the nation's most renowned freedom fighter. The governor announced the designation at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center in Church Creek as the kick-off to a full weekend of 200th birthday events celebrating the most famous conductor of the Underground Railroad.

"I want to encourage all Marylanders to take time this year to come here to visit Dorchester County, to travel the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway, to visit the countless immersive exhibits, which cover every period of Harriet Tubman's life from slavery to freedom, or to come see the amazing artifacts from the Ben Ross cabin site, which was confirmed just last fall to have been the home of Harriet Tubman's father," said Governor Hogan. "It is truly inspiring to think about how we can walk along the same path she did, where she forged her indelible legacy of freedom."

This weekend also marks the fifth anniversary of the opening of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center, which is co-managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Park Service, and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park. Since opening in 2017, the park has welcomed more than 300,000 guests from nearly 70 countries—despite a lengthy closure and limited capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among those visitors, more than 18,000 youngsters have been sworn in as Harriet Tubman State Park Junior Rangers, following activities that teach about Harriet Tubman's life and legacy, and the importance of the Underground Railroad.

"This bicentennial year is a perfect time for people to experience Harriet Tubman's life and legacy by touring the byway and visiting our 17-acre state park and visitors center," said Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. "Throughout 'The Year of Harriet Tubman,' the park will offer programs and immersive experiences about Harriet Tubman's life, surrounded by the landscape that looks much like it did during her time."

As the birthplace of Harriet Tubman, Maryland is uniquely positioned to celebrate her lifelong achievements and provide visitors and residents places to learn more about Harriet Tubman, her life, and the Underground Railroad. Her stories are told at destinations across Maryland through attractions, special events, curated exhibits, and driving

"Maryland's Eastern Shore was named in two prestigious travel magazines—National Geographic World Best Places to Travel in 2022 and Fodor's Best Places of 2022—because of our history, heritage, and connection with Harriet Tubman," said Secretary Mike Gill of the Maryland Department of Commerce. "I personally encourage everyone to celebrate Tubman's extraordinary life by traveling in her footsteps, especially along the Tubman Byway."

The 125-mile-long Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad All-American Road Scenic Byway, which traverses a living landand-waterscape similar to what Tubman

would have experienced in her lifetime, serves as the perfect vehicle for exploration. In addition to sites along the byway, Maryland attractions with permanent exhibits on Harriet Tubman include:

- Banneker-Douglass Museum, Annapolis
- Great Blacks in Wax Museum, Baltimore City
- Harriet Tubman Museum & Education Center, Cambridge
- Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History, Baltimore City

Following the kick-off Tubman 200th Birthday Celebration Weekend, planned Year of Harriet Tubman events, exhibits, and activities include:

• Exhibit of numerous artifacts from Tubman's life—many in public for the first time—including the receipt from a midwife for Tubman's birth, Tubman's "runaway" advertisement, and items recovered from the site of her father

Ben Ross' cabin. (March 1-31, 2022 at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center, Church Creek)

- "Birding on the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway" Join Harriet Tubman Tours and Delmarva Birding Weekends for our guided, self-driven tour. Learn about the life and times of the famed freedom seeker and human rights activist known as "The Moses of Her People," and experience some of the best birding and Bald Eagle watching on America's Eastern Seaboard. (April 9, 2022 and various dates through October)
- Not What You Think, an a cappella ensemble dedicated to social justice is joining the ongoing celebration of Harriet Tubman's 200th birthday with a musical performance. (April 22, 2022 at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center,

Church Creek)

Harriet Tubman

Bicentennial

March 26 • 2-4pm

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celebration

Harriet Tubman throughout

2022, marking 200 years

since her birth in Dorch-

ester County on Mary-

land's Eastern Shore. Peo-

ple from far and wide will

be sharing and reflecting

Join the Maryland Com-

on her remarkable story.

mission on African Ameri-

can History and Culture

and Banneker-Douglass

Museum as we present the

"Harriet Tubman Women

of Courage and Maryland

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the life and legacy of Har-

https://bdmuseum.

maryland.gov/events/

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- "We Walk with Harriet History Walks"— Narrated history tours in Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot counties which include walking, sailing, and horse and buggy rides. (Thursday-Saturday during the last weekend of every month April-October, led by Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center)
- "Beacon of Hope," a new 12-foot bronze sculpture of Harriet Tubman, created by

Wesley Wofford Sculpture Studio, will be dedicated at the Dorchester County Courthouse—a former site of slave auctions and a daring escape to freedom engineered by Tubman in the mid-1800s. The ceremony will happen during the annual Day of Resilience event. (September 10, 2022, Dorchester County Courthouse, Cambridge)

- · "Emancipation Celebration" During Maryland's International Underground Railroad Month, celebrate Harriet Tubman's decision to self-liberate with programs and activities throughout the day. (Sept. 18, 2022 at the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center, Church Creek)
- "Lead On, Harriet!" Interactive history program for ages 9 and up. Take a ride on the Underground Railroad with the famous Maryland-born conductor. (Oct. 15 and Dec. 3, 2022, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., at Chesapeake Children's Museum, Annapolis)

· PBS will premiere "Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom," a documentary produced by

Maryland Public Television (MPT), directed by Stanley Tucker and narrated by Oscar®-Nominated and Emmy® Award-Winning Actor Alfre Woodard. (Oct. 4, 2022)

"Bike the UGRR: Harriet's Journey Home" Join in a bicycling event inspired by Harriet Tubman and her daring journeys to freedom. Choose from a 25-mile or 43mile ride along and around the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway on Maryland's Eastern Shore (Oct. 15, 2022)

To further immerse yourself in the Tubman Byway, download the audio guide complete with new AR/VR experiences or request a free copy of the byway map and guide. Share your travel highlights on social media using the hashtag #MDinFocus and #Tubman200. For even more inspiration on planning your Harriet Tubman journey in Maryland, visit www.visitmaryland.org.

National Cherry Blossom Festival Ushers in 2022 Festival Season and First Day of Spring With Spectacular **Opening Ceremony Celebration**

Co-presented with The Japan Foundation, the Festival's annual kick-off celebration showcased Japanese performing arts and culture; marked 110th anniversary of the gift of trees

By PRESS OFFICER

National Cherry Blossom Festival

Washington (March 20, 2022)—Today, the National Cherry Blossom Festival's signature Opening Ceremony returned in traditional fashion to the historic Warner Theatre for the first time since 2019. Co-presented with the Japan Foundation, this artistic celebration also commemorated the 110 years of the 1912 gift of trees from Tokyo to Washington, D.C. with an annual tribute to the longstanding friendship between Japan and the U.S.

Special guests in attendance included Japanese Ambassador Koji Tomita; Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Secretary of the District of Columbia Kimberly Bassett, along with Ward 2 D.C. Councilmember Brooke Pinto. Additionally, 2022 Festival Leadership Circle sponsors Events DC President Greg O'Dell and Patrick Phillippi, head of community engagement for Amazon HQ2, were in attendance. There was a special video message from Jeff Reinbold, Superintendent of the National Mall and Memorial Parks.

First Lady of the United States and Honorary Chair of the National Cherry Blossom Festival, Dr. Jill Biden said in pre-recorded video remarks during the event, "Since receiving them more than a century ago, Japan's cherry trees have become so much more than a gift of diplomacy. Like the "yuj ou"—or friendship—they represent, the roots of the cherry blossom trees have grown deep, and today, they are a part of who we are, adding to the unique and beautiful character of our capital. Today's ceremony is just the beginning of this Festival and I hope you will continue to explore all that spring in [Washington, D.C.] has to offer."

Co-hosted by 7News On Your Side (WJLA-TV) Stormwatch7 Meteorologist Veronica Johnson and actor and comedian Yoshi Amao, the Opening Ceremony celebration featured spirited traditional and contemporary performances from acclaimed artists with ties to Japan and the U.S., including Samurai sword performers KAMUI, world-renowned musicians Keisho Ohno

(Shamisen player) and Wadaiko drummer Toshihiro Yuta, internationally known musical group MINYO CRUSADERS and Washington D.C.'s Unstoppables Steppers. DJ Heat of the NBA Wizards and WNBA Mystics provided musical interludes throughout the evening.

"The National Cherry Blossom Festival traces its history back to an act of friendship. That gift has blossomed into the amazing celebration that we are witnessing today," said Ambassador Tomita.

The Opening Ceremony was co-presented with The Japan Foundation and supported in part by the JCAW Foundation, Inc., Toyota North America, Inc., the Japan National Tourism Organization, and Warner Theatre. Other contributors include Daiichi Sankyo, MUFG Bank, Ltd., and National Press Club, and the Washington Post is a media partner.

For more information about the 2022 Festival, visit nationalcherryblossom festival.org/RediscoverSpring and follow the Festival's social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

Upcoming Events:

Opal Lee, the 'grandmother of Juneteenth,' to join Virginia Tech community in conversation

By PRESS OFFICER **Virginia Tech Media Relations**

BLACKSBURG, Va. (March 14, 2022)—"A Conversation with Ms. Opal Lee: the Grandmother of Juneteenth" will be held at 3 p.m. March 27 at Burruss Hall (800 Drillfield Drive) in Blacksand also will livestreamed via YouTube https://youtu.be/aLNL7outSBA. This event is free and open to the public and will be part of Virginia Tech's 1872 Forward celebration weekend.

Lee, often referred to as the "grandmother of Juneteenth," is a retired teacher, counselor, and social justice activist in the movement to make Juneteenth a federally recognized holiday. On June 17, 2021, President Biden signed Senate bill 475, making Juneteenth the 11th federal holiday. Author of Juneteenth: A Children's Story, Lee has been nominated for the 2022 Nobel Peace

During Virginia Tech's event, Lee will share her wisdom about



Opal Lee

advocating for equality as an activist and leader.

"I am honored to bring Ms. Opal Lee to Virginia Tech during Women's History Month," said Belay Reddick of S & B Company. "The students are going to learn so much from this American treasure and iconic figure."

The event is sponsored by the Elizabeth A. "Betsy" Flanagan Women in Leadership and Philanthropy Endowed Lecture Fund, Virginia Tech Student Affairs, I WILL Council, and VT Engage: The Center for Leadership and Service Learning.

Register now for "The Woods in Your Backyard" online course

Monday, March 28, 2021 to June 6, 2022

By PAMELA K THOMAS

University of Maryland Extension

Registration is now open for the spring 2022 session of "The Woods in Your Backyard" online course. Our self-directed, noncredit course runs 10 weeks from March 28 to June 6, 2022. The course will help landowners convert lawn to natural areas and enhance stewardship of existing natural areas. The course provides strategies to landowners of small parcels of land (1–10 acres) that improve the stewardship of their property for personal enjoyment and environmental quality. It uses a hands-on learning approach to help participants develop and implement a plan for their property. Activities include how to map habitat areas, understand basic ecological principles about woodland and wildlife, choose and implement a few habitat management projects, and how to set a timetable and record your progress. Online discussion groups will allow participants to interact with others tak-

ing the course. A certificate of completion is awarded when all assignments are completed.

The course costs \$95.00 per person, which includes the 108page "Woods in Your Backyard" guide, workbook, and a tree identification guide. The course is limited to 25 participants, so sign up now! Registration closes March 28, 2022 or when filled. Registration is through Eventbrite; go to https://spring22.eventbrite.com.

For more information, go to https://go.umd.edu/ WIYB-Spring_2022, or contact course coordinator Andrew Kling, University of Maryland Extension, akling1@umd.edu, 301-432-2767, extension 307.

The University of Maryland Extension programs are open to any person and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, genetic information, political affiliation, and gender identity or expression.

Marietta House Museum Presents: The Giving Voice Initiative: Listening to the Historical Enslaved at Marietta

By STACEY HAWKINS Marietta House Museum

Thursday, April 7, 4–6 p.m., Marietta House Museum's research team will present the longawaited stories of the enslaved families and individuals who labored at Marietta in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The public is invited to attend this event in-person at Marietta or livestreamed on Microsoft Teams.

After a year-long deep dive into historical records, researchers Maddy McCoy and Chris Milko of Slavery Inventory Database, joined by Marietta's historian and assistant curator Katherine Brodt will share an overview of their findings about the historical enslaved community. Hear about the marriages, births, escapes, manumissions, and travails that defined the lives of the Brown, Duckett, Jackson, and Butler families. The newly revealed research helps to document the fortitude and per-

severance of these families to secure their personhood and family ties. In- person and virtual guests will be invited to participate in a discussion led by discussants Marietta House Museum director Julie Rose, and M-NCPPC Black History Program historian Artura Jackson with the researchers.

Guests will also be the first to see Marietta's new orientation film, "Giving Voice at Marietta" which will screen at the end of the program followed by a Marietta-based poem by Marcia

The program is Free, however registration is required to receive the link for online, and registration is required for those attending on-site. Please email Stacey.hawkins@pgparks.com or call 301-464-5291.

Marietta is located at 5626 Bell Station Road, Glenn Dale, MD 20769 and is a property of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

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and March, U.S. gas prices rose by 13%, according to an analysis of data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Between March 7 and March 14 prices shot up again by another 5%, the agency's data

Earlier [last] week, consumer advocates and tax experts sounded off on whether the gas tax holiday policy would lead to decreased fuel

Howard Gleckman, senior fellow at the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center at the Urban Institute, said consumers might not be able to tell if they are seeing the benefit of the tax holiday as initial price drops drive up demand, further increasing costs.

It will not be possible to tell if gas stations are pocketing some of the tax break, Gleckman said in an interview with Capital News Service, as prices continue to change quickly.



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