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Aiding and Abetting Bad Behavior

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Governor

The Chesapeake Bay is not only an essential natural resource for Maryland, but also for the United States. It is a recognized national treasure. Here in our great State, we've taken on this moral imperative by making a commitment to restore the Bay and ensure that it's an economically and ecologically viable resource for our children and our grandchildren. We have made these commitments in partnership with the other jurisdictions of the Bay's watershed.

Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia and the federal government are, together, committed to restoring and protecting our nation's largest estuary.

Despite the pressures that come with population growth and the challenges of economic crises, we have made great progress in conserving thousands of acres of land, reducing levels of harmful nutrient pollution, providing farmers with millions of dollars to implement water quality protection practices. But we still have more work to do.

Now, our years of hard work and partnership efforts are being challenged and threatened by other states objecting to what we have done and plan to do to preserve and protect the Chesapeake Bay.

Recently, the Attorneys General of twenty-one states sued to stop the U.S. Environmental

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CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY Pete Souza
President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama acknowledge the crowd after the President spoke at Coral Reef Senior High School, Fla., March 7, 2014.

World-Class Education for Every Student in USA

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the White House

Today, President Obama and the First Lady visited Coral Reef High School in Miami to discuss the President's plan to equip all Americans with the education they need to compete in the 21st century economy.

"By working hard every single day, every single night, you are making the best investment there is in your future," President Obama told the students. "And we want to make sure you've got everything, all the tools you need to succeed."

President Obama talked about one tool that's helping give more students the opportunity to afford, attend, and graduate from college: the Free Application for Student Aid or FAFSA.

It is a simple form. It used to be complicated; we made it simple. It doesn't

cost anything -- that's why the word "free" is right there in the name. It does not take a long time to fill out. Once you do, you're putting yourself in the running for all kinds of financial support for college -- scholarships, grants, loans, work-study jobs.

Over the last five years, the Obama administration has been working to make college more affordable for more students. And today, more young people are earning college degrees than ever before. But we have to do more, President Obama said.

"Unfortunately, there are still a lot of young people all across the country who say the cost of college is holding them back," he said. "Some of you may have sat around the kitchen table with your parents wondering about whether you'll be able to afford it."

"FAFSA is by far the easiest way to answer that question," President Obama told the students at Coral Reef.

Last year, almost half of high school graduates in Florida didn't fill out a FAFSA. Together, they left a combined \$100 million on the table that could have helped pay for college.

So today, President Obama issued a challenge to every high school student in America: Fill out the FAFSA, even if you think you might not qualify for financial aid.

"We're making it easier that ever," President Obama said. The form is now available online, and shorter than earlier versions – it takes about half an hour to fill out.

And as of today, school administrators can confidentially find out which students have already filled out their FAFSA, and which students haven't and might need help completing their forms. And anyone can go online and find out the number of students who have filled out the form at each high school – setting the stage for a new kind of rivalry.

Medical Officials Call for Birth Injury Fund

By Megan Brockett
Capital News Service

BALTIMORE – Warning of a looming crisis in health care access for pregnant women in Maryland, some medical officials are urging lawmakers to consider a "no-fault birth injury fund" that would help alleviate mounting pressure placed on hospitals and birthing centers by multimillion-dollar malpractice lawsuits.

The measure would allow families of babies who suffer neurological injuries during birth to sidestep the lawsuit process and seek compensation directly from a statewide fund paid for by hospitals, doctors and malpractice insurers.

Advocates say the existence of such a fund would ensure that victims receive the care their injuries demand while preventing exorbitant lawsuit awards that threaten to sink obstetrics units and reduce statewide access to maternity health care.

"More babies who suffer birth injuries will get the lifetime care they need because acceptance into the program is based on the injury, not the outcome of a lawsuit," Sen. Catherine Pugh, D-Baltimore, said during a recent Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee hearing.

Pugh, who initially called for the establishment of a birth injury fund, is now sponsoring a measure that would set up a task force to study the issue first instead. Delegate Dan Morhaim, D-Baltimore County, a physi-

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Minimum Wage Measure Sparks Heated Debate

By MEGAN BROCKETT
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS – Several Republican lawmakers on the House floor Wednesday voiced persisting opposition to Gov. Martin O'Malley's measure to raise the Maryland minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, proposing a slew of changes to the bill that would chip away at many of its provisions.

Lawmakers offered up more than a dozen amendments that focused mostly on creating broader exemptions for small businesses or expanding protections for employers with seasonal workers. None of the amendments passed during Wednesday's heated debate. The House is scheduled to vote on the wage increase Friday.

Earlier this week, the House Economic Matters Committee voted to amend the legislation, postponing the raise's implementation for six months

and eliminating a provision that would have indexed the minimum wage to rise automatically with inflation.

The committee also altered the bill to exempt seasonal amusement parks and recreational establishments, like swimming pools, from having to pay the proposed higher rate. Committee chairman Delegate Dereck Davis, D-Prince George's, said these types of seasonal businesses employ mostly young people, and the exemption helps to keep job opportunities for that population intact.

But several House Republicans said the exemption favors Six Flags in Prince George's County and fails to offer adequate protection to smaller-scale, year-round amusement parks like Adventure Park USA in Frederick County.

Critics said an increase would hurt these smaller amusement parks, which

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O'Malley Meets With Business Owners Who Back Minimum Wage Increase

By MEGAN BROCKETT
Capital News Service

UPPER MARLBORO — A day after House Republicans unsuccessfully pushed to amend Gov. Martin O'Malley's minimum wage bill to provide greater protections for businesses, O'Malley touted the plan Thursday before a group of business owners who support an increase of the state's minimum wage.

O'Malley's proposal, which would gradually raise the base rate of pay for most workers to \$10.10 an hour, is expected to go before members of the House for a vote on Friday.

Sitting around a conference table at Linemark printers, O'Malley and about a dozen business people from across the state discussed how a hike would benefit companies of all sizes by boosting the economy and reducing turnover costs for companies.

"From time to time, we raise the minimum wage to keep pace



PHOTO BY MEGAN BROCKETT
Gov. Martin O'Malley (right) talks with Linemark President Steve Bearden (left) and Vice President David Ashton during a tour of the printing plant.

with inflation for the people who work at minimum wage," O'Malley said. "But also, as importantly, it's to make our economy grow. Because the more a worker earns, the better able they are to be good cus-

tomers for business. ... When people earn more, businesses have more customers."

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INSIDE

Report Shows some improvements in Chesapeake Bay Restoration

The New Insights report was conducted by the Chesapeake Bay Program and looked at more than 40 case studies in the Chesapeake bay watershed examining whether practices aimed at reducing nutrients in the water worked.

Community, Page A3

Obama Rallies Help for Young Males of Color

Framing the initiative as both a moral and economic imperative, President Obama has done what Congress has failed to do over the past five years -- convene a diverse and bipartisan coalition of Americans committed to targeted help for communities and populations most in need.

Commentary, Page A4

O'Malley Announces Maryland Hits Record for 2013 Exports

"The continued increase in Maryland exports, along with the Port of Baltimore hitting record cargo levels and BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport growing its international passenger traffic, demonstrates that Maryland remains a fierce global competitor.

Business, Page A5

MovieReview: "Cheap Thrills"

An out of work family man and his friend are roped into a series of innocent dares in exchange for money by a couple they meet in a bar. As the evening progresses the couples twisted sense of humor pushes just how far the two friend are willing to go for money and cheap thrills.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

How is it that global warming could cause an increase in health problems and disease epidemics?

— Jim Merrill,
Provo, UT

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Air Force wife and seasoned traveler, Connie Robbins, dies

Constance W. Robbins, of Montgomery Village, who lived in three different homes in Morningside and Skyline, died March 10. She was 90.

She grew up in Fort Ashby, a little town 15 miles from Cumberland, Md., and went to school in Ridgeley, W.V. She skipped a year in high school and graduated as valedictorian when she was 16.

She married an Air Force man, Frank B. Robbins Jr., about 1939, and with him traveled the country and beyond—to Sebring and Miami, Fla.; Oakland and Mountain Lake Park, Md.; Birmingham, Ala.; Morgantown and Ft. Ashby W.V., Charlottesville and Alexandria, Va.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; and Ruislip, England (outside of London), all before moving to Morningside in the mid 1950s. Connie became an excellent packer for moving.

They settled on Larkspur Road, in Morningside, to be near Andrews. In the '60s they moved to Reamy Drive and in 1963 to Ridgecrest Drive, just behind Skyline Restaurant. Two of Connie's best friends in Skyline were Betty Cummings and Chris Shipley.

She was mostly a homemaker, but she worked at the Post Office in Washington for several years and later did telephone work from home. In the mid '90s she moved to Gaithersburg to be near family.

Connie's husband of 40 years, Frank Robbins, died in 1979. Survivors include sons Robert A. and Frank W. "Bill" Robbins, and daughter Lucille "Lucy" Carroll; brother C. Eugene Welch; three grandchildren and a great-grandson. Burial will be at Arlington Cemetery.

Thank you to Bill Robbins who emailed me this sad news about his mom. He now lives in Harpers Ferry, W.V.

Neighbors

Viral Padiya, of Upper Marlboro, is a runner-up in a photography contest sponsored by AAA World magazine. His entry is an amazing shot taken at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve in Colorado. A landscape photographer for 20 years, he has won Epson International Pano awards and View-Bug photo contests.

Linda Cullinan, principal of St. Philip the Apostle School in Camp Springs, is retiring after 40 years in Catholic education and 17 years as principal at St. Philip's. I worked with her when I was librarian there, and I will miss her!

Ruth Sanford told me her Allies Road home in Morningside cost \$4,500 when she bought it back in 1947. Her monthly payment was \$47.19.

My daughter Kathleen Shearer and her son Richard flew home to West Chester, Ohio, last Thursday after five fun days here. Among our activities was a trip to the Newseum in Washington, where we visited 15 galleries, 15 theaters and two broadcast studios. I highly recommend it.

Coming up

Health Fair, March 22 and 29, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at two locations: Suitland Community Center, 5600 Regency Lane and Prince George's County Government, 4235 28th Ave., Temple Hills. Also, there'll be Health Insurance enrollment from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For information, call Dee Dee Bass, 301-909-7073, or Dellia Hawthorne Williams, 301-883-7835.

Primary Election Day is June 24, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Registration deadline is June 3. Early voting for the Primary will be June 12-19. The General Election will be held November 4.

The Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House Museum, in Waldorf, begins its new season on March 29. It will be open to the public Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. until November; closed Easter Sunday. For information or to schedule tours, call Danny Fluhart, 301-274-9358.

Changing landscape

Easter Auto Supply has moved from Indian Head Highway in Oxon Hill to 8055 Penn Randall Place, across from Murry's Steaks and behind the Forestville Fire Department. Hours are 8 to 5:30 p.m. weekdays and 8 to 3 p.m. Saturdays. Ask for John McHale. If you mention Mary McHale's column, he'll give you an extra discount.

The National Park Service plans to move the Black Women's History from the carriage house at Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site in Washington to the Park Service's Museum Resource Center in Landover. This move is not without controversy.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Russ Kyser, Matthew Curcio Bobbitt and Dejuh Bedewi, March 21; Ruth Anthony, my great-grandson Jack McHale and Hudson Murphy Glaubitz, March 23; Lewis Woods, Ken Kyser and Jay Rollins, March 25; Gina Foster, March 26; and Walter Dimes, March 27.

Happy anniversary to Morraine and Harold Wilson on March 22, and to Terry and Gina Foster, March 26.

urdays, 9:00 AM-4:30PM: Sundays, 11:30 AM-4:30 PM. Come and view year-round livestock displays that include ducks, goats, rabbits, and many more. You can walk through the interpretive gardens and stop by the Gift Shop.

KIDS FUN FAIR & ZOO

Enjoy fun for the whole family with games, food, animals, and indoor comfort on April 5, 2014 to April 6, 2014 at 10:00 AM. The Venue is Show Place Arena located at 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772. Saturday show times 10:00 AM-7:00 PM and Sunday show times 10:00 AM-6:00 PM. Cost is \$0-\$14, \$10 in advance (Limited Time Only), \$14 at the door. Children are free with a Free Child Ticket in Hand. You can buy your tickets online at: www.kidsfunfair.com.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Seven PGCPSS students excel in regional skills USA competition. Congratulations to Trayvon

Washington, Jazmine Tinsley, Maria Valasquez, Devon Long, Chris Salmeron, Brittany Johnson and Deandre Smith who competed in the Annual Maryland Skills USA Regional Competition early February. These students will now have the opportunity to compete in the state competition in April. This year's competition theme is Skills USA: Champions at Work, Education and Skilled to lead America. These students placed in the competition have demonstrated mastery in career and technical skills that prepare them for the future.

NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

Congratulations to Jordan Jackson son of Mr. and Mrs. Ron Jackson who resides in Upper Marlboro, Maryland and Morgan Eugene daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Eugene who resides in Brandywine, Maryland. These two students were inducted into the 8th Annual National Junior Honor Society Induction Program on February 26, 2014 at the Arundel Bay Christian Academy in Lothian, Maryland.

Neighborhood Events

Edwards Continues "2014 HBCU STEM Tour"



Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards

Washington, DC — Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) continued her "2014 HBCU STEM Tour" yesterday with a visit to Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland. During Congresswoman Edwards' visit, she met with President Dr. Mickey L. Burnim, students, and faculty. She also toured the Education Innovation Initiative, the Virtual Reality Program, and the Mobile Apps Research program in the Computer Science Building along with the Protein Crystallography and Bioinformatics Program, the Genomics and Biotechnology Program, and the Medicinal Chemistry Program in the George Crawford Science Building.

As a senior member of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Congresswoman Edwards is visiting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to tour their facilities and gain additional insight on how best to engage women and minorities in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

Congresswoman Edwards: "We must promote the engagement of women and minorities in STEM fields so that they may compete and succeed in our 21st Century, global economy. I was encouraged by the strong work of President Burnim and Bowie State University, especially the university's engagement of young people and their cutting edge anti-malarial and small molecules research. With the introduction this week of the America Competes Act of 2014, I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Science, Space, and Technology Committee to advance legislation that invests in STEM education, promotes preparing our young people for careers in the sciences, and strengthens America's prosperity through technological innovation."

Bowie State University President, Dr. Mickey L. Burnim: "I was pleased to welcome Congresswoman Edwards to Bowie State University and to share our new signature program, the Education Innovation Initiative (EI2), aimed at increasing hands-on experiences for our students to tackle real-world problems with corporate and government partners in the STEM disciplines and also opening a pipeline, beginning in kindergarten, to get more young minorities excited about careers in the sciences. Bowie State is committed to producing many more highly qualified graduates needed to help maintain America's national security and technological competitiveness in a changing world. I applaud Congresswoman Edwards for her continuing efforts to advance legislation to enhance STEM education."

Edwards Reintroduces S.O.S Act to Combat Nationwide Overdose Epidemic

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-4) reintroduced the Stop Overdose Stat (S.O.S.) Act today with 18

drugs, on how to recognize the signs of an overdose, seek emergency medical help, and administer naloxone and other first aid. Naloxone is a medication that quickly reverses an overdose from heroin and opioid pain medications. The use of naloxone as an overdose reversal medication has recently been profiled in USA Today, The Washington Post, CNN and other media outlets.

Despite recognition among federal lawmakers and health authorities that overdose prevention programs are highly effective at saving lives at low-cost to taxpayers, few federal dollars are dedicated to supporting these critical programs. A study funded by the CDC and released last year found that expanding access to naloxone and overdose prevention activities are effective at reducing deaths from opioid overdoses. A CDC report issued in 2012 credits overdose prevention programs with saving more than 10,000 lives since 1996.

The S.O.S. Act is supported by the American Medical Association, Trust for America's Health, Drug Policy Alliance and Harm Reduction Coalition.

Senate Passes Bill To Protect Transgender Rights

ANNAPOLIS - Transgender individuals are one step closer to receiving protection from anti-discrimination laws after a bill passed in the Maryland Senate Tuesday.

The bill, called the "Fairness for all Marylanders Act of 2014," would forbid employers, property renters and public businesses from discriminating against individuals based on gender identity. If signed into law, the measure would require businesses such as restaurants or movie theaters to serve transgender individuals.

"Under the current law, there's no protection for transgender people," Sen. Jamie Raskin, D-Montgomery, one of the bill's sponsors, said.

Before the bill passed 32-15, Sen. Bryan W. Simonaire, R-Anne Arundel, gave some opposition by asking questions about the use of bathrooms in public businesses.

A man who fits the definition to be identified as a woman "can go into the women's restroom, whether there are young children, and there's no provision to stop that," Simonaire said.

"Transgender people have been going to the bathroom a long time," Raskin said in an interview. "When these laws pass, very little changes, because most of them are going to the bathroom that is consistent with their gender identity already."

Simonaire's reservations notwithstanding, no other senators spoke in opposition to the measure.

Raskin was optimistic that the bill will face little opposition in the House, despite what he called "partisan character" and Simonaire's pushback.

"The important parts of this are that people should not be fired because they are transgender, should not be kicked out of housing because they are transgender, and the whole question of bathrooms are really a sideshow," he continued.

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Ruth Turner 301 888 2153

FIGHTING BREAST CANCER IN 2014

Join us for a discussion of the exciting developments in breast cancer prevention and early detection, risk factors for breast cancer and genetic testing, advances in breast cancer surgery held at the Colony South Hotel in Clinton, Maryland on March 27, 2014. The admission is free however you must reserve your seat by calling 1-866-724-2099.

CAMP SPRINGS SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

The Center is serving seniors 60 and older offering a variety of classes, day trips and drop in activities. A nutritionally balanced lunch is offered at the center daily. Limited transportation to and from the Center is provided. Please call the Area Agency on Aging Office at 301-265-8450 for information and to make reservations.

OLD MARYLAND FARM

The Educational Farm located at 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774 is open Tuesdays-Fridays, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM: Sat-

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COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

Don't Forfeit Past Tax Refunds

Does this sound familiar? A few years back your yearly earnings were pretty low so you figured you wouldn't owe any income tax. Thus, when April 15 rolled around the following year you didn't bother filing a tax return, knowing you wouldn't be penalized.



Big mistake.

Even if your income fell below the threshold at which you'd owe anything, chances are taxes were deducted from your paycheck throughout the year. (Check your year-end W-2 form). If so, you probably left a sizeable tax refund on the table.

And you wouldn't be alone. The IRS estimates that each year close to a million people don't bother filing federal tax returns, thereby forfeiting around \$1 billion in refunds they were due — refunds that average several hundred dollars apiece.

Here's the good news: The IRS generally gives you a three-year window to go back and file a past year's tax return if you want to claim an unpaid refund. For example, to collect a refund for 2010 you have until April 15, 2014, to file a 2010 return. After that, the money becomes the property of the U.S. Treasury.

You can order prior year tax forms at www.irs.gov or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676). If you're missing any supplementary paperwork (e.g., W-2 or 1099 forms), you'll need to request copies from your employer, bank or other payer. If that doesn't work, file IRS Form 4506-T to request a free transcript showing information from these year-end documents.

Keep in mind that if you file to collect a refund on your 2010 taxes but have not also filed tax returns for 2011 and 2012, the IRS may hold onto the refund until you file those subsequent returns. Also, past refunds will be applied to any amounts you still owe to the IRS or your state tax agency, and may be used to offset unpaid child support or past-due federal debts, such as student loans.

Another good reason to consider going back and filing a previous year's tax return: the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Chances are, if the reason you didn't file a return was because you didn't earn enough to owe taxes, you may have been eligible for the EITC, a "refundable" tax credit for low- to moderate income working taxpayers. ("Refundable" means that if you owe less in tax than your eligible credit, you not only pay no tax but also get a refund for the difference.)

As an example, for tax year 2010, a married couple filing jointly with three or more qualifying children whose adjusted gross income was less than \$48,263 were eligible for an EITC of up to \$5,666. To find out how EITC works and whether you qualify, consult IRS.gov.

For the rest of us, April 15 looms as the deadline for filing our 2013 taxes. At the very least you should request a filing extension by then; otherwise the penalty on any taxes you owe increases dramatically.

Typically you'll have to pay an additional 5 percent of taxes owed for each full or partial month you're late, plus interest, up to a maximum penalty of 25 percent. However, if you file your return or request an extension on time, the penalty drops tenfold to 0.5 percent per month, plus interest.

Bottom line: If you skipped filing a tax return in the last three years, go back and crunch the numbers — you may be pleasantly surprised by a hefty refund.

Report Shows some improvements in Chesapeake Bay Restoration

By LYLE KENDRICK
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Amidst statewide debate about how to fund restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, a report released Thursday shows that many local and national efforts to curb pollution have had a positive effect on the watershed.

The New Insights report was conducted by the Chesapeake Bay Program and looked at more than 40 case studies in the Chesapeake Bay watershed examining whether practices aimed at reducing nutrients in the water worked.

According to the report, wastewater treatment plant improvements, reductions in nitrogen released in the atmosphere and reducing agricultural land runoffs were three of the most effective long-term practices for water quality improvement.

This was the first time the program had looked at that many sites and monitored data from before many pollution controls, or best management practices, were implemented, said Nicholas DiPasquale, Chesapeake Bay Program director.

Some of the data analyzed in the report was from as far back the mid-1980s, said Bill Dennison, an author of the report and vice president for science applications at the University of Maryland Center for Environ-

mental Science.

While some of the information in the study was expected, DiPasquale said the research team did not expect as high a reduction of airborne nitrogen as the report showed.

Some of the reasons for the improvements were regulatory programs aimed at reducing air emissions from power plants, legislation like the Clean Air Act and an increase in fuel-efficient automobiles.

He said the air quality in other states can impact the Chesapeake Bay watershed because west to east winds from states like Ohio and Michigan can affect the nitrogen content of Maryland's air which then can impact the state's waters through rain.

But the report also highlighted efforts by Marylanders using local solutions to clean up the watershed.

The town of Centreville, on the Eastern Shore, used several best management practices, such as stormwater wetland ponds, manure management and using cover crops to reduce winter soil erosion.

The study showed that because the town aggressively implemented many of these practices, there was a significant reduction of phosphorous and nitrogen in two tributaries of the Corsica River.

While the study showed several positive signs for water



PHOTO BY AMANDA SALVUCCI
Ducks gather on the ice in the Chesapeake Bay.

quality improvement around the state, population growth — which causes intensified land use — remains a major challenge, research team members said.

In addition, while many best management practices have short-term results, some, especially those involving groundwater, have a lag time and patience is required in order for the benefits to be realized, said Scott Phillips, Chesapeake Bay coordinator for the United States Geological Survey.

Dennison said the study helps show Marylanders that efforts across the state and the country have led to some water quality improvements.

"We've got demonstrable evidence that shows that we can improve our air and water and

land, and it's going to work, so hang in there," Dennison said.

Phillips said that he thinks that because the study shows a summary of what is working, it could potentially lead to better decision-making regarding bay restoration. It could also lead to the application of effective practices in other parts of the country, such as the Gulf of Mexico.

Research team members said the report will help restoration efforts because it shines a light on what is working.

"We have a good idea of the kinds of practices that need to be implemented but there are some that need to be more effective and we want to try and focus on those," DiPasquale said.

Birth Injury from A1

cian, is sponsoring the same measure in the House.

Medical officials from organizations like Mercy Medical Center and Johns Hopkins Medicine have said that high jury awards in recent birth injury cases have threatened the state of obstetrics units across Maryland.

At a legislative hearing, Dr. Andrew Satin, director of gynecology and obstetrics at Johns Hopkins, warned lawmakers about the "a crisis looming in access to obstetric care."

"Over the last 24 months, juries in Baltimore City and Prince George's County returned verdicts relating to births against hospitals for \$55 million, \$22 million, \$18 million, \$15.6 million and \$9.5 million. The magnitude of these awards have had an immediate effect on the liability climate in Maryland," Satin said.

Susan Kinter, a vice president at the Maryland Medicine Comprehensive Insurance Program, a partner of the University of Maryland Medical System, said that hospitals already facing thin or non-existent operating margins are considering whether it is worth the risk to keep open their obstetrics units, which have high costs and inherently high medical malpractice risk.

Satin and others pointed in warning to the Philadelphia region, where more than 20 hospitals have closed their obstetrics programs.

But opponents deny that any such crisis in women's health care is headed toward Maryland and argue that the large size of recent judgements in birth injury cases is due to the rising cost of health care and what it takes to provide a lifetime's worth of care for a person with a neurological birth injury.

Some added that drawing a comparison to the situation in Philadelphia is dangerous because Pennsylvania has no cap on non-economic damages in medical malpractice cases to limit the amount plaintiffs can

receive. In Maryland, a cap on non-economic damages was set at \$500,000 in 1994 and pegged to rise \$15,000 each year since 2009. It is now \$740,000, according to a legislative analysis.

Many critics of the birth injury fund also disputed the relevance of the malpractice cases cited by Satin and others, pointing out that many of the awards mentioned had been overturned or reduced significantly following the judgements.

But Dr. Cyrus Lawyer, medical director of the metropolitan practice at Mercy's Family Childbirth and Children's Center, said high-cost birth injury cases are using up much of the hospital's insurance.

"If these lawsuits continue, they are putting us in a position [where] we won't have the insurance [to pay for them] because we are self-insured," Lawyer said. "If they continue to use up the money for the insurance, and one department is using all that money, the board of trustees has emphatically stated that we can't let one department, ... OB-GYN, drag the hospital down."

The threat creates a potential crisis in terms of access to quality maternity health care that would disproportionately affect low-income women, according to proponents of the birth injury fund.

In Baltimore, where many low-income residents are without a car, some women would be left facing stark obstacles were Mercy to close the doors of its obstetrics unit.

Dr. Susan Dulkerian, medical director of newborn services at Mercy, said there is rarely a woman today who doesn't visit an obstetrician, usually several times, before delivering a baby. It's a vast improvement from the early part of her career at Mercy in the early 1990s, when fewer women were getting adequate prenatal care, and it's led to better outcomes for babies in Maryland, she said.

But Dulkerian, who supports the creation of a birth injury fund,



PHOTO BY MEGAN BROCKETT
Dr. Susan Dulkerian, medical director of newborn services at Mercy Medical Center, examines a baby in the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

said she worries what will happen if the high-cost lawsuits continue. She thinks it's a "realistic potential" that hospitals will shut down their obstetrics unit as a result of the current malpractice environment, which would lead to less prenatal care and a potential increase in birth injuries.

"Where will these women go to deliver?" Dulkerian said. "These aren't women that have their own vehicles, easy access to other facilities, and that's why their neighborhood facilities are so important to them getting health care. And if these institutions simply can't afford to keep that service open and putting everything else the hospital does at risk, then they unfortunately may have to make that difficult decision."

Even before the addition of the amendment to first convene a task force, both the House and Senate versions of the measure had strong backing from Baltimore area lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans. Of the more than 30 senators and delegates signed on to the legislation as of last week, roughly half represent Baltimore City or Baltimore County, and nine are Republicans.

Advocates argue that low-income residents are also less likely to have the means to engage in a medical malpractice lawsuit, and therefore less likely to receive compensation without a birth injury fund.

Under the current proposal, a birth injury fund in Maryland

would cover brain or spinal cord injuries that cause death or a "permanent and substantial mental and physical disability that results in a permanent need for assistance."

Three states have birth injury funds, including Virginia, and Lawyer said an additional harm caused by the absence of any such policy in Maryland is the loss of the state's medical students to states that offer better protections for doctors.

The OB-GYN unit at Mercy, Lawyer said, has been struggling for the last two years to fill two openings for physicians.

Mary Louise Preis, a member of Mercy's board of trustees since 2008 and a former member of the Maryland House of Delegates, said that she doesn't see the possibility of having to close Mercy's obstetrics unit as an immediate risk. But it is a "fear" held by board members, Preis said, and likely one being taken seriously by hospitals across the state.

"This is not something that can be ignored," she said.

"These things can be compounding, and it's not just Mercy. Many hospitals, all the hospitals that do obstetrics and have birthing units, have faced or will face similar situations," she said. "The question is, 'When do you begin to tackle the solutions?' ... I think Mercy and a few other hospitals feel that it's time to bring it to the public with some options."

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COMMENTARY

Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator for Maryland



Mikulski Continues Fight to Combat Sexual Assault in the Military

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.) today voted to pass new reforms to take on sexual assault in the military. The Senate unanimously voted 100 to 0 to advance the Victims Protection Act of 2014, legislation that builds on the more than 30 reforms recently passed in the National Defense Authorization Act to end military sexual assault. A vote on final passage of that legislation is expected Monday. Senator Mikulski also voted to support the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2013, which failed to pass a procedural hurdle.

"I have worked on this issue for years, and I am tired of lip service and empty promises of zero tolerance policies. Sexual assault in the military and service academies continues to rise," Senator Mikulski said. "The 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included more than 30 reforms addressing sexual assault in the military. However, our work is not done. That is why I support Senator McCaskill and Senator Gillibrand's bills to further reform our military justice system. These two bills take another step towards cracking the code on addressing sexual assault in the military. Our men and women in uniform face enough stresses on the battlefield. We can't allow sexual violence to be another one."

According to the fiscal year (FY) 2012 SAPRO report released by the Defense Department last year, an estimated 26,000 cases of sexual assault or unwanted sexual contact occurred in FY2012, a 37 percent increase from FY2011. Meanwhile, overall rates of reporting dropped from 13.5 percent in 2011 to 9.8 percent in 2012. In 2011, victims reported 3,192 out of 19,000 incidents, compared to 2012, where victims reported just 3,374 out of 26,000 incidents. While the number of perpetrators convicted of committing a sexual assault increased from 191 in 2011 to 238 in 2012, the conviction rate dropped from one percent in 2011 to 0.9 percent in 2012.

Of the 3,374 total reports in 2012, 2,558 reports were unrestricted, which means they were actionable. Of those unrestricted reports, 27 percent were for rape, 35 percent were for abusive and wrongful sexual contact, and 28 percent were for aggravated sexual

assault and sexual assault. The remaining cases were for aggravated sexual contact, nonconsensual sodomy, indecent assault and attempts to commit those offenses.

In December, Senator Mikulski voted to pass the bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act. With an historic 20 women serving in the Senate, including seven on the Armed Services Committee, more than 30 reforms on sexual assault are included in the bill.

Senator Mikulski's statement submitted to the Congressional Record follows:

"I rise in support of S. 1917, the Victims Protection Act of 2014, and S. 1752, the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2013.

"I have worked on this issue for years, and I am tired of lip service and empty promises of zero tolerance policies. Sexual assault in the military and service academies continues to rise. The data speaks for itself. Roughly 26,000 sexual assaults took place in the military last year.

"I am so proud of the seven women on the Armed Services Committee who led this effort. And I appreciate the fine men who supported them, especially Chairman Carl Levin.

"We're now 20 women total in the Senate. We disagree on some issues, even the bills before us. But we agree on the goal of providing more prosecutorial tools to punish criminals, ensuring fairness in the process and getting help to victims.

"The 2013 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included more than 30 reforms addressing sexual assault in the military. They include:

- 13 prosecutorial reforms;
- Five reforms to improve reporting of crimes;
- 10 reforms to improve victims services; and
- Two reforms to expand the training of first responders.

"This is a historic piece of legislation that takes a serious and significant step towards addressing this issue.

See *Sexual Assault* Page A7

Marc Morial, President and CEO
National Urban League



President Obama Rallies Help for Young Males of Color with "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative

"There are some Americans who, in the aggregate, are consistently doing worse in our society - groups that have had the odds stacked against them in unique ways that require unique solutions...And by almost every measure, the group that is facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in this country are boys and young men of color."

— President Barack Obama

At the White House, I was on hand for one of the most inspiring and important Presidential announcements in recent history. In the aftermath of the killings of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis, and in response to data showing how badly the odds are stacked against millions of boys and young men of color in the United States, President Obama kicked-off "My Brother's Keeper," an unprecedented public-private initiative aimed at improving life outcomes and addressing opportunity gaps for the nation's most vulnerable population.

The President made the announcement before an audience of young males of color and a coalition of government, business, civic and philanthropic leaders. I was proud to be there to represent the National Urban League. In unusually personal terms, President Obama spoke about his own struggles with drugs and alienation as a young boy growing up without a father. He called on all Americans to do more to improve the prospects for young males of color who are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be unemployed or end up in jail than any other group in America.

Framing the initiative as both a moral and economic imperative, President Obama has done what Congress has failed to do over the past five years -- convene a diverse and bipartisan coalition of Americans committed to targeted help for communities and populations most in need.

At the heart of the My Brother's Keeper initiative is a commitment from a group of businesses and large and small foundations who have pledged at least \$200 million over the next five years, on top of the \$150 million they have already invested to test and expand proven strategies for improving the life prospects of young males of color. The President has also formed an interagency federal task force to direct this effort.

As the National Urban League Movement has asserted for years, we know what works: early childhood education, stronger pathways to college and the world of work, alternatives to zero-tolerance discipline policies, shutting down the school-to-prison pipeline, more guidance from fathers and mentors, and the courage and determination of young males of color themselves to reject negative stereotypes, make good choices and succeed.

The need for this initiative is clear. Data shows that boys and young men of color, regardless of socio-economic background, are disproportionately at risk throughout the journey from their youngest years to college and career -- including large disparities in reading proficiency, employment, and involvement in the criminal justice system. These young men are more than six times as likely to be victims of murder than their white peers and account for almost half of the country's murder victims each year. As the President said, "These statistics should break our hearts, and they should compel us to act." I agree and I commend President Obama for his leadership in tackling this problem.

"My Brother's Keeper" is an inspiring example of what we can do when we transform words into action and coalesce around complex issues with a commitment to changing lives. But, there is still much to be done as we work together -- across the public-private-nonprofit spectrum -- to drive this initiative forward. The opportunity is before us, and so is the will.

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Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Struggling to Change What You're Given

"I feel like a lot of people when they encounter adversity—a lot will just say, 'Oh, well, I guess I can't do that. I'm going to sit here and not do anything,' or 'I'm going to throw myself a pity party.' But beat the odds, I feel like it's an opening and it shows you that whatever you face in life, that there is a way out and that you can change what you're given. You don't have to accept what happens to you. You're fully capable of doing whatever it takes to change whatever has happened to you, to change your future—maybe not your past, but your future."

Seventeen-year-old Theresa Tran is one of this year's winners of the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio's Beat the Odds® scholarships after overcoming tough odds including physical disability, the death of a beloved sibling, and a father who suddenly abandoned the family and left her mother to raise four children alone. Theresa says she had to be a survivor right from the start: "The odds were against me from the moment I was born. The chances of my survival were very slim since I was born three months premature and weighed only 1 lb and 10 oz. The doctors just looked at my mom and said, 'She won't make it until tomorrow.' My dad refused to come see me and instead argued with my mom, saying that there wasn't a point to my living because I was already messed up. My mom didn't give up on me, though, and I began to fight for my life, unaware that this was the first of many times where I'd be a fighter."

Soon after birth Theresa was diagnosed with spastic diplegia, a form of cerebral palsy. Her closest brother Daniel, only eight months older because Theresa had been born so prematurely, and their older brother David helped protect Theresa from other children's teasing and stares. Five days before her fourth birthday, Theresa underwent corrective surgery to allow her to walk more easily—a date that should have been a happy milestone. But as family and friends were picking up balloons and flowers later that day to celebrate they were in a car accident, and five-year-old Daniel was killed.

Theresa says, "After Daniel passed away, I wasn't the same because he was my best friend, confidant, and protector. During elementary school, I was mourning, but that didn't stop kids from viciously teasing me and humiliating me constantly because of my limp and an unusual gait. I didn't want to go to school because I was defenseless, so going to school was a daily nightmare. Yet, because of the constant torment, I became emotionally strong. I figured if I were strong, if my tormentors couldn't see me cry, then I'd be okay."

By middle school Theresa had finally started to believe the worst of the hard times were behind her when her world fell apart again. Her father left one day without mentioning where he was headed and never returned. After filing a missing person report her frantic mother eventually learned he had paid a coworker to drive him to the airport and boarded a flight to his native Vietnam, leaving his family behind with no warning and no way to contact him.

As her mother continued working several jobs to keep the family afloat Theresa quickly took on much of the responsibility for caring for herself and her two younger

siblings and she began to look at school in a new way—as a refuge. "School is the place I can get away from all the stress and troubles going on around me. I have no control over many things in my life, but my academics are up to me." Theresa loved the feeling of being able to see all the hard work she put into a project or test immediately pay off, and good grades were an even greater incentive for her to "focus on what you're good at and what you can do and not what you can't."

Theresa is now a high school senior and president of her class with a grade point average above 4.0. She hopes to major in biochemistry premed and become an orthopedic surgeon—"I've always felt the compelling obligation to help others and that I must give back to all the doctors who've helped me." She also says, "I hope [my story] can help others going through adversity and show those people that they're not alone . . . Despite these challenges, I've gotten back up and faced each day with an optimistic attitude. My past does not define me or

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Five Simple Steps For Overcoming Test Anxiety

Even very good students can sometimes suffer from test anxiety. That's the name given to poor performance in testing situations which results from the student seeming to mentally freeze up, despite having really studied the subject matter.

It can happen from early elementary years through college and even in work situations. Most students suffering from severe test anxiety are very aware of it and eager to make it disappear.

A starting point in overcoming test anxiety is accepting that some nervousness is natural. Blame it on our ancestors. In any tension-filled situation — whether it's a snarling bear at the cave entrance or test questions about polynomials — our blood pressure goes up and other physiological and psychological reactions take place. This is good when the threat is a bear but overkill when it's just a snarling math problem.

Try these tips to reduce that level of natural anxiety:

- ❑ Prepare, but don't cram, trying to cover the whole subject the night before a test. Instead, take an organized, rational approach and focus on the key points of the subject being tested.
- ❑ Anticipate test questions. There may be small surprises, but most tests focus on core concepts and materials. Concentrate your studying and preparation in those main areas and you'll feel more confident about handling the test.
- ❑ Be physically prepared. Get a good night's sleep and eat smart. Don't skip breakfast or consume foods high in caffeine, sugar or artificial sweeteners. Fresh fruits and vegetables are often recommended to reduce stress.
- ❑ Change your attitude. Tell yourself, repeatedly, that you've studied well, that you're ready to do your best and that you're feeling confident. A positive attitude makes a big difference. Relax at test time, taking several deep breaths and thinking pleasant thoughts. Take that same relaxation break during the test if you feel yourself tensing up.
- ❑ Remind yourself it's only a test, not an "all or nothing" situation. Don't worry about the whole test, just focus on the current question. Tell yourself you're doing your best.

Being nervous about a test is natural. Being so anxious that it repeatedly affects performance is a problem that should be dealt with. If simple changes, such as those above, don't seem to help, talk to your school counselor, or consider meeting with a professional counselor outside your school. There are treatments and strategies that can effectively help manage severe test anxiety.

Business Spotlight

Smart Tips for Your Tax Refund

(StatePoint) If you're fortunate enough to receive a refund this tax season, it's time to think about sensible uses for the extra income so, as Grandpa used to say, "it doesn't burn a hole in your pocket."

The smartest thing to do with a little extra money, say experts, is to use it in a way that benefits your budget, generates extra income or helps you achieve financial peace of mind.

This can be accomplished in several ways, including putting the money into a savings account with a competitive interest rate, investing in energy saving improvements for your home, or paying down debt. Or, if these options don't move you, consider donating your refund to a charity of your choice.

"There's an old saying that money can't buy happiness, and while this may be true, our research shows that saving money can impact our sense of well-being," says Diane Morais, Ally Bank deposits and line of business integration executive.

In fact, among those with a savings account, 38 percent of respondents surveyed report feeling extremely, or very happy, versus 29 percent of those without one, according to a recent Ally Bank survey.

Beyond a savings account, another smart move is to make a deductible IRA contribution. Not only will you earn interest, your contribution may be eligible for a tax deduction. Depending on the size of the refund, you may need to find a bank that has no minimum deposit requirement or monthly maintenance fees that can quickly eat away at your principal. For example, Ally Bank, Member FDIC, meets both criteria. To learn more about options that meet your specific personal needs, visit www.AllyBank.com.

While few people will regret saving money, another wallet-friendly option is to invest your tax refund into money-saving projects, such as energy efficient home improvements. In addition to helping reduce utility costs, you may qualify for a tax credit, called the Residential Energy Efficient Property Credit, on such projects as solar power and wind turbine upgrades. More information can be found at www.Energy.gov.

Also, consider paying off credit card debt to save on the interest expense and improve your credit score to help you obtain better terms for big ticket items like a car or a home. For free budgeting and credit tips, visit www.AllyWalletWise.com.

And finally, you may also want to consider making a donation to a charitable cause, which in some instances may reduce your tax liability. Always check with a tax professional if this is a concern.

Regardless of how you spend your refund, remember that it's your hard-earned money, not a windfall -- so be sure to use it wisely.

Governor O'Malley Announces Maryland Hits Record for 2013 Exports

Presents International Award to Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System President Ronald Peterson

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Office of the Governor

ANNAPOLIS, MD — Governor Martin O'Malley will join more than 300 Maryland business leaders tonight at the 18th Annual World Trade Center Institute's International Business Leadership Awards and announce that Maryland's trade exports climbed to a record \$11.8 billion in 2013. Trade to countries that Maryland has strategically targeted, like United Arab Emirates and Brazil, grew by 39 percent and 22 percent, respectively. Key merchandise export categories include transportation equipment; chemicals; computer and electronic products; machinery manufactures; and waste and scrap. Maryland's strong performance in 2013 helped the U.S. reach an all-time record for exports of U.S. goods and services, reaching \$2.3 trillion in 2013 and supporting nearly 10 million American jobs.

"The continued increase in Maryland exports, along with the Port of Baltimore hitting record cargo levels and BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport growing its international passenger traffic, demonstrates that Maryland remains a fierce global competitor," said Governor

O'Malley. "Ultimately, our strength and global competitiveness depends on our willingness to make the investments that a modern economy requires to create jobs."

"Exporting is paying off for many Maryland businesses that continue to 'make locally and sell globally,' said Bill Burwell, Director of the U.S. Commercial Service in Baltimore. "Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers reside outside of the United States. If your business is not exporting, it's time to get on board—because not selling globally is just like leaving money on the table. We can help you navigate the avenues of exporting."

At the conclusion of his remarks, Governor O'Malley will present the Governor's International Award to Ronald Peterson, President of The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System. In addition to the Governor's Award, there are also seven awardees of WTCI's International Business Leadership Awards: Domino Sugar — Stuart FitzGibbon, Refinery Manager; Honest Tea — Seth Goldman, Cofounder, President, & TeaEO; Institute for Genome Sciences — Claire Fraser, Director; KEYW — Len Moodispaw, President & CEO; MedImmune — Bahija Jallal, Executive Vice

President; Phenix Technologies — Frank Vitéz, President; and Prometric — Michael Brannick, President & CEO.

To boost the State's exports and help companies take advantage of global trade opportunities, Governor O'Malley launched the Maryland Export Initiative in 2010 to complement President Obama's National Export Initiative. In 2012, Maryland was awarded a total of \$1.2 million in grants from the U.S. Small Business Administration to increase the number and amount of Export MD grants, a State program that provides funding to small and mid-sized businesses to help them market their products and services overseas. As a result of the increase in funding, 89 Maryland small businesses have benefitted from the program, enabling them to add a combined 400 new jobs and generate more than \$180 million in increased export sales.

The O'Malley-Brown Administration has taken significant steps to ramp up the State's international outreach. In 2011, the Governor led two historic economic development missions — one to China, South Korea and Vietnam and one to India — that netted a combined \$145 million in trade and investment deals for the State and the companies that

were part of the delegation. In 2013, the Governor led a trade mission to Brazil, which resulted in EMS S/A, Brazil's largest domestic pharmaceutical company, announcing its new U.S. headquarters in Montgomery County and plans to invest \$200 million into the new operation.

The State has a number of foreign trade offices in targeted countries, including China (Shanghai), Israel (Tel Aviv), France (Paris), Africa (Nigeria); India, Russia, South Korea (Seoul), Taiwan (Taipei), Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), Brazil, and United Arab Emirates (Dubai). With the exception of the offices in China and Israel, all the State's foreign offices operate on a contingency basis with no up-front cost to taxpayers.

Maryland's Office of International Investment and Trade works to stimulate foreign direct investment in the State, offers export assistance for small and mid-sized Maryland companies and coordinates international trade and investment missions and trade show opportunities for Maryland companies. For more information on resources available to business that want to market their products or services globally, visit www.choose-maryland.org

Minimum Wage from A1

Linemark President Steve Bearden was one of several business owners who told the governor that paying a higher wage has contributed to the success of his company.

Bearden said his business employs 125 people and pays a starting wage of \$10.50 an hour, which he said has helped tremendously with employee retention.

Nancy Meyer, chief executive officer of Community Forklift in Edmonston, said that a small business's biggest asset and biggest expense is its workforce, and it pays to invest in it.

"Small businesses that don't pay their employees well often fail," Meyer said. "If you're buying expensive equipment, that's fine, but if you're not paying your people well enough and training them well enough, your business will fail."

Meyer said Community Forklift, which sells environmentally-friendly building materials, has a staff of 50 people and pays a starting wage of \$11 an hour.

She said that small businesses are key job creators, and ensuring they don't fail is important.

Many Republican lawmakers who oppose a minimum wage hike agree. But during a heated debate on the House floor Wednesday, some argued that increasing the base rate employers have to pay will hurt small businesses and ultimately damage the economy when business owners who can't afford the raise have to cut jobs.

Those gathered at Linemark, though, said an increase would actually benefit many businesses by putting more money into the pockets of low-wage workers, who are more likely to spend their paychecks out of necessity, rather than put them into a savings account.

Denise Bowyer, vice president at American Income Life Insurance Company, called it the "multiplication factor."

By increasing employees' hourly wages by a few dollars, she said, the employer's "consumer base is multiplied."

O'Malley's proposal is still awaiting a vote by members of



PHOTO BY MEGAN BROCKETT
Gov. Martin O'Malley discusses his proposal to raise the state's minimum wage with business owners who back the plan.

the Senate Finance Committee, and O'Malley said Thursday he hopes the Senate will pass a version at least equivalent to what is before the House.

The governor said he was "disappointed" that the House Economic Matters Committee eliminated a provision of his bill that would index the minimum wage to rise with the cost of inflation.

"It's been my experience that legislators tend to index to in-

flation things which they should not, and tend to impose flat [rates on things] which should be indexed," he said.

The committee also delayed the date when the proposed raise would begin to be implemented. The amended measure would increase the minimum wage in three stages, postponing the end goal of \$10.10 an hour to 2017, six months later than O'Malley's initial proposal.

Debate from A1

have to compete with parks in surrounding states where the minimum wage sits at the federal \$7.25 an hour rate.

"The Six Flags thing is really the elephant in the room," said House minority leader, Delegate Nicholas R. "Nic" Kipke, R-Anne Arundel.

He spoke ardently in favor of an amendment that would remove parks owned by publicly-traded companies, like Six Flags, from the exemption.

Kipke said that, as it stands, the exemption gives a corporation that has had "booming profits" unfair protection against the "harsh and harmful effects of a \$10.10 minimum

wage," while the small businesses, who need the protection, are left uncovered.

Delegate Michael McDermott, R-Worcester, also pointed to Six Flags in his push for a measure that would carve out an exemption for seasonal businesses in Ocean City. McDermott pleaded with lawmakers to consider the effect a minimum wage increase might have on an area that has to compete with other vacation spots in neighboring states, like Bethany Beach, Del.

"If you can see it for a sector like Six Flags," McDermott said, "if you can [understand] how [an increase] impacts that industry, I'm going to take a look at the broader picture and

say, 'Can you not see how it impacts an entire region?'"

The Eastern Shore delegate engaged in a heated exchange with Davis over the issue, and when Davis asked if he would support the bill if the amendment passed, McDermott said he wouldn't be tied to it.

"We're not race horses here with blinders on," McDermott said. "We've got to take the blinders off and look at the whole picture and where this impacts ... It's about doing the right thing on this bill and making it work. I certainly can't vote for it if it's going to be a blinded bill that favors one over another."

While Republicans seemed to be pushing for a compromise,

Davis expressed confidence that the measure would pass, amended or not, telling McDermott he didn't need his vote.

"I think it will pass without you," he said.

Delegate Heather Mizeur, D-Montgomery, offered the only amendment that sought to extend the bill's reach rather than limit it.

Mizeur, who is running for governor, pushed for a return to a provision under the original measure that would peg the minimum wage to rise automatically with inflation. Her amendment was defeated by a vote of 124 to 8.

The Senate version of the bill is awaiting a vote by members of the Finance Committee.

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OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review

“Cheap Thrills”

Cheap Thrills
Grade: A-
UnRated, Adult comedy,
violent action
1 hr., 25 min

You could read *Cheap Thrills* as a commentary on the current American socio-economic condition, with the working poor increasingly willing to humiliate themselves in exchange for whatever breadcrumbs are tossed to them by the plutocrats who control everything. That reading isn't much fun, though, and if there's one thing *Cheap Thrills* stands for, it's fun -- sick, demented fun, the kind that hurts the next day.

Our underdog hero in this testosterone- and drug-fueled dark comedy is Craig (Pat Healy), a button-down would-be writer who's been barely supporting his wife (Amanda Fuller) and baby son doing work he's not suited for, only to be laid off from that job due to cutbacks. Drowning his sorrows at a dive bar that night, he runs into Vince (Ethan Embry), an old buddy from his wilder days who works as a leg-breaker for a loan shark. The drinks, the company, and the financial desperation loosen Craig up enough to be receptive to what happens next.

He and Vince are befriended by a couple in the bar: Colin (David Koechner), a loud, flashy rich guy who throws his money around, and his wife, Violet (Sara Paxton), who's younger and more enigmatic. For his and Violet's entertainment, Colin starts offering Craig and Vince cash for completing dares -- \$50 to whoever drinks this tequila shot first, \$200 to whoever can get the hooker at the bar to slap him, that sort of thing. No harm in it so far, except to the men's dignity. And hey, two hundred bucks is two hundred bucks.

Eventually the four are back at Colin and Violet's lavish



PHOTO COURTESY: DRAFFHOUSE FILMS

Craig, a struggling family man who loses his low-wage job and is threatened with eviction, in an effort to delay facing the music at home, heads to a local bar and encounters an old friend. The two friends are roped into a round of drinks by a charismatic and obscenely wealthy stranger along with his mysterious wife. The couple engages the two friends in a series of innocent dares in exchange for money over the course of the evening, with each challenge upping the ante in both reward and boundaries. It seems like easy and much needed money, but the couple's twisted sense of humor pushes just how far Craig and his friend are willing to go for money and cheap thrills.

house in the Hollywood hills, where the booze and cocaine flow freely and the wagers get bigger and riskier. Colin's games pit Vince and Craig against one another, reopening old wounds and widening the gap between Craig, who has grown up and become responsible, and Vince, who's still greedily looking for the easy way out.

And they're both here with this Colin jerk, this rich bastard who wastes money on nonsense, who clearly doesn't deserve to be so wealthy and carefree. Craig is practically killing himself to provide for his family, and here's Colin, sitting in his mansion almost literally setting money on fire. If these guys will demean themselves for money, that says something about them. But paying someone to demean himself says something

about Colin, too. (David Koechner, an old pro at playing tacky loudmouths, is brutally funny in the role.)

I won't spoil the dares for you, only warn you that they're all some combination of hilarious, felonious, painful, and disgusting. Directed by first-timer E.L. Katz from a screenplay by Trent Haaga and David Chirchirillo, the tone grows darker but remains funny, laughter mingling with gasps at the lengths men will go to when money and pride are at stake. Each of Colin's new propositions feels like a question for the audience as well, turning the film into its own parlor game: Would I take that dare? And what's the lowest amount of money that I'd do it for?

Ethan Embry's nice dude with rough edges and Sara

Paxton's secretly twisted accomplice are vital, but Pat Healy's mealy-mouthed wimp-hero is the film's main asset. Healy revels in Craig's suffering, making us laugh (at him and with him) as we root for him not just to get the money he needs but to win the games. We respect how far this awkward, goony man is willing to go, whether we'd do the same or not.

Though there's absolutely no agenda in the film, I think it's fair to say it wouldn't be as resonant if it came out during a time of economic prosperity, when fewer people have daydreams about being able to pay their bills. But it also speaks to the competitive, reckless streak found in many men (it's hard to picture women doing these dumb stunts, isn't it?), and it's a total blast to watch.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

After Darren Sharper, the NFL Must Address Violence Against Women

In 2010, Darren Sharper was the hero of New Orleans: an All-Pro safety who led the Saints to Super Bowl glory. Now retired and working for the NFL Network, Darren Sharper has been formally charged with multiple sexual assaults and is suspected to have raped at



least nine women across five states. In California, he has been arrested and charged with drugging the drinks of two women before raping them. His bail was not only set at \$1 million but Judge Renee Korn ordered that a condition of his release would be a legal agreement to not be alone with women he didn't know before October 30. Korn said, "The court considers these crimes quite serious and has to evaluate the protection of the public."

This news comes on the heels of the online release of video that shows Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice dragging his unconscious fiancée Janay Palmer out of a casino elevator. Police have said that they have footage of Rice physically assaulting Ms. Parker as well.

Sharper's story has been, according to my own surveying of the top-rated national programs, almost entirely absent from sports radio and Rice's story has received far greater coverage only insofar as his "legal troubles" affect his future playing prospects. Ravens Coach John Harbaugh has said, "I haven't seen anything that would remotely make me think" that Rice would not be on the team this fall. This kind of response is all too typical. The news would have been if Harbaugh had said otherwise.

Both the Sharper and Rice stories raise a blaring question: At what point do the NFL and Commissioner Roger Goodell confront the constant, haunting league-wide presence of violence against women? In 2012, after Kansas City Chiefs player Jovan Belcher killed Kasandra Perkins, the mother of his child, before taking his own life, Justin Peters at Slate determined, in the aftermath, that twenty-one of thirty-two NFL teams had employed a player that year "with a domestic violence or sexual assault charge on his record." There is an argument that the actual rate of players accused of violence against women is lower than the national average, and therefore should not be considered a problem. This is hogwash. When one considers the underreporting of these instances, the ways in which our society blames victims and the resources NFL players and teams have at their disposal to make "problems" go away, statistics don't really get us anywhere. I would also add that the NFL rightly saw the bullying culture in the Miami Dolphins locker room, even if it was atypical, as utterly unacceptable. Even one incident was one incident too many. In other words, even one instance of violence against women should be compelling the NFL to act. But instead, we get silence.

It is stunning that an NFL, which wants to police how players talk to each other on the field and has announced plans to institute an entire new set of guidelines around "locker room conduct," does not address this publicly. It is stunning that an NFL, which tries to cultivate and grow its female fan base by trussing players in pink for a full month out of the season to display their seriousness in the fight against breast cancer, is silent on the question of violence against women. It is stunning that Roger Goodell, who believes that players should be "role models," does not address the kind of behavior that is being modeled.

This is about more than violence. It is about a locker-room environment that sees women as little more than "road beef." Amidst the infamous text messages between Miami Dolphins offensive lineman Richie Incognito and Jonathan Martin, lost among the racial taunts and homophobic jibes, were the discussions of "bitches," "hooker parties," "strippers who go the extra mile," and Incognito's boast that "I was doing work last night. I got those girls hammered." This is the same Richie Incognito who received second chance after second chance, no matter how many accusations of sexual assault were levied against him throughout his career in college and the pros. The entire Incognito saga could have been avoided if the league had a zero-tolerance approach to violence against women. They don't, so it wasn't.

No, the connective tissue between football and rape culture is not created in the NFL, as Incognito's own history demonstrates. We know too much from stories that span from high schools in Steubenville and Maryville to colleges like Vanderbilt, Notre Dame and Missouri to think that it possibly starts in the pros. But shouldn't the NFL be where it ends? I have no idea why an NFL and a commissioner that is so acutely image conscious does not see how badly this looks. It looks like the league turns a blind eye and shrugs its shoulders, as if violence against women is little more than "boys will be boys." It looks like they believe that the stink of stories like Darren Sharper's will not waft into their boardrooms. It looks like they do not care. Roger Goodell needs to read the arrest report for Darren Sharper and admit that this league has fostered, and not fought, a football culture that sees women as collateral damage. He needs to admit they have a problem and he needs to act. He needs to think not only about "how it looks" but also the young people who are doing the looking.

Throwing A '60s Dessert Party... Disney Style

(NAPS)—A party doesn't have to deplete your monthly budget as long as you realize the purpose of entertaining is to have fun with friends. A dessert party is the perfect answer. Everyone loves dessert and, with only one course, the shopping is less expensive and you can often prepare the food beforehand. But what about the theme for the party? That leads us to an idea based on the Disney film "Saving Mr. Banks," starring Tom Hanks and Emma Thompson—a '60s Dessert Party!

A little background. Walt Disney's "Mary Poppins," one of the world's most beloved and enduring family films ever, was released in the mid-1960s, the setting for "Saving Mr. Banks," which is now on Digital HD, Blu-ray and DVD. The film tells the little-known story of how Walt (Hanks) convinced author Pamela "P. L." Travers (Thompson) to agree to a movie based on her best-selling book series. In many meetings, the stubborn Travers insists Disney and his team stick to the exact details of her novels. Eventually, Walt makes her understand that despite taking some liberties, using imagination and creativity does achieve what Travers really wanted to say.

Creativity, of course, went into duplicating the early to mid-'60s style and look of "Saving Mr. Banks," a key component of which was food. TV and film food styl-



ist Chris Oliver ("About Last Night," "The Master"; TV's "Parenthood," "Masters of Sex," "Boardwalk Empire") was brought in to handle the design.

Ms. Oliver's primary focus was the writers' room scenes where Walt had plentiful dessert fare wheeled in for breaks. Some of the most popular desserts from the '60s were featured. "The food was meant to reflect a time line for Mrs. Travers, who, at first, was entirely negative about everything Disney. When she first arrives in the room, we put out tons of premade desserts loaded with preservatives—Sno Balls, Twinkies, etc. (I was particularly proud of the red/green/orange Mickey Jell-O mold.) As the film progresses and Travers softens, we brought in more homemade items with pure ingredients."

Oliver sees the movie as the perfect inspiration for a retro-themed ladies' dessert party. To throw a classic '60s party, she recommends starting with "a pastel color scheme, Pyrex serving dishes,

fun Jell-O molds, cheese and fruit platters, and cakes with lots of frosting. Popular desserts of the '60s are coconut or butter cakes, baked Alaska, soufflés, berry pies and pineapple upside-down cake."

One of Chris Oliver's favorite dishes inspired by the '60s is cherry pie, but her special recipe is a timeless classic with ingredients that haven't changed for more than a century. For Chris' Cherry Pie and other favorite '60s recipes, visit www.facebook.com/SavingMrBanks.

To get more into the spirit of the era as you watch the film together, put on a pot of tea and provide a few side snack dishes like deviled eggs or Walt Disney's personal favorite, chili: (<http://blogs.disney.com/insider/recipes/2013/02/04/walts-own-chili/>).

For more information about Chris Oliver and her cooking and food styling tips, please visit www.hollywoodfoodstyling.com. For more information about the "Saving Mr. Banks" Blu-ray™ and DVD, please visit www.movies.disney.com.

Calendar of Events

March 20 — March 26, 2014

Movie Night - Remember The Titans

Date and Time: Friday, March 21, 2014 7:30 pm
 Description: This Friday enjoy a screening of Remember the Titans, based on the real-life integration of two schools to form T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia. When the Caucasian head coach of the Titans is replaced by an African American coach from North Carolina, tensions arise. Players of different races are forced to play side-by-side on one football team. At a two-week training camp in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, many of these early tensions are eased. When the players return to Alexandria they find their city in turmoil, due to the forced desegregation of the high school. But, as the season progresses the team's success causes the community to accept the changes. And, with the Titans' perfect season, football brings the team and the closer than ever.
 Cost: Tickets: \$5/person
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Harmony Hall Regional Center
 10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington 20744
 Contact: 301 203-6070; TTY 301-203-3803

LIVE at Montpelier!- Phil Wiggins and the Chesapeake Sheiks, Blues

Date and Time: Friday, March 21, 2014 8 pm
 Description: Join us with Phil Wiggins, arguably America's foremost blues harmonica virtuoso. While rooted in the melodic Piedmont or "Tidewater" blues of the Chesapeake region, his mastery of the instrument now transcends stylistic boundaries. Born in Washington, D.C. in 1954, Wiggins achieved worldwide acclaim over three decades as one half of the premier Piedmont blues duo, Cephas & Wiggins. Since the passing of guitarist and singer John Cephas in 2009, Phil has brought his harmonica wizardry to bear in a variety of musical collaborations.
 Cost: Tickets: \$25/person; 10% discount for Montpelier members & seniors
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Montpelier Arts Center
 9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708
 Contact: 301-377-7800 or 410-792-0664; TTY 301-490-2329

Camp Madness Expo: Final Countdown to Summer Fun

Date & Time: Sunday, March 23, 2014 1-5 pm
 Description: You're invited to the Camp Madness Expo: Final Countdown to Summer Fun! This free event is designed to showcase M-NCPPC facilities and programs such as summer camps, playgrounds and teen sites. While at the expo, be sure to learn about other M-NCPPC programs including Safe Summer, Xtreme Teens and summer and volunteer job opportunities. As a token of our appreciation, lucky patrons will have the chance to win 1 free week to a camp of their choosing!
 Have questions about the expo? Please call 301-218-6700.
 Cost: Free for residents and non-residents
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex
 8001 Sheriff Road, Landover 20785
 Contact: 301-773-6685; TTY 301-218-6767

The Montpelier Classical Recital Series- Joshua Brown, Baritone

Date and Time: Sunday, March 23, 2014 3 pm
 Description: Come out to the Montpelier Classical Recital series featuring baritone, Joshua Brown! Recognized as "a fine baritone" by The Washington Post, Brown frequently performs in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area. He's even been featured in operas, including Papageno in Die Zauberflöte, Guglielmo in Così fan tutte, Enrico in Lucia di Lammermoor and Valentin in Faust.
 Cost: Free; \$5 donation is suggested
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Montpelier Arts Center
 9652 Muirkirk Road, Laurel 20708
 Contact: 301-377-7800 or 410-792-0664; TTY 301-490-2329

Nature Hike for Seniors

Date & Time: Tuesday, March 25, 2014 10-11 am
 Description: Seniors aged 60 & better, come join a naturalist on a nature hike! While on the hike, we'll search for wildlife and local plant life. And, remember to wear comfortable shoes and dress for the weather. Reservations are required.
 Cost: Resident \$2; Non-Resident \$3
 Ages: 60 & better
 Location: Watkins Nature Center
 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro 20772
 Contact: 301-218-6702; TTY 301-699-2544

Shopping Trip to Arundel Mills

Date & Time: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 9:30 am-4 pm
 Description: Join us for a shopping trip to Arundel Mills Mall! Enjoy lunch on your own and shop with your friends. Don't forget to see if you can snag a sale! Bus departs promptly from College Park Community Center at 9:30 am and returns back to the Center by 4 pm.
 Cost: Resident \$5; Non-Resident \$7
 Ages: 50 & up
 Location: College Park Community Center and Youth Soccer Complex
 5051 Pierce Avenue, College Park 20740
 Contact: 301-441-2647; TTY 301-445-4512

Helping Drew

Date and Time: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 10:15 am & 12 noon
 Description: This interactive musical puppet show will have everyone helping Drew and will teach children why bullying is not cool. When the principal tries to stop Lee from bullying Drew, Lee thinks bullying Drew is fun. Lee's best friend Victoria doesn't think so, but what can she do to help Drew?
 Cost: Tickets: \$6/person; \$5/groups of 15 or more
 Ages: Recommended for grades K-3
 Location: Publick Playhouse
 5445 Landover Road, Cheverly 20784
 Contact: 301-277-1710; TTY 301-277-0312

EARTH TALK ... How is it that global warming could cause an increase in health problems and disease epidemics?

Dear EarthTalk:

How is it that global warming could cause an increase in health problems and disease epidemics? Do we have any evidence that it is already happening?

— Jim Merrill,
 Provo, UT

Global warming isn't just bad for the environment. There are several ways that it is expected to take a toll on human health. For starters, the extreme summer heat that is becoming more normal in a warming world can directly impact the health of billions of people.

"Extreme high air temperatures contribute directly to deaths from cardiovascular and respiratory disease, particularly among elderly people," reports the World Health Organization (WHO). "In the heat wave of summer 2003 in Europe, for example, more than 70,000 excess deaths were recorded."

WHO adds that high temperatures also play a role in elevated levels of ozone and other air pollutants known to exacerbate respiratory and cardiovascular problems. And according to the non-profit Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), warmer temperatures and higher levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide can stimulate plants to grow faster, mature earlier and produce more potent

allergens. "Common allergens such as ragweed seem to respond particularly well to higher concentrations of carbon dioxide, as do pesky plants such as poison ivy. Allergy-related diseases rank among the most common and chronic illnesses..." reports the group.

Another way global warming is bad for our health is that it increases extreme weather events that can injure or kills large numbers of people. According to WHO, the number of weather-related natural disasters has more than tripled since the 1960s. Likewise, increasingly variable rainfall patterns combined with higher overall temperatures are leading to extended droughts around the world. "By the 2090s, climate change is likely to widen the area affected by drought, double the frequency of extreme droughts and increase their average duration six-fold," reports WHO. One result is likely to be a downturn in agricultural productivity along with a spike in malnutrition. Another is less access to safe drinking water, a trigger for poor sanitation and the spread of diarrheal diseases—not to mention resource wars.

Perhaps most worrying to public health experts, though, is the potential for global warming to cause a spike in so-called "vector-borne diseases" like schistosomiasis, West Nile virus, malaria and dengue fever. "Insects previously stopped by cold winters are already moving



CREDIT: U.U. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The Union of Concerned Scientists reports that, thanks to global warming, insects previously stopped by cold winters are already moving to higher latitudes, a phenomenon that could expose an extra two billion people, mostly in developing countries, to the dengue virus over the next half century.

to higher latitudes (toward the poles)," reports UCS. Researchers predict that thanks to global warming an extra two billion people, mostly in developing countries, will be exposed to the dengue virus over the next half century.

A related fear is that thawing permafrost in Polar Regions could allow otherwise dormant age-old viruses to re-emerge. Earlier this year, French and Russian researchers discovered a 30,000 year old giant virus, previously unknown to science, in frozen soil in Russia's most northerly region. While the virus, which researchers dubbed Pithovirus sibericum, is harmless to humans and animals, its discovery has served as a wake-

up call to epidemiologists about the potential re-emergence of other viruses that could make many people sick. While some of these re-emergent viruses might also be new to science, others could be revitalized versions of ones we thought we had eradicated, such as smallpox.

CONTACTS: WHO, www.who.int; UCS, www.ucsusa.org.

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Wild College Mascots in Danger

By JUSTINE MCDANIEL
 Capital News Service

COLLEGE PARK — As March Madness approaches, college mascots are busy getting ready for excited fans, tailgating students and historic games.

But their wildlife counterparts aren't so lucky, according to the National Wildlife Federation.

Climate change is putting some of the nation's most beloved college mascots in danger, including the terrapin, buffalo, wolverine and alligator, the conservation organization said in a report released Tuesday.

That could leave the universities of Maryland, Colorado, Michigan, Florida and others with endangered or even extinct animals as mascots.

"The game may soon be over... for many of our wildlife mascots unless we reduce our carbon pollution and we develop instead... new clean energy sources," said Doug Inkley, senior scientist at the National Wildlife Federation.

The report, released in anticipation of the NCAA basketball tournament, which starts March 18, said that warming temperatures, sea level rise and extreme weather are threatening wildlife and their habitats.

For terrapins, warmer temperatures cause a greater proportion of their eggs to hatch as females, creating an imbalance that threatens their population, Inkley said. The reptiles, which live in coastal areas, also face dangers due to rising sea level.

"If we don't do something to make the kinds of recommendations that the National Wildlife Federation has put forward... for future generations, as they are looking at our mascots... they're going to be... thinking, 'Wow, what were those animals? Who were those creatures?'" said Rep. Donna Edwards, D-Fort Washington.

The report includes recommendations for helping these animals, including passing laws to reduce carbon pollution, transitioning to cleaner energy sources considering climate change in wildlife and natural resource management.

Edwards, a ranking member on the House Science, Space and Technology Committee criticized climate change deniers in Congress and said it was time to take action.

"I can't wait to dig through the report and actually compare the dangers to those mascots to my brackets come Sunday," Edwards said.

Behavior from A1

Protection Agency (EPA) from working with Maryland and the other Bay watershed states to restore the Chesapeake Bay. While Maryland certainly wouldn't consider fighting Florida's efforts to restore the Everglades or Utah's efforts to protect the Great Salt Lake, they seem more than willing to challenge our efforts to restore the Chesapeake.

Quite frankly, we do not appreciate their trespassing on our turf.

We are part of the most ambitious, scientifically-driven ecosystem clean-up effort in the nation if not the world. We are

working across a watershed of 64,000 square miles to stop polluted runoff from extinguishing our fisheries, suffocating our oysters, and making our waters unswimmable. With wastewater treatment plants incorporating state of the art technology, local governments controlling stormwater runoff, citizens limiting fertilizer applications on their lawns, and farmers planting cover crops, we are taking action to restore the Chesapeake.

Other ecosystem restoration efforts can learn a lot from Maryland's work on the Chesapeake Bay. We know that there is a vital link between how we use our land and the condition

of our waters. We cannot become more prosperous if we are not more mindful of the other living systems upon which our prosperity depends.

What good is it for us to spur innovation or make the next major biotechnology discovery if we no longer have a Chesapeake Bay or a Red River? A Lake Michigan or a Missouri River? If we can't swim or fish in our waters? If we no longer have clean air to breathe? If sea-level rise destroys that which we have fought to preserve?

The urgent transformation of the Chesapeake Bay is not just about Maryland or even just the United States. It's about all of

us. We need to move from global economies of depletion to local economies of regeneration.

The leaders of these twenty-one states who want to stop the work of Maryland, its sister states, the District of Columbia, and EPA on restoring the Chesapeake Bay could better spend their time preserving the waters in their own backyards. Stop aiding and abetting the polluters who want to prevent us from bringing back the Bay to the glory that we know it offers our citizens. Rather than standing in our way, we encourage them to join us in doing more, together, for the future of our children and for our planet.

Sexual Assault from A4

"However, our work is not done. That is why I support Senator McCaskill and Senator Gillibrand's bills to further reform our military justice system.

"Senator McCaskill's bill builds on the provisions included in the 2013 NDAA by providing additional support to victims. It prevents defendants from using a good military character defense unless it is relevant to the crime. And it ensures these improvements also apply to the Service Academies which are also dealing with the epidemic of sexual assault.

"I also support Senator Gillibrand's bill which would take the job of deciding which crimes to

prosecute out of the hands of commanders and instead give it to independent military prosecutors with expertise in these crimes.

"This approach has value for victims, commanding officers and the accused. Victims are assured of a fair process. Commanders are given an independent source on an issue that they might not have expertise or experience. And those accused of sexual violence get legal protections through the process.

"These two bills take another step towards cracking the code on addressing sexual assault in the military. Our men and women in uniform face enough stresses on the battlefield. We can't allow sexual violence to be another one.

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Watch from A4

my future, but all of these hardships have molded me into the person I am today." Theresa and her fifteen fellow Beat the Odds scholarship winners the Children's Defense Fund is honoring in Ohio, Minnesota, and New York in March are a genuine inspiration for other young people and all of us who face steep odds. How many children are we losing who lack Theresa's resilience and grit? How do we instill and nurture the same sense of hope and perseverance in their ability to struggle to make the future different despite the odds stacked against millions of them by poverty, disabilities, and inadequate school and community support? And how do we all struggle together to change unjust policies and practices,

structural poverty, racial disparities, violence, and disabilities children can't control while we lend a helping hand and encouragement to help as many individual children as possible? Every child deserves a level playing field on which to grow and contribute. That is America's dream.

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For more information go to www.childrensdefense.org. Mrs. Edelman's Child Watch Column also appears each week on The Huffington Post

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