
MARYLAND GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
2014 SESSION



OPENING DAY EVENTS
JANUARY 8, 2014

This morning at a legislative summit of the Marc Steiner Show held at the Calvert House discussed issues facing the 2014 Maryland State Legislative Session. Although many areas were discussed, the following represents those of interest to us as a school system.

Governor O'Malley said he sees Maryland leadership in the economic diversity is not simply wishing the economy will get better, but instead has taken action such as giving more to education and building a modern infrastructure. There is still work to be done as the reality of the American Dream has been battered and torn, which is why he will be pushing an increase in the minimum wage. A question was asked about the adequacy of education commission which was pushed off in 2012. With a new governor coming in and new legislators next session, is there support to panel a new commission so the next body of legislators can wrestle with the issue. Governor O'Malley said he was not aware he "un-paneled" the commission and would get back to Marc Steiner as he is not aware of the issue. However, he encouraged everyone to look at the history of funding in Maryland as well as the dollars that have gone into the education system. Tremendous strides have been made in closing the achievement gap. Another question by Marc Steiner was in regard to the pre-k expansion and can we expect an announcement in the State of the Union address. Governor O'Malley said he is very passionate of this issue along with Lt. Governor Brown, especially in Baltimore City when it was seen the first cohort of kids in kindergarten scoring high in reading and math which shows the

importance of early childhood education and children coming to school ready to learn. His administration will take some first steps in expanding universal, full-day, prekindergarten this year as a positive development and in a prudent way. Marc Steiner stated that he looked forward to more information on the adequacy commission with Governor O'Malley and corrected that it was the Legislature who put off the study and not the Governor. Governor O'Malley responded "that sometimes they do not ask him." Betty Weller (MSEA) asked about his vision on supporting our schools and continue to move forward as well as his position on the Thornton II Commission.

Governor O'Malley said the more a person learns the more they can learn. So important to accelerate achievement to create jobs. As far as Thornton II it is important to set up immediate benchmarks and look longer term. The next big stride that needs to be made is on the pre-k and although costly it makes a strong economic investment. He also feels there are areas where we have not made the progress capable of making such as hiring and retention of quality principals in hard to serve schools as well as those in high schools. "We pay for high school and yet feels it is squandered." We need to look at trade skills recognized by industry which is also recognized by a year or two of college

education before they get out of high school which is the future of the modern high school experience. Yes, he supports Thornton II when asked by Betty. When asked in conclusion if he was running for President, the Governor said he would "continue to do the best job he can for the people of our State."

Questions surrounded the State deficit with Senate President Miller saying the bad news is when the federal government shuts down Maryland's revenue drops. Speaker Busch said for the past five years they had stimulus money which funded education aid and then cuts had to be made when the stimulus funds were finished. However, he feels the budget will be manageable due to funds held over in last year's budget. They (legislature) expect to balance the budget without increasing any revenues and hope to look at points where those revenues that were passed will meet the needs in the State of Maryland and reduce some of the tax burden in line with other states such as the estate tax. When asked about the corporate tax, he feels there is already a low corporate tax in the state so does not feel the need to reduce further. Another issue brought up at the summit was a question on the Public School Labor Relations Board by Gary Brennon of the Frederick County Teachers Association as well as MSEA. He stated the law has a sunset and would the Speaker and the President support the removal of the sunset. The response is there will be public hearings. Senator President Busch stated there was a sunset as this law was viciously opposed by the local boards and superintendents and he feels it has worked successfully. Speaker Busch said part of it is to see how well this issue has worked. There will be reviews which take place on sunsets all the time and Busch agrees all the

contiguous legislation will warrant review. It was also asked by Brennon that in talking with the Governor on the Thornton Commission, what is expected on adequacy and is there a push for the next session and there will be a "ton of new legislators." Miller said yes, but also want to look at pre-k and all gubernatorial candidates want to see a change in this for all students and not just at-risk. Senator Miller said they are contributing more money to education that all the locals combined. The state has made a tremendous investment as well in school construction. The concern the State needs to take a look at the formula regarding wealthier counties and are they contributing their share. So it is agreed adjusting formulas is needed. A question was asked about mentoring youth. Senator Miller said he supports many programs personally, but this is not an area to be mandated but instead encouraged. Another issue that was brought up was a question by a teacher from State Board of Directors at MSEA and a social studies teacher who asked about vouchers to private schools. She voiced concerns these schools would not hold up the same accountability in respect to testing and teacher evaluation standards or required to hold the first amendments. The response by Senate Miller was since the 1970 independent schools and college funds from the State will continue, not to the tune of what is done in Pennsylvania. If these schools were closed in Baltimore City it would bankrupt the City. Speaker Busch said in the House they have allowed charter schools and still waiting to see how this works how, but they have been resistant to other forms of funding expect for books (from the tobacco fund) to private schools. Although private schools play a huge role in the State he feels parents make this choice, but also feels these schools should have the same facilities available.

OPENING DAY

Today both the House of Delegates and the Senate of Maryland convened for its annual 90-day session. It was expected during comments that a minimum wage hike as well as marijuana support to legalize is gaining

support in Maryland along the lines of what has been done in Colorado. However, Maryland Governor O'Malley earlier this morning stated he is "not much in favor" or decriminalizing marijuana and while the

Governor is pushing for an increase in the minimum wage, it remains unclear as to how much. On the Republican side, House Republican leaders are seeking 10-percent cuts in income tax rates as well as a reduction in the corporate tax rate which stands at 8.25%. Governor O'Malley responded that any tax cut considered or approved this year would have to be fiscally responsible as the state has to be able to fund essential programs. Of interest is that just a few hours before the session began, the Maryland State House was evacuated for about 10 minutes, after a basement sprinkler malfunctioned. Today is largely ceremonial with House Speaker Busch and Senate President Miller once again elected by their respective bodies to continue in their roles as House Speaker and Senate President. Senator McFadden continues to serve as President Pro Tem in the Senate and Delegate Adrienne Jones continues as Speaker Pro Tem in the House.

House Speaker Busch gave his opening remarks in stating "this is a special year and welcomed two new members to the House representing Montgomery County and Queen Anne's County with both replacing two members who were appointed to Senate seats. Speaker Busch said that although he realizes many will not be returning in the next legislative session for various reasons, he wanted to thank them for their hard work over the past four years, "Although many have new philosophies, and many times have disagreed" he thanked everyone for their respect during the sometimes difficult debates. He went onto state that everyone should be proud of the commitment Maryland has made to K-12 education with a record amount of \$6.2 billion. "Maryland has also surpassed the

Kopp Commission recommendation on school construction with 64% of the school construction costs paid by the State of Maryland. He went onto provide an overview of what to expect during this legislative session to include taking an appropriate look at raising the minimum wage in Maryland as well as increasing investments in cybersecurity to higher education.

Senate President Miller announced in his opening remarks that he will be married 50 years next year in welcoming his wife to the chamber. During this time, today represents his 25th year as Senate President. Senate President introduced David Craig who running for Governor and highly respected as a former Maryland Senator as well as other County Executives in attendance.

Governor O'Malley addressed the House with welcoming remarks and after congratulation both House Speaker Busch and Senate President Miller he reported that 100% of Maryland jobs have been recovered with more job opportunities to create. There are many new businesses in Maryland with one recent visit to KEYW who is currently hiring and looking for highly skilled people.

Lt. Governor Brown also addressed both chambers and thanked all for their willingness to serve the people of Maryland. "As elected public servants, everyone has a tremendous job before them and expect no coasting this session."