



**Parliamentarian, Maryland House of Delegates
Member, Economic Matters Committee
House Chair, Joint Information Technology and Biotechnology Committee
Chair, House Banking, Economic Development, Science and Technology Subcommittee**

Dear Friend,

The Maryland General Assembly's 2013 Legislative Session concluded at midnight on April 8, 2013. The following is a summary of several important topics that may interest you. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at Brian.Feldman@house.state.md.us.

A Balanced Budget

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Budget discussions focused on a balanced approach to spending cuts and revenues, while at the same time confronting current issues and funding priorities. This year's budget is balanced and ensures that, in the face of sequestration cuts, the State's rainy day fund will remain above a self-imposed 5% level, allowing more than \$1.1 billion in reserves to help address possible future Federal cuts. In 2009, the long-term structural deficit was \$1.7 billion but the Legislature has worked diligently since that time to reduce it through a combination of measures. The structural deficit for FY 2014 is now only one tenth the size of what it was at the height of the recession.

One of Maryland's greatest achievements is its educational system. I am proud of Maryland's designation from *Education Week*, the Nation's leading education newspaper, which ranked Maryland's public schools **first in the Nation for a fifth year in a row**. This distinction is a direct result of the significant investment the State has made in K-12 education over the last decade. The total support for K-12 public school education in the FY 2014 budget is \$6 billion, over \$608 million for Montgomery County, a 2.3% increase from last year. Higher education will receive \$1.3 billion - an amount that will keep our State on a four-year path of limiting annual tuition increases at State colleges and universities. Montgomery College will receive \$44 million.

Maryland has also retained its AAA bond rating, one of only nine states to get a AAA rating from all three ratings agencies - Standard and Poor's, Moody's and Fitch's. Fitch's stated that Maryland's rating "**reflects its sound financial operations, a wealthy, diversified economy and strong management of debt... Maryland retains ample fiscal flexibility, including in the form of a well-funded rainy day fund, the targeted threshold of which the state is elevating in response to federal budget uncertainty.**"

Significant 2013 Bills

Below are the several noteworthy bills that passed this year:

The Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013 allows Maryland to start to address its major backlog of transportation projects and begin to ameliorate our region's traffic congestion – the worst in the Nation. Through a tax on gasoline, the first increase in two decades, the State will generate \$4.4 billion in new transportation funding, adding \$800 million to the Transportation Trust Fund, over the next five years. The bill

will also create 57,000 new jobs while building a 21st century transportation network that is imperative for Maryland's economy to move forward and compete with neighboring states.

The Firearm Safety Act of 2013 modifies and expands the regulation of firearms, firearms dealers and ammunition in the State while strengthening mental health restrictions on the possession of firearms. This bill places limits on the purchase and sale of assault weapons without violating second amendment rights.

The Death Penalty Repeal follows the 2008 recommendations of the Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment which called for the abolition of Maryland's death penalty. The bill allows for an individual found guilty of first degree murder to be sentenced to life imprisonment or life imprisonment without parole.

The Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2013 creates a mechanism to incentivize the development of a major offshore wind facility in Maryland. The bill allows the Public Service Commission to approve an offshore wind farm while placing a cap on any rate increases resulting from the legislation. The developers of the wind farms must demonstrate that any project will provide a net economic benefit to the State by creating jobs, economic development and protecting public health.

Election Law – Improving Access to Voting allows for Maryland residents to register to vote and cast their ballot on the same day. Same day registration will be available during early voting. Additionally, the number of days for early voting will be increased from six to eight days and additional voting sites will be added to accommodate the increase in the number of Marylanders who took advantage of early voting in 2012.

Medical Marijuana – Academic Medical Centers establishes a Commission to oversee the distribution of marijuana grown by licensed growers and allows academic medical centers to apply to the commission to distribute marijuana to patients and publish their findings.

Feldman Bills

I introduced and gained passage of six bills that update, clarify and modernize our laws in several important areas. I continue to advocate for the bio-tech industry while also introducing bills that provide additional enforcement authority in combating fraud in the mortgage relief area. These bills will allow Maryland businesses to compete more effectively with out of state competition.

I also sponsored a bill which will allow Marylanders in November 2014 to vote on a Constitutional Amendment that would create a “**lockbox**” for the Transportation Trust Fund so that the fund cannot easily be raided for non-transportation purposes. For the economic health of our region, it is essential that those monies are protected.

Additionally, I collaborated with Delegate Arora (District 19) on **Real Property – Refinance Mortgage** legislation which assists Marylanders in refinancing their homes and with Delegate Hucker (District 20) on **Swimming Pools – Automated External Defibrillator Programs (Conor's Law)** which requires all public swimming pools to own an automated external defibrillator (AED) and to train their employees to use it. This bill was named after 5-year-old Connor John-James Freed, a fellow Marylander, who could have been saved by an AED.

In closing, I want to thank you for contacting me during this Session with your thoughts and comments. It is an honor to represent you in the Maryland General Assembly.

Sincerely,

