

2009 Legislative Round-Up

Safe & Healthy Communities

 ***Environment - Brominated Flame Retardants - Decabrominated Diphenyl Ether - Prohibition Deca – SB 184/HB 14 (Lennett/Hubbard)***

Deca-BDE is a toxic flame retardant linked to developmental problems in children and health problems in firefighters. SB 184/HB14 would require manufactures to replace Deca-BDE with safer alternatives by 2010. The bill passed the House of Delegates by a vote of 122-12, but failed to get a vote in the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee.

 ***Mercury Switch Removal from Vehicles – HB 1263 (Hucker)***

HB 1263 requires auto manufacturers to set up a recycling program in Maryland for car switches that contain mercury. These switches are the largest manufacturing source of mercury, a potent neurotoxin that can cause serious developmental problems for infants and children in the womb.

 ***Child Care Articles Containing Bisphenol-A - Prohibition – HB 15 (Hubbard)***

This bill phases out the use of the toxic chemical Bisphenol-A in baby bottles and cups designed for children under the age of 3, starting in 2010. The bill also requires manufacturers to clearly label products as “BPA-free” to help consumers make educated choices in the marketplace. HB 15 passed the House of Delegates by a vote of 134-1 but was voted unfavorable by the Senate Finance Committee by a vote of 4-7.

 ***Environment - Reducing Lead Risk in Housing - Lead Paint Dust Testing – SB 361 (Gladden)***

This bill safeguards the health of children living in older housing stock by requiring all landlords to conduct lead dust testing before a new tenant moves in. The bill strengthens current law which permits landlords to simply do a visual inspection for lead hazards instead of actual lead testing. SB 361 failed on the Senate floor by a vote of 22-25.

Smart Energy Solutions

 ***Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2009 – SB 166/HB 101 (Administration)***

The General Assembly diverted \$70 million from energy efficiency and clean energy programs to direct bill payer assistance over the next two years by changing the allocation formula for Maryland’s proceeds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) carbon auction.



Maryland Building Performance Standards - Energy Conservation and Efficiency

– SB 625(Frosh)

SB 625 will help lower energy costs for new homes in Maryland by bringing Maryland's building codes in line with the International Energy Conservation Code.



Public Service Commission - New Electric Generation Facilities - Rate Regulation and Contracts – SB 844/HB 1530 (Administration)

SB 844 makes it the intent of the state of Maryland to re-regulate its electricity sector and requires utility companies to submit long-term plans to the Public Service Commission on how they plan to meet electricity demand with the least impact on service, rates and meeting the state's energy efficiency and renewable energy goals. SB 844 passed the Senate but failed in the House Economic Matters Committee by a vote of 22-2.

Protecting Consumers



Commercial Law - Consumer Contracts - Prohibited Provisions – HB 1048(Frick)

HB 1048 protects consumers from 'universal default', a practice commonly used by credit card companies to raise interest rates on a consumer's credit card because of activity on a separate and unrelated line of credit. HB 1048 passed the House but failed to get a vote in the Senate Finance Committee.



Consumer Protection - Consumer Credit Contracts - Prohibited Provisions – HB 1292(Ali)

HB 1292 protects consumers from having a credit card company or other entity 'black-list' consumers by raising their interest rates or lowering their credit limit without the consumer's consent based on where a consumer shops or obtains lines of credit. HB 1048 passed the House but was never voted on by the Senate Finance Committee.

Sound Budget & Tax Policy



Corporate Income Tax - Rate Reduction and Reform – SB 603/HB 1244 (Pinsky/Ross)

Many corporations use fancy accounting tricks to avoid paying their fair share in taxes. SB 603 closes corporate tax loopholes through a comprehensive solution called "combined reporting". The bill did not receive a committee vote in either the House or the Senate.

Strengthening Democracy



Elective Franchise - Registration and Voting on Election Day – SB 514/HB 476 (Lennett/Reznick)

In the 2008 election, many Marylanders were turned away from the polls or had to file provisional ballots because their voter registration form either hadn't been received or was

invalid. SB 514/HB 476 allows voters to decide whether or not citizens should be able to register to vote on the day of elections. The bill did not receive a vote in either committee.



Election Law - Voting Systems - Requirements – HB 893 (Hixson)

This bill permits the continued use of a limited number of touch-screen voting machines for voters with disabilities and other voters who prefer the touch-screen machine, while maintaining the 2010 implementation of a voting system that guarantees a voter-verified paper record to safeguard the integrity of our elections.



Election Law - Public Campaign Financing Act for Candidates for the General Assembly – SB 633/HB 1353 (Pinsky/Cardin)

In the system proposed in SB 633/HB 1353, candidates who opt for public funding must engage with average voters to earn their qualifying money, in the form of contributions of at least \$5 from 350 voters in the district. In exchange for receiving public funds candidates have to refuse all private donations. After debate on the Senate floor, the bill was re-referred to committee and was not brought up for another vote in committee.

Encouraging Transit, Not Traffic



Transportation - Intercounty Connector - Elimination of Funding – SB 753/HB 127(Pipkin/Frush)

SB 753/HB 127 eliminates funding for the Intercounty Connector. The bill received an unfavorable report in the House Committee and was never voted on in the Senate.



Driver Relief Act of 2009 – SB 539/HB 992 (Frosh/McIntosh)

SB 539/HB 992 reduces traffic and air pollution by setting a statewide goal of reducing the total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in Maryland 35 percent by 2036. The bill was withdrawn after an unfavorable report in the House Environmental Matters Committee.