

NEIL C. PARROTT, P. E.

Legislative District 2B  
Washington County

Judiciary Committee



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April 21, 2014

Dear Friend,

I hope you and your family are doing well. I appreciate your interest in what is happening in state government. Paying attention is critical to making positive changes, and I thought you might be interested in reading my 2014 end of session letter this year.

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

The 434th session of the Maryland General Assembly came to an end on Monday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, at midnight. The 2014 session created many new laws that will affect you and your family. The following notes represent my perspective on the session. It is my hope that they will be informative and helpful to you.

Please review the following summary and skip to the parts that interest you the most. For more information on the starred bills (\*) that I introduced, please visit <http://delegateneilparrott.org>, where you can find PowerPoint presentations that provide greater detail.

As you will see, a lot occurred during the 434th session of the Maryland General Assembly. Due to space constraints, I was not able to detail here many of the bad bills that were stopped. I consider these defensive actions every bit as important as passing new laws in order to protect your family and protect your freedom.

It is an honor to serve you in the Maryland General Assembly. If there is anything I can do to be of service to you or your family, please contact me by email at [neil.parrott@house.state.md.us](mailto:neil.parrott@house.state.md.us) or by phone at 240-329-0293.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Neil C. Parrott".

Neil C. Parrott  
2B Delegate, Washington County

**IN THIS LETTER:**

**TAX CUT ATTEMPTS AND TWO SUCCESSES:**

1. *Delegate Parrott's Tax Cut Bills*
  - a. *HB 1216 - Retirees Tax Relief \**
  - b. *HB 448 - Eliminate Maryland's Marriage Penalty*
2. *HB 50 - Elimination of the Rain Tax - A bill I co-sponsored*
3. *HB 326 - The Income Tax Relief Act of 2014 - A bill I co-sponsored*
4. *Corporate Income Tax Cuts - Bills I co-sponsored and/or supported*
5. *Success - HB 739 Estate Tax Reduction - A bill I co-sponsored*
6. *Success - HB 1228 Volunteer Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services Tax Deduction - A bill I supported*

**FINANCIAL:**

1. *Del. Parrott's Minimum Wage Compromise HB 293 \**
2. *Maryland's Operating Budget*
3. *Maryland's Capital Budget (Debt)*
4. *Legislators vote themselves a more than 15% raise - Without a "vote"*
5. *Maryland's Health Care Exchange*

**SOCIAL:**

1. *Delegate Parrott's Social Bills*
  - a. *HB 1110 - Protecting Children at Libraries and Schools \**
  - b. *HB 283 - Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act \**
2. *SB 212 - "Bathroom Bill"*
3. *SB 364 - Decriminalization of Marijuana*

**SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS:**

1. *Delegate Parrott's 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Rights Bills*
  - a. *HB 1185 - Castle Doctrine \**
  - b. *HB 1325 - "Pop Tart" Bill \**
2. *2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Rights Bills - General Discussion*

**TAX CUT ATTEMPTS AND TWO SUCCESSES:**

*Delegate Parrott's Two Tax Cut Bills:*

This session, I introduced two bills that would have lowered taxes for retirees and married couples.

**HB 1216 - Retirees Tax Relief:**

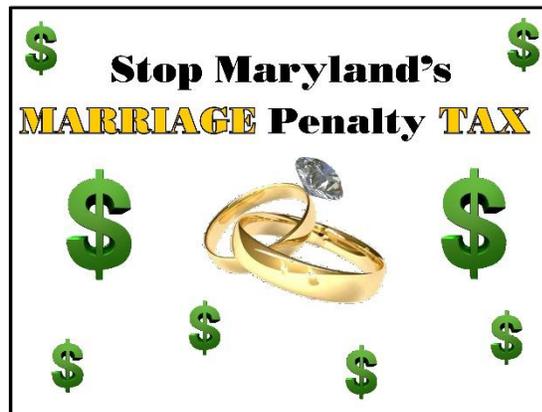
Our retirees need a break, and this bill would have done it. HB 1216 would have made Maryland a retirement-friendly state, by reducing income tax for Marylanders over 65. The bill was based on the policies currently in place in Pennsylvania and other surrounding states.

In fact, **Forbes** Magazine recently ranked **Maryland the 9th worst state** in the nation for retirement, and **Virginia was ranked the 5th best**. While the bill did not pass this year, changes to the tax code for retirees in Maryland is needed in order to help our seniors stay close to friends and family when they retire.

Evidence overwhelmingly indicates that Marylanders are fleeing to other states upon retirement. With this change to our tax code, Maryland could prevent people from leaving our state, and perhaps even encourage retirees from other states to come to Maryland in their retirement.

**HB 448 - Eliminate Maryland's Marriage Penalty:**

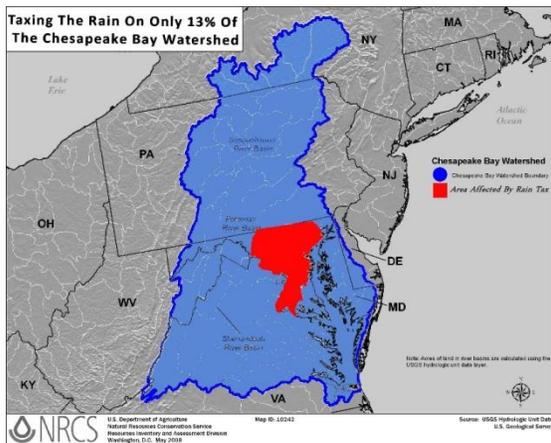
The Marriage Penalty Tax Removal Bill, HB 448, would have given some relief from the tax burden on Maryland families by allowing married couples to be taxed at the same level as two unmarried persons earning the same amount. All people should be treated equally under the law. Taxes have been increased to historic levels in the last 8 years during the O'Malley/Brown Administration.



Families have been hit hard with many new taxes. HB 448 would help **show respect for the family** and would work **stop punishing Maryland's married couples**. Marriage is an important institution that our Maryland tax policies should encourage, not punish.

*HB 50 – Elimination of the Rain Tax – A bill I co-sponsored:*

In 2012, Maryland lawmakers passed the Rain Tax, officially known as HB 987 – The Stormwater Management-Watershed and Restoration Program. The purpose of the legislation was to reduce the pollution levels in the Chesapeake Bay. Funding for the program was to come from taxing Marylanders on anything that prevented rain water from reaching the earth, like paved parking lots and building structures.



The figure on the left shows that Maryland's rain tax **only taxes properties in 13% of the actual watershed that drains to the Chesapeake Bay**. Taxing these properties creates a situation where Maryland puts our own businesses, homeowners, and non-profit organizations at a financial disadvantage to our neighboring states through over-taxation.

In addition, the Rain Tax does not address the real issue of Bay Pollution. Much of the Bay's pollution is caused by sediment release from the Conowingo Dam. When storms come through or flooding occurs, the water levels rise to the point that an emergency release of waters from the Dam becomes necessary. Such a rush of water then flows out that it churns the sediment that's been piled up at the Dam and pushes it out into the Bay.

This is the problem that truly needs to be addressed; **it's time to implement regular dredging of sediment from the Conowingo Dam** to prevent debris and other pollutants entering the Bay during every storm. For an example of the direct cause and effect of this sediment upon the Bay, please see the photo on the right from a "Chesapeake Quarterly" article, in which the Bay is photographed after a storm. The brown trail from the top should be blue, but shows the sediment coming from the Conowingo Dam.



Given the disparate ways in which it is being implemented and the fiscal impact on our small businesses, churches, and charitable organizations, I and my fellow House Republicans introduced **HB 50**, legislation that would have repealed or modified the tax.

Unfortunately, the Democratic Speaker of the House Mike Busch declared that such legislation was dead on arrival. He was correct. The bill was referred to the House Environmental Matters Committee where it received an unfavorable vote. The "Rain Tax" continues in Maryland, but thankfully still does not affect Washington County.

*HB 326 – The Income Tax Relief Act of 2014 – A bill I co-sponsored:*

HB 326, The Income Tax Relief Act of 2014, was the House Republican's signature tax relief proposal for the 2014 Session. Since the start of the O'Malley/Brown Administration there have been more than 80 tax, fee and toll increases, resulting in \$8 billion in new revenue to the state, while increasing each household's tax bill by about \$4,000 per year. HB 326 would have lowered the income tax rate by 10% over the next three years and brought much-needed tax relief for all taxpayers, regardless of their income. Unfortunately, the Democrat majority killed this bill and it never received a committee vote.

*Corporate Income Tax Cuts – Bills I co-sponsored and/or supported:*

There were three separate corporate tax bills (HB 330, HB 339, and HB 457) introduced this year which would have reduced the corporate tax rate from 8.25% to as little as 4%. I believe that the reduction of the corporate tax rate is needed in Maryland. The reduction would encourage new corporations to come to our state and would encourage companies that are already here to invest more heavily in the state, creating new jobs for Marylanders. Unfortunately none of the bills made it out of committee this year.

*Success - HB 739 Estate Tax Reduction – A bill I co-sponsored:*

The House and Senate voted to loosen the grip of Maryland's high Estate Tax, also known as the Death Tax.

The bill recouples the tax with the federal exemption by 2018. I was pleased to work with my Democrat colleagues to get this bill passed. While several colleagues reluctantly supported the bill they realized that the currently high estate tax has been driving citizens and their resources out of Maryland. While I support Maryland's complete elimination of death taxes, I voted for and support this reduction to the crippling tax burden placed on Maryland's citizens. Article: (<http://marylandreporter.com/2014/03/19/miller-reluctantly-supports-estate-tax-cut-hes-sponsoring/>)

*Success – HB 1228 Income tax subtraction for volunteer fire, rescue, and EMS members – A bill I supported:*

Currently, qualifying volunteer members and auxiliary members of Maryland fire, rescue, or emergency medical services organizations are allowed a \$3,500 subtraction modification on their income taxes. This bill, which I voted for, increases that amount by **\$250 each year up to \$5,000 in 2019**. Volunteer fire, rescue, and EMS members are critical to Washington County and this bill is one way to say “thank you” for their hard work and service.



**FINANCIAL**

*Minimum Wage*

The Maryland Legislature voted to incrementally increase the minimum wage rate in Maryland to reach \$10.10 in July of 2018. While designed to help people earning the minimum wage, unfortunately, this law will hurt the very people it is trying to help.

I voted against this bill because I believe it will hurt businesses all across the state, but in particular, Washington County. In Washington County we have to compete with Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania businesses. Businesses looking to open up in the I-81 corridor and close to the I-70 corridor would ideally like to open operations in our county, but with Maryland's high business taxes, and now a higher minimum wage rate, it will become even more difficult for us to attract those jobs.

With regard to the minimum wage issue, I compiled a YouTube video which helps explain why raising the minimum wage is bad policy. Please visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPkCJqAGBE4> to view it.

I am committed to trying to make Maryland more business-friendly, and this bill did just the opposite. Not only does it hurt employers, but the new law also hurts employees who will not get hired and may even lose their jobs as a result of the higher minimum wage rate.

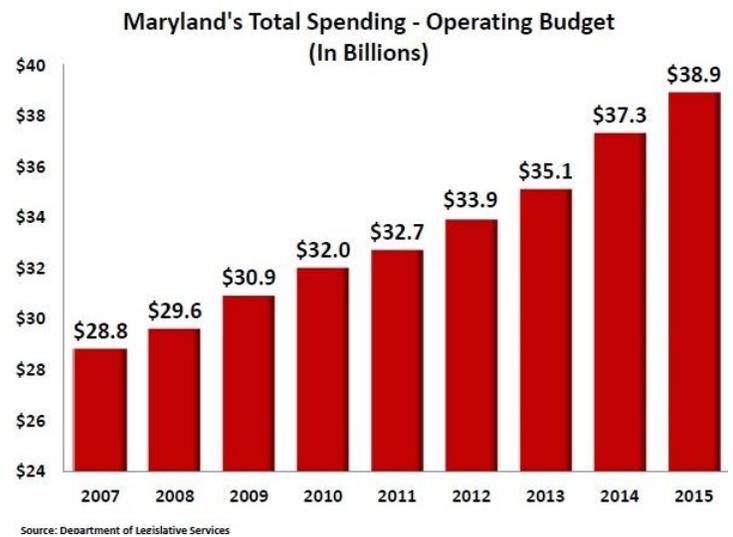
**Delegate Parrott Helps to Shape the Discussion:** In an effort to counter this harmful legislation and to provide a viable alternative, I introduced HB 293 this session. HB 293, the County Choice Minimum Wage Bill, would have given each individual county the ability to set its own minimum wage rate. This was a reasonable compromise of conflicting needs, given the vast disparity in counties' economic climates across the state. Since Western Maryland, Central Maryland, the D.C. suburbs and the Eastern Shore each have a distinctive character and vastly different “costs of living,” for the minimum wage rate in Maryland, **one size does not fit all**.

I believe that each individual county can serve the needs of its citizens' best. For some counties, a raise in minimum wage would suit them. For others, the consequences could be severely negative. The bill would have allowed counties to set their own minimum wage rates and have the Maryland State Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation enforce the law. A version of the bill passed in the House and was seriously considered by Senate President Mike Miller, but the O'Malley/Brown Administration did not like it and pushed for their original bill to pass.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, a non-partisan analyst in Washington DC, raising the national minimum wage to \$10.10/hour would cost the nation half a million jobs. In Maryland, this extreme hike will cost our state nearly 12,000 much-needed jobs. Unfortunately, the minimum wage bill that passed will do little to help low-wage workers, and will in fact, put many workers on the unemployment line.

### *Operating Budget*

Like a drunken sailor who cannot get enough whiskey, the Maryland Legislature cannot spend enough of our hard-earned money. The graph shows how the O'Malley/Brown Administration and the legislature have increased spending with every budget since they have been in office. This spending exceeds the rate of inflation and continued increasing despite the serious financial downturn that forced businesses and individuals to cut spending. This year's spending is increased by more than \$2 billion, or a 6% increase from fiscal year 2013.



***Your taxes have increased to pay for all of this!*** The budget relies on Governor O'Malley's record-setting **26 new tax increases** since taking office for a total of 80 tax, fee and toll increases. In fact, next year's operating budget is over \$10 billion (37%) higher than the first O'Malley/Brown budget in 2007. Maryland's legislature continues to make Maryland government bigger while taxpayers struggle to keep up with these new taxes and fees. In spite of the increased spending, the budget even steals \$100 million from teachers and state employee pensions so that it can continue to spend more money today while sacrificing the financial future. An alternative budget that I supported would have reduced spending to less than the rate of inflation. Our state government is not being financially responsible with our money.

### *Capital Budget (DEBT)*

As rapidly as state spending has grown over the last eight years, the growth in state debt has also been rather dramatic. While there are certainly many, worthwhile projects in the Capital budget, **Maryland's debt far exceeds the taxpayers' ability to pay for it.** Many of the Capital Budget Projects are outside the scope of how government should be spending taxpayer dollars, such as the funding of facilities for Casa de Maryland, a non-profit organization that helps illegal aliens skirt the law. This is essentially "charitable giving" with taxpayer dollars in the form of debt. It may feel good, but it is not the job of government, AND the state is taking on more debt to do it!

Maryland's debt payments, commonly called "debt service," are funded primarily by the revenue from the property tax; a revenue source which has flat-lined over the last several years due lower property values statewide. To cover shortages, Maryland has supplemented debt payments with dollars from the General Fund. But Maryland's General Fund is facing significant deficits in the coming years, and will not be able to cover these growing shortages. Without supplements from the General Fund, Maryland's only other option would be to increase the state property tax. As much as a 70% increase in property taxes could be needed to cover Maryland's debt payments. After more than 80 tax, fee, and toll increases over the last several years, another tax increase is NOT something our citizens can afford.

In many ways, what we do in the Capital Budget is like using our children's credit cards. We run up debt in their names, reap the benefit of all the projects, and then we leave the responsibility of paying to future generations. This is not responsible government, and I voted against this irresponsible bill.

*Legislators vote themselves a more than 15% raise - Without a "vote"*

The photo on the right shows the results of voting, where a green vote would stop the "automatic" pay raise for Legislators until the legislators have had a chance to debate and vote on the increase.



My vote is shown in the first column on the left, sixth name down. With my green vote I supported the effort to at least have a discussion and a vote regarding whether the legislators want the pay raises or not. The vote that took place on the House floor would have brought the salary bill directly to the House floor for a vote. To have required a vote on the raise would have provided "transparency and accountability" for the legislators who control the budget and consequently control this pay raise.

Unfortunately, the majority of legislators hid behind the Salary Review Commission's recommendation of a 15.7% increase. Unlike eight years ago, when the legislature actually took a vote on the pay raise, this year they hid behind procedure, allowing them to tell their constituents, "I didn't vote for my own pay raise."

Obviously, my feeling is that with the hard economic situation that many Maryland families find themselves in right now, the Legislators should not be voting pay raises for themselves. This is a part-time position, intended to be a "Citizen Legislature", rather than a state house full of "Career Politicians". Personally, I work hard and depend on my business as a traffic engineer to support my family, and I think that makes for a good reminder for me to vote as my constituents want for me to vote.

*Maryland's Health Care Exchange*

Unfortunately, one of the largest financial fiascos to hit the State in years is the Maryland Health Care Exchange. After spending \$150 million on a computer system that didn't work, wrangling more money out of the legislature to cover those individuals who were not able to sign up before the deadline, and increasing the number of personnel in the call center from 100 to 400, the entire system will be scrapped. **Millions of your taxpayer funds have just been wasted.**

With less than a week left in the Session, Governor O'Malley announced that Maryland will now be transitioning to the Connecticut system. The cost? No one knows for certain, but an emergency contract for \$50 million has been approved to pay the contractor that will handle the transition.

Why the disaster? It started with Governor O'Malley's rush to make Maryland the first state in the nation to implement Obamacare and ended with Lt. Governor Brown's failure to properly oversee the construction and implementation of the exchange.

**SOCIAL:**

*Delegate Parrott's Social Bills*

*HB 1110 Protecting Children at Libraries and Schools*

Did you know that children can access pornography and obscene material through the wireless internet connection at certain County Library Systems in Maryland very easily by using a Nintendo DS, a Kindle Fire, a Wii, an iPod, or an iPad? In a "Pornography Access Test", 50% of libraries that were tested in Maryland allowed access to explicitly pornographic websites through their free wireless internet connection.

**Federal law requires** that all libraries must filter their own hardware that users access, but the current law does not specify if the wireless internet provided by the facility must be filtered or not. My bill would require the filters so

that children would be protected even while using common hand-held devices to access the internet.

Despite the federal law, some libraries are not protecting our children, possibly by oversight. Our children need to be protected and our tax dollars should not be used to distribute pornography. HB 1110 is needed so that the federal CIPA law can be clarified and codified in Maryland, to apply to all internet use.

I appreciate Maryland's librarians and teachers for the important work they do, for helping our children, and for their contributions to our communities. I especially commend and praise the Washington County Library System for their firm policies on blocking obscene materials in Washington County Libraries, both on their hardware and free wireless connections, unlike our neighboring Frederick County Libraries.

This bill would help to clarify the law, protect children, and help librarians and teachers in Maryland. While the bill did not pass this year, this is a bill that should be reintroduced next year.

#### *HB 283 Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act*

is a matter of basic humanity to prevent pain to innocents and our most vulnerable citizens. This bill would update Maryland law to recognize current, medical science, showing that unborn children feel pain late in pregnancy. It is time for Maryland to find some middle-ground on the issue of abortion. We cannot continue, as a state, to ignore scientific fact - the fact that children in the womb feel pain after 5 months gestation.



**Delegate Parrott with other Delegates at a Press Conference Supporting HB 283, the Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act**

#### *SB 212 "Bathroom Bill"*

SB 212, also known as the Bathroom Bill, was passed this year and gives special rights to people who consider themselves to be transgendered or transsexual. Deceitfully assigned the name "Fairness for All Marylander's Act of 2014", the bill actually takes away the rights of the vast majority of Marylanders.

This radical bill will require most public facilities to be open to anyone – regardless of gender or gender expression. This bill creates a wide open opportunity for a man to simply say he sincerely feels like a woman, enter the women's restroom, shower room, or locker room, and endanger women and girls. Conversely, a woman could do the same to the men's room, eliminating the privacy of men as well. Unbelievably, this bill takes away the rights of parents to know that when their children enter public facilities, that only individuals of the same sex will also be in the facility. This bill begs the question, "What about my rights?"

Contrary to what the bill sponsors want you to believe, this bill creates dangerous opportunities for sexual assault. Only two US States and Canada have recently instituted similar laws. Already, sexual predators have already assaulted women and children in those locations. Montgomery County also adopted a similar law and several cases where women have been raped are occurring in their bathrooms.

If this bill is not overturned, it will radically change our society and put our families and children at risk. You may be interested to know that MDPetitions.com is currently conducting a survey on their website to help determine whether or not they will lead an effort to try to take this bill to referendum so that the people of Maryland can have the final say regarding this controversial bill.

#### *SB 364 Decriminalization of Marijuana*

The bill decriminalizing marijuana passed this year and is now awaiting signature by the Governor. This bill does not legalize marijuana, but makes the possession of 10 grams or less of marijuana a civil offense, like a parking

ticket. A first-time offender would pay a \$100 fine, and second and third offenses would be \$250 and \$500, respectively.

This bill sends the wrong message to children all across the State of Maryland. Studies have shown that in states where decriminalization has taken place, drug use by young people has increased significantly. Decriminalizing marijuana sends the confusing message that while the drug is still illegal, it is acceptable to use in small amounts. Studies show that another side effect is the increased use of harder drugs like heroin, LSD, and methamphetamines, as marijuana often acts as a “gateway” drug.

Decriminalizing the drug does not stop illegal drug dealing, but actually increases the practice. By not seriously enforcing our laws, we are allowing more money to go to gangs, drug cartels, and terrorist organizations.

Marijuana poses a serious risk to young people and Maryland should not treat possession of marijuana with a simple fine like it would for littering.

## **SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS:**

*Delegate Parrott's 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Rights Bills*

*HB 1185 Castle Doctrine*

Currently in Maryland, homeowners who defend themselves by means of force against intruders cannot be held civilly liable for any damage or injuries, but they can be held criminally liable.

There is no current criminal protection under the law for Marylanders using deadly force against an unlawful intruder. This bill would provide the “castle doctrine” defense to provide homeowners protection in cases of defense against home invasion.

This bill would help Marylanders to be protected from criminal charges should the WORST happen, should an intruder enter their home unlawfully with the intent to do harm to them or their family. The bill had a hearing, but unfortunately, was not brought out for a vote in the Judiciary Committee.

*HB 1325 “Pop Tart” Bill*

Do you remember the 7-year old child in Maryland who was suspended for shaping his Pop-Tart into the shape of a gun? Did you know that a 6-year old Maryland student was suspended for fashioning a firearm with his hand and making bang-bang noise, or the 11-year old Marylander suspended for the same thing? These are just a few of the cases in Maryland.

**Do These Look Dangerous to You?**



My bill, HB 1325, would specify that common sense be used and not a political agenda against gun rights. It specifies that where there is no threat, no fear, no damage, there should be no punishment. Kids should not be suspended or punished for being kids. Children should be taught to respect firearms, not to fear even the mention of them. The bill did not pass this year, but this is a bill that could be modified and reintroduced in future sessions.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Rights Bills – General Discussion*

In some ways, this year was a good year for gun rights in the General Assembly. Bow hunters were given permission to carry guns in deer management region A where bear can be located. In addition, the Department of Natural Resources was given authority to expand deer hunting on Sundays in Washington County and several others throughout the state.

Last year saw a serious restriction on guns rights in the form of SB 281. I believe that this burdensome bill is unconstitutional and am hopeful that a lawsuit that had a hearing earlier in the year will overturn SB281's provisions. For more details on this lawsuit, you can visit [mdpetitions.com/sb-281-lawsuit-status](http://mdpetitions.com/sb-281-lawsuit-status).