February 1, 2019

State House Update

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Message to Members

On January 28, 2019, the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) hosted its annual Maryland General Assembly Legislative Forum. The GBC holds this event a few weeks after the start of the Maryland General Assembly legislative session to provide members and guests the opportunity to hear from political "insiders" about the most important and controversial issues facing the policymakers.

The event featured leading figures from the Executive and Legislative branches from both parties. The panel consisted of Senior Advisor Keiffer Mitchell representing Governor Larry Hogan (R), Senator Bill Ferguson (D-46), Senator J.B. Jennings (R-7), Delegate Ben Brooks (D-10), Delegate Eric Bromwell (D-8), Delegate Nic Kipke (R-31B) and Delegate Sheree Sample-Hughes (D-37A). Added this year were leaders from the Women Legislators of Maryland (Delegate Sample-Hughes) and the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland (Delegate Brooks) to add the perspective of those organizations' priorities.

The speakers addressed a wide range of issues with a focus on what is important to the Greater Baltimore region. Nearly 300 attendees heard about matters including public safety and
violent crime in Baltimore City, income tax relief, health care, public education, veteran's issues and investment in economically-stressed communities.

The GBC will be active throughout the legislative session serving as the voice of business and protecting Maryland's competitive business environment. To follow the GBC's work in Annapolis, including positions on priority legislation and access to written testimony, visit our legislative tracking page. Also, take a moment to visit the GBC's legislative webpage where members can access the 2019 legislative agenda and important information about the Maryland General Assembly.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Donald C. Fry
President and CEO

**Governor Hogan Delivers State of the State Address**

Governor Larry Hogan delivered his first State of the State Address of his second term on January 30, 2019. In the 28-minute speech, the Governor reported that the state of the State is strong. He touted his Administration's accomplishments during the previous four years and focused on the importance of finding common ground regardless of political party.

Governor Hogan also cited his legislative priorities for the 2019 legislation session of the Maryland General Assembly. The GBC will support a number of items mentioned in the State of the State address, including proposals related to public safety, Opportunity Zones and other initiatives that improve Maryland's business competitiveness.

Many were interested in learning more about what the Governor would propose for tax relief. In the speech, he called for legislators to approve eight separate pieces of his legislative package for 2019 that equate to $500 million in tax relief over five years. These bills include tax cuts for certain retirement benefits, employers providing parental leave, student loan debt, college savings plans, manufacturers and investors in federal Opportunity Zones.

The Governor also discussed his public safety package of proposals, including some that seek to address the crisis of violent crime crisis in Baltimore City. These include a judicial transparency proposal and repeat gun crimes bill, both of which the GBC is supporting. This follows other announcements that the Governor has instituted increased local, state and federal law enforcement coordination and expanded the Project Exile program in the United States Attorney's Office.
House Republican Legislative Priorities

The Maryland House Republicans issued its formal legislative priorities for 2019 session of the Maryland General Assembly. The priorities consist of four bills, which will be introduced shortly, that address violent crime, police officers, taxes and legislative districts.

Specifically, the four priorities propose the following:

- Lower the Maryland income tax rate by a quarter percentage point, which would amount to about $400 million annually.
- Establish a public registry of violent offenders modeled after Maryland's sex offender registry.
- Allow government bodies to establish a special police officer program within their jurisdictions to respond to school shootings.
- Authorize single-member House legislative districts rather than the current structure that requires the 47 legislative districts to have three delegates.

Following the 2018 General Election, Republicans lost a net of eight seats in the Maryland House of Delegates. The current partisan split is 99 Democrats and 42 Republicans.

Democratic Legislative Priorities

A few days after the House Republicans released their priorities, the Democratic legislative leadership released their legislative package. The Democrats have seven top priorities for the session:

- Raise Maryland’s minimum wage to $15 per hour.
- Create a prescription drug price monitoring board and cap prescription costs for state retirees.
- Prohibit health insurers from declining insurance to those with preexisting conditions.
- Ban 3-D printed guns.
- Expand the child care tax credit.
- Ban polystyrene in Maryland.
- Raise the minimum age for buying tobacco to 21.

Some of these proposals have failed to pass in previous sessions, but because they are now formal priorities of the Democratic leadership, chances for success greatly improve. While some of these bills may face the threat of a gubernatorial veto, Democrats hold veto-proof majorities in both the Senate of Maryland and the House of Delegates if the override vote is along party lines.

Upcoming Dates of Interest

On February 11, the GBC is hosting a Breakfast Briefing, “What the Affordable Care Act Means for You.” This event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at the GBC Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202.
On February 20, the GBC is hosting a Newsmaker Breakfast, "Baltimore's CitiWatch Surveillance Camera Program - Its Role in Law Enforcement." This event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at the GBC Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202.

On February 25, the GBC is hosting a Newsmaker Breakfast, "Meet Baltimore Police Department Acting Commissioner Michael Harrison." This event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at the GBC Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202.