

Annapolis Advocate

Paul Pinsky, your senator in the 22nd District

January 2007 Phone: 301-858-3155 E-mail: Paul.Pinsky@senate.state.md.us



Dear Neighbor,

Can government be used to improve our quality of life? Or is government itself the root of the problems we face?

Over recent years, many of our nation's top politicians have blamed "government" for just about all our problems. These politicians have worked to "reduce" government, even if that means people suffer.

I don't buy that approach. I think that we can use government to improve our lives. That's why I entered public service. What government can do can make — and has made — a powerful, positive impact on the lives we lead.

Think about Social Security, for instance. But, more importantly, think about how much we still need to accomplish, and can accomplish, with government's help.

We need a "living wage" for jobs in our state. We need a tax system that stops rewarding corporations that lavish bonuses on CEOs. We need health insurance for everyone, not just seniors.

Unfortunately, here locally, trust in government is running low. We have a former school superintendent under indictment, controversy over the letting of county contracts, and local lawmakers using county credit cards for personal use. Scandals like these fuel the anti-government fire — and sidetrack efforts to make government work for us all.

So what can we do? We can demand that officials provide ethical leadership — or get out of the way. There's simply no other way to regain the confidence in local government we need.

Paul Pinsky

Trouble Ahead . . .

. . . for polar bears and the rest of us, too

We've had so far, knock on wood, a warm winter. Unfortunately, we better get ready for many more, so many more that we won't be smiling about the unseasonably warm weather.

Welcome to global warming, the end product of what happens when greenhouse gases — most notably, carbon dioxide — keep the sun's heat within the earth's atmosphere.

How serious a problem has global warming become? Much more serious than the Bush administration is willing to admit. If not abated, global warming will limit our drinking water supply, threaten communities on our coasts and major estuaries, and increase the frequency of droughts and major storms.

Just last month, one international insurance company stopped writing insurance in coastal areas. Maryland's Eastern Shore, according to recent news reports, has witnessed an 18 inch rise in sea level. Glacier National Park, note experts, will someday soon no longer have glaciers.

"Global warming isn't science fiction," notes Senator Paul Pinsky. "It's now science."

Last year, state lawmakers in Annapolis enacted legislation — sponsored by Senator Pinsky — that's helping make Maryland a national leader in the struggle against global warming.

This new legislation, the Healthy Air Act, includes provisions that will reduce



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carbon dioxide levels by 10 percent.

In the upcoming 2007 legislative session, Senator Pinsky will be working on two key follow-up measures. One, the Clean Car Act, will seek to reduce auto emissions. The second, the Global Warming Initiative, aims to place a cap on carbon dioxide emissions in Maryland, along the lines of similar legislation recently enacted in California.

Interested in more information? You can contact Senator Pinsky at Paul.Pinsky@senate.state.md.us.

A fair economy, real democracy, and livable communities

Improving Our Schools, Inside and Out

The new O'Malley administration could help get our kids out of portable classrooms

Imagine a fourth grade student who spends all day in an outdoor, temporary classroom, waiting for the opportunity to go inside the *real* building to use the bathroom. Or imagine a high school student who spends *half the school day* isolated in a temporary facility.

You're imagining daily reality for 10 percent of Prince George's County students. Many thousands of local students now find themselves in facilities — called everything from “trailers” to “portables” — that should not define the school experience for our children.



Over the last four years, the level of state support for school construction has been nothing less than an embarrassment. But the embarrassment could be ending.

Incoming Governor Martin O'Malley has pledged \$400 million in the first year of his term towards school construction statewide, a sum that would set a new one-year record for school construction.

The announcement of this new state school construction plan actually took place, this past summer, right here in Prince George's County, at a campaign stop at Eleanor Roosevelt High School where Senator Pinsky introduced then-candidate O'Malley.

Some observers are now arguing that state finances are too tight to allow Governor O'Malley to go through with his school construction pledge. But Senator Pinsky and other local lawmakers will be fighting this winter to make sure that the governor's school construction pledge gets kept.

“Our county schools,” the senator explains, “need buildings that can help learning take place.”

Improving Classroom Learning

Students in our county schools need to be challenged — and stretched. Our new

county school superintendent seems to understand that.

Superintendent John Deasy is already expanding the Advanced Placement program in high schools and will be encouraging more students to take the class and the AP test.

At the same time, notes Senator Paul Pinsky, the county needs to take care not to stuff unprepared students into these college-level AP classes.

“That's setting these students up for failure,” explains Senator Pinsky. “Dr. Deasy needs to increase challenging classes while maintaining the rigor for those ready for

the challenge.”

Expectations, adds the senator, need to rise throughout the school system, not just for students.

“We need higher expectations for the people who run the system, from central office staff to the leadership in each school,” Senator Pinsky notes. “Parents need to be able to expect effective instruction and a safe and orderly environment for all students.”

Our Elected New School Board

November's election saw the reintroduction of an elected Board of Education to Prince George's County. Four years ago, after a series of fairly outrageous missteps, the state legislature replaced the old elected board with an appointed board.

Senator Pinsky supported this action on the condition that the county school system be returned to an elected board in 2006. That promise has now been kept.

“I look forward to a Board of Education that works wells internally, with the community, and with the superintendent,” Senator Pinsky notes. “If everyone works together, we can move our system forward.”

Schools and Corporate Creep

The growing campaign against junk food

Senator Paul Pinsky has been a long-time advocate for keeping our schools a place for learning, not for marketing products to young people.

We all share, the senator believes, a responsibility to make sure that private-sector marketing whizzes aren't allowed to turn our school children into a captive audience.

One big battleground in the struggle against the commercialization of our schools has, over recent years, involved vending machines for junk food and drink.

In Annapolis, Senator Pinsky has been fighting for legislation that would limit the in-school marketing of unhealthy foodstuffs and beverages.

This past year, the big national soda companies — feeling the pressure from

similar efforts all around the country — announced they would soon no longer sell full-calorie sodas in schools. They also agreed to restrict school products to water, juice, and milk, as well as diet soda in high schools.

This initial step may help create healthier school environments, notes Senator Pinsky. But this industry move hardly eliminates the need for more serious regulation.

Our nation's child obesity rates, the senator points out, have been rising over the same years that soda and candy sales in schools have been exploding.

“You can't require our children to learn about health — a state requirement to graduate — at the same time you're pushing junk food sales at them all day long,” says the senator.



Smart Growth Still Smart

The face of our communities is changing, for a common-sense reason

Construction is taking place all across the 22nd district. We have the renovation and expansion of the New Carrollton Hotel (the old Sheraton) into offices, restaurants, and condos.

To the west, we have the the M-Square project north of Riverdale Park, near the College Park Metro, with research facilities and thousands of new jobs.

To the north, the MetroLand project surrounding the Greenbelt Metro. To the south, the EYA townhouse development on Rte. 1 in old Hyattsville.

Finally, out further west, multiple projects near the P.G. Plaza/Metro station area, including the University Town Center project with condos, movie theatres, student housing, restaurants, and a new Staples and Bally gym directly under and adjacent to the Metro station itself.

Will these projects inundate our area with more development than we can handle? How will these projects transform our communities? These are important, valid questions now getting raised throughout our district.

The 22nd district used to be a “suburb” of Washington, just like the rest of Prince George’s and Montgomery counties.

That’s no longer the case. We are now an extension of the Washington area, with dense housing, traffic, and a greater reliance on mass transit.

In the 1990s, amid our state and county’s spiraling development, former governor Paris Glendenning popularized the “smart growth” movement.

The basic idea: Let growth take place only in areas where infrastructure — roads, schools, water and sewer — already exist, while sealing off existing green space from new growth.

At the same time, encourage jobs and housing to locate near mass transit and reduce the use of automobiles.

The goal: Protect as much green space as possible because green space, once lost,

can’t be recovered.

The 22nd district, obviously, fits the definition of an area ripe for “smart growth.” We have infrastructure. Most of our new projects center around the five Metro stops in or adjacent to our district.

The new projects in our 22nd district combine housing, jobs, and retail, a reality that should allow new residents to go car-less, or allow a family to jettison one car of two.

“Intense growth here in our district,” notes Senator Pinsky, “will hopefully preserve green space and parkland in the outer reaches of Prince George’s and Anne Arundel counties and bring some much needed services — and new urban energy — to local residents.”

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Serving the 22nd District

Need Help in Annapolis? You Have It!

Senator Paul Pinsky has a great staff working with him — and for you — in Annapolis.

These staffers can help you with problems, track the legislative progress of a bill you may be following, set up trips to the state capitol, or provide you with information on Senate scholarship applications.

To contact the Senator Pinsky office staff, just call 301-858-3155 or email this address: Paul.Pinsky@senate.state.md.us.

This year’s staff line-up: Pam Shur-

kin serves as administrative assistant, and David Kahn serves as the senator’s legislative assistant.

Also working in Senator Pinsky’s office in Annapolis this session: Mark Travaglini and intern Jaya Kannan.

Scholarship Applications Now Available

Are you or anyone in your family interested in financial help to attend a college in Maryland next year?

If you are, you can fill out a brief application for a state senatorial scholar-

ship. Scholarships are for residents living in the 22nd district (Berwyn Heights, Edmonston, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Lanham, New Carrollton, Riverdale, Riverdale Park, and University Park).

A citizen scholarship committee reviews all completed applications.

You can download an application from www.senatorpinsky.org by clicking on the “Scholarship application” tab.

You can also request an application by calling 301-858-3155. The deadline for submission: April 10, 2007.

On the Road Again . . . and Again . . . and Again

Just going to work can be hard enough. Having to fight traffic to get there, or paying big bucks for public transit, makes commuting even harder to swallow. You would think employers, private as well as public, would be working to make commuting easier — and cheaper.

Unfortunately, that's not the case, as recent news stories make crystal clear.

Proposed Metro Fare Increase.

The Washington Metro Board has announced plans to consider a proposal that would substantially raise the cost of Metro during rush hours. This "solution," Senator Paul Pinsky believes, is nuts.

With increased air pollution and global warming such a real threat, the senator notes, government should be encouraging more people to use public transit, not less.

At a minimum, public officials ought to be setting aside a dedicated revenue stream to help underwrite the public transit system.

And maybe private employers should be paying a transit surcharge on their corporate taxes as well, since these employers don't seem to want to pay for employee parking but still want employees to arrive at work on time.

ICC: Pay as You Go.

According to traffic research studies, the planned Inter-County Connector running

east-west between I-95 and I-270 will not reduce traffic on the Beltway. But the ICC will give executives traveling from BWI-Marshall Airport a clear path to the high-tech corridor on I-270 in Montgomery County.

Thanks to the ICC, these executives won't have to sit stuck in Beltway traffic with the rest of us riff-raff. And to keep the ICC a semi-private preserve, users may have to pay as much as \$10 a trip to drive it.

What a solution for the hardworking people of our metro area!

Senator Pinsky's E-mail Newsletter: Sign Up Now!

Want to learn how sleazy lobbyists work their magic in Annapolis? Or how to connect with progressive groups working to improve our state? Between issues of this biannual newsletter, you can keep up-to-date on political doings by signing up to receive Senator Pinsky's **free monthly email newsletter**. Just e-mail ppinsky@senatorpinsky.org and type "subscribe" in the subject line.

Banking on the Beltway: Our Latest Visual Pollution

In Maryland, our interstate highways and the Beltway used to be an ad-free zone. No more. The newest corporate advertising scam? Buy naming rights to a sports field or stadium and, presto, get a Beltway roadside sign. That's just what the Chevy Chase Bank has done.

The bank last year bought naming rights to the football field at the University of Maryland's Byrd Stadium. Now signs promoting the new Chevy Chase Field are popping up around the Beltway. And what ugly signs they are, complete with raised red letters that give the bank extra roadside visibility.

How did this happen? Isn't the Beltway supposed to be advertising-free? The state highway administration seems to have a rather elastic definition of advertising.

To cut the naming rights deal for Maryland's football field, university officials had to throw in the right to advertise the football field's new name on the interstate highway system. The state highway administration gave this maneuver the green light.

Out of this deal, the university gets money for stadium expansion. Chevy Chase Bank, meanwhile, gets previously prohibited advertising on interstate highways. And what do commuters get? They get visual blight.

As singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn so aptly sang some years ago:

"Kiss the ladies, shake hands with the fellows,
open for business like a cheap bordello."

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