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Job Creation Top Priority for O'Malley

Maryland Weathered the Recession Better Than Most States, Added Job

By ASHLEY M. LATTA
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - Gov. Martin O'Malley pledged his commitment to job creation and solicited input from business leaders Friday on what he said will be a package of regulatory reforms and other pro-business initiatives to be introduced in the legislative session that kicks off next month.

Despite Maryland's economic strengths, including a highly educated and skilled workforce,

business leaders and others argue change is needed to make the state a more attractive place to do business.

"We've weathered this recession better than most," said O'Malley, speaking at a symposium in Annapolis that drew business leaders, state officials and others. "We do have a better array of strengths than any other state in the Union."

Maryland has created 20,400 jobs this year, more than 19,000 in the private sector. At 7.2 percent, the state's unemployment rate is among the lowest in the nation, according to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor.

But the governor said there is still work to be done.

"We need to restore that balance," O'Malley said, referring to the balance between protective regulations and business growth.

Identifying ways to achieve this balance, through discussion between government and business leaders, was the goal of the symposium.

O'Malley issued an executive order nearly two months ago requiring state agencies to review current regulations and make recommendations for changes or repeals no later than Dec. 17. To date, the governor has received 352 public comments and sug-

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First Year Accomplishments of the Rushern Baker, III Administration

By PRESS OFFICER
County Executive's Office

Upper Marlboro, MD - Last week marked the first anniversary of the Administration of Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III, who is the seventh Prince George's County Executive. Inaugurated on December 6, 2010, Baker, set forth an agenda that would lead the County to greatness. During his first year in office, Baker focused his Administration on addressing critical issues facing the County, such as education, public safety, job creation, economic development, health care access, constituent services, and more efficient, effective, and ethical management of the government.

Baker's success has been grounded in assembling a talented team of professionals to help him operate and manage the government. Under the mantra of collaboration, this team has worked throughout the first year of the Administration to reshape the way the County's government functions and improve the quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors. County departments and agencies have worked in concert with the Prince George's County Council, the Maryland General Assembly and Congressional delegations, the State of Maryland, neighboring jurisdictions, the County's 27 municipalities, and affiliated County

offices, commissions, and boards to implement programs and initiatives that have yielded improvements in customer service as well as more efficient and effective spending.

"I am proud of where Prince George's County is after a year in office and I want to thank all of the hard working employees for their unwavering dedication to improving services for our citizens and stakeholders," said Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. "Furthermore, I want to thank my new leadership team for helping me to successfully move this County forward. I believe that we are moving in the right direction. We have momentum and we are just getting started."

Highlights of the Baker Administration's first year in office include the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Maryland, the University of Maryland Medical System, and Dimensions Healthcare to establish a long term plan to establish a new regional medical center that will improve health care access; the creation and passage of the \$50 million Economic Development Incentive Fund; reduction in overall crime; increasing of funding to the Prince George's County Public Schools; obtaining and retaining a AAA bond rating for the County; addressing \$77 million FY 2012 deficit with no furloughs or layoffs; and creating CountyStat to help



PHOTO BY COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker speaks at his inaugural.

improve government operations.

From the onset, the Baker Administration has been committed to reshaping the County government so that it better serves the people. The Administration conducted significant research and created a blue print of best practices to guide the work of the government. Additionally, the Administration convened the Accountability, Compliance, and Integrity Task Force which developed a set of strong recommendations to improve the County's oversight of unethical conduct.

The Baker Administration has also been very active and engaged with residents, the business community, and regional, state, and national organizations to promote Prince George's County as a destination for economic opportunity as well as the home of a highly educated and diverse workforce. The County Executive has made it a point to

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Regents Decline UMCP/UMB Merger

System Would Benefit More From a Strategic Alliance

By GINA CAIRNEY
Capital News Service

ADELPHI - The potential benefits from a merger between the University of Maryland College Park and Baltimore campuses were not enough for the University System of Maryland Board of Regents to support merging the two campuses.

USM Chancellor William E. Kirwan said in a special meeting Friday that the state of Maryland and its higher education system would benefit more from a strategic alliance between the College Park and Baltimore institutions.

The regents will recommend that approach to the General Assembly when they submit their report to the legislature next week. The General Assembly asked the regents to study the idea of a merger and set a deadline of Dec. 15 for the regents' report.

"This is a decision about an

See **MERGER**, Page A5



PHOTO COURTESY GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
Gov. Martin O'Malley is Committed to job creation.

Take It Back: Students Bring 'Right' Stuff to Foreclosure Residents

By JEFFREY BENZING
Capital News Service

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY - When Gabriel Rodriguez-Rico and Danielle Dean met one recent Saturday in Prince George's County to help residents of foreclosed homes, they ended up heeding, in a way, the advice they were handing out: "Don't move. Don't panic. You have time."

"That is a huge dog," Dean said about two hours into their mission.

"A horse," said her partner. There, crouched in the front yard, a disheartening long chain around its neck, was a wolfish canine blocking access to a home near FedEx Field.

It was just one more barrier that the volunteers with Take Back Your Home -- a student-run outreach program at the Washington College of Law -- needed to surmount to notify homeowners and renters of their rights and cut through the confusing, intimidating or misleading information in foreclo-

sure documents.

Homeowners in Maryland have just 25 days to request mediation after they receive a final notice of pending court foreclosure. This can save their home, but only if they know their rights. Likewise, renters don't have to move, even if notices from a landlord imply that time is short.

The Take Back Your Home group compiles addresses of hundreds of foreclosed homes in Prince George's County in hopes that its members can meet residents early in the process to encourage mediation and counseling services, and help them surmount the barriers.

Often, they run into barriers of their own -- like the dog.

"You run over on this side and I'll run on the other," joked Rodriguez-Rico, stepping forward as the dog perked up.

With no clear route to the porch -- and after contemplating jumping a neighbor's fence, they settled for leaving a red information baggie on the

chain-link fence post. Not ideal, but at least they got the word out.

Elsewhere, they had to

the door. They live in regular homes in regular neighborhoods -- and often, said coordinator Ashly Hinmon, they can



PHOTO BY IM COACH FLICKR

Hud foreclosures go up for auction to real estate investors in every state.

leave a bag on a porch light. The door was just a tall slab of plywood, the house almost certainly vacant, like two nearby homes in the Capitol Heights neighborhood.

Some homeowners don't even know they're in foreclosure until they get a knock on

even pay their mortgage, but fell behind in past months because of unemployment or illness.

"For someone to have a home and then lose it is such a

See **AUCTION**, Page A5

Stores Seek Harsher Penalties for 'Flash Robberies'

By BRANDON COOPER
Capital News Service

COLLEGE PARK - In less than 10 minutes, 78 teenagers and young adults cycled through a 7-Eleven and emptied the shelves of candy bars, snacks and drinks. Before police arrived, they were gone.

The "flash rob" in Silver Spring last month was the fifth such mass theft in the Washington, D.C.-area since April, a crime trend defined by large groups of thieves descending on an unsuspecting store and quickly cleaning it out.

Police say the size and speed of the robbery crews make the crimes difficult to combat. Now, retail organizations and legislators in Maryland are pushing to increase penalties for flash robbers.

"Flash robs" were named because of their resemblance to flash mobs, where large groups of people connect with social

media and meet in a public place to perform a song or a dance.

"It is not a flash mob, it's just organized violence," Staci Lawrence, co-founder of Flash Mob America, one of the largest flash mob organizations in the country, said of the robberies. "I don't know how it happened, but we really feel like the name was stolen from us."

But police say local flash robberies have lacked a key component of flash mobs -- they were generally not organized through social media.

The 7-Eleven heist in Silver Spring was not set up through websites like Facebook and Twitter, but "more of the old fashioned way -- word of mouth," said Capt. Paul Starks, spokesman for the Montgomery County Police.

"There may have been tex-

See **ROB** Page A3

INSIDE

Star-Spangled Banner Coins

The United States Mint unveiled the designs of the Star-Spangled Banner Commemorative Coins. President Obama signed a law, cosponsored by Sen. Ben Cardin and Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, directing the United States Mint to create coins commemorating the 200th anniversary of the writing of the Star-Spangled Community, Page A3

Commuter Tax Credit

Senators urge the Finance Committee to include an extension of the mass-transit commuter tax credit in any relevant legislation taken up by the Senate before it expires at the end of the year. The tax credit has an impact on the region's federal workforce and middle-class commuters across the nation. Commentary, Page A4

Maryland Housing Market Slow Through 2012

Maryland home builders expect a sluggish 2012 as joblessness and low consumer confidence have delayed a housing market recovery until at least 2013, according to experts at a forecast event held by the Home Builders Association of Maryland Thursday. Business, Page A5

Movie Review

About two-thirds of the way through "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy," I jotted in my notes: I don't know what's going on. I'd been struggling to keep my head above water the whole time, and it was here that I resigned myself to drowning. when it was over I felt disoriented, Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

I heard that the less meat one eats, the better it is for the environment. How so?

-- Jason K., Sarasota, FL

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Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Forestville parish hosts Warm Nights for the homeless

Homeless men, women and children will be spending the nights and eating some of their meals at Mount Calvary Parish in Forestville from Dec. 26 through Jan. 1. They'll be housed in the school while the students are off for Christmas break.

Donations of money and hygiene items—toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, shampoo and conditioners, tissues, and combs—are needed. Also gloves, hats, scarves, socks and thermal underclothing.

For more information, call the Rectory at 301-735-5532. Checks (made out to Mt. Calvary Catholic Church) can be mailed to Mt. Calvary Church Rectory, Attention Warm Nights, 6700 Marlboro Pike, Forestville, MD 20747.

Hacked!

Last week I received a warning in what looked like a legitimate letter from AOL warning that they had discovered a "series of illegal attempts" on my account. They asked me to provide some information so they could deal with it. I gave them the information—including my password.

Ohhhh, my! What a can of worms that opened. Someone sent a message to my entire directory that I was in London and had been held up at knife point and robbed. And that I needed \$2,000. (You've heard stuff like this before, right?) I began to get emails and calls from any number of people, either warning me that I was being hacked, or saying that they wanted to help me.

With assistance from my grandson Conor, I changed my password. And then I got no emails for several days. AOL

found that everything was going to IM (Instant Messenger), which apparently is one of the ploys used by hackers.

All is okay now, but I've learned a valuable lesson: Never give out a password!

A time for giving

Once day a month the students at St. Philip's School bring, along with their lunches, extra sandwiches which are delivered to SOME (So Others Might Eat), a soup kitchen in Washington. On Nov. 15 they brought in a total of 347 sandwiches, and the 6th grade brought in the most. Another SOME day is coming up Dec. 20.

The Skyline Citizens Association has a basket on hand at all its meetings, to collect canned goods and other nonperishable food for the Oxon Hill Food Pantry. The Pantry started as the Interfaith Community Action Council back in 1970 and, after several moves, is now located at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. Skyline residents have been generous in supporting the Pantry.

Bishop McNamara High School and the Ladies of Charity of Mt. Calvary are coordinating a Winter Coat Drive. New and gently used coats, hats, gloves and scarves are needed. They can be dropped off in a box located in the vestibule at Mt. Calvary Catholic Church and will be given to those who will be receiving Christmas baskets of food and toys. The church is at 6700 Marlboro Pike.

500 Paws for Claus

The County animal shelter is encouraging animal adoption with its new 500 Paws for Claus event this month. They want to find homes for 500 animals and are offering a 50% discount on all adoption fees between now and Dec. 31.

The County Department of Environmental Resources Animal Management Division is located at 3750 Brown Station Road in Upper Marlboro. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Friday; 11:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday and Thursday. You can call them at 301-780-7200.

To view the available pets for adoption, log onto www.princegeorgespets4us.com. By the way, they stress that a pet should never be given as a surprise gift.

May they rest in peace

Thomas A. Bast, 70, a 50-year member of the American Guild of Organists and current director of music for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Temple Hills, died Dec. 1. He lived in Columbia. Survivors include his wife Irma, five children, five grandchildren and two siblings. Services will be held at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Silver Spring, 11 a.m. on Jan. 14.

Condolences to Gus and Dolores Steinhilber on the death of Gus's brother Martin Steinhilber.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Erin Nicole Brown-Sandoval, Dec. 16; Bradley Wade and David Williams III, Dec. 17; my son-in-law Jim Shearer, Charlene Baker and Paul Ratliff, Dec. 18; my grandson Michael Gallegos, Dec. 19; Ricky Nichols, Dec. 20; Evelyn McKeown, Dec. 21; Timothy Flaherty and former Morningside Mayor Irving Robinson, Dec. 22.

Happy anniversary to Margaret and Leslie Greene, their 58th on Dec. 18; Bill and Betty Malkowski, their 59th on Dec. 20; Ray and Betty Call, Dec. 20; and Rev. Doctor Kelvin and Mrs. McCune, their 26th on Dec. 21.

Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards' Legislative Update

Investments in Water Infrastructure Create Jobs and a Healthy Environment

At celebration of Edmonston, MD's innovative "Green Street," Congresswoman Edwards calls for similar projects nationally to make America healthier and put people to work.

EDMONSTON, MD – At an event today in Edmonston, Maryland, Congresswoman Donna Edwards (MD-4) called for broad investment in our nation's neglected water infrastructure.

Joined by EPA Acting Assistant Administrator for Water Nancy Stoner and environmental organizations, Green For All and American Rivers, Rep. Edwards noted the organizations' recent report, Water Works, which highlights how upgrading our crumbling water infrastructure could put nearly 1.9 million people back to work and add a quarter of a trillion dollars to the economy. The nation's water infrastructure is in dire need of repair - an estimated \$600 billion over the next 20 years is needed to protect our water supply, public health and the environment.

"Investments to improve the nation's water infrastructure will create jobs, reduce energy consumption, and promote long-term economic development and environmental stewardship. These common sense conclusions are affirmed in Water Works, a report highlighting that investments could create 36,000 - 56,000 jobs in

the state of Maryland," said Congresswoman Donna Edwards (MD-4). "We cannot afford to pass on this opportunity. That is why I introduced the Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act of 2011 to ensure that projects effectively manage stormwater flow and improve water quality, bringing us closer to a clean-energy economy and improving our outdated water infrastructure."

The occasion for the event was the one-year anniversary of Edmonston's innovative "Green Street." The model serves as an inspiration to other cities, and one that attendees at today's event agreed that the program should be scaled nationwide. In 2010, the town of 1,500 along the Anacostia River decided to make a strategic investment in upgrading its main street, adding green infrastructural upgrades and energy efficient lighting.

"Our nation's water infrastructure is in desperate need of improvement. Communities across the country identified the need for \$300 billion in wastewater and \$335 billion in drinking water infrastructure improvements for capital expenditures alone over the next 20 years," said Nancy Stoner, EPA Acting Assistant Administrator for Water. "Today, we have a path forward where innovation in water management will enable us to meet America's water needs, protect public health, create jobs and strengthen our economy."



The "Green Street" project has paid off, reducing the amount of pollution entering the Anacostia River, saving the city on its energy costs - and putting seventy people to work in its construction.

"From just outside our nation's capitol in the town of Edmonston to Chicago to San Francisco we are seeing how investments in water infrastructure are putting thousands of Americans back to work in the clean-energy economy," said Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, CEO of Green For All. "But, we are only scratching the surface, as our Water Works study highlights investments in water infrastructure should be scaled in cities and towns across the country."

"The Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act," which, if passed, would establish up to five Centers of Excellence charged with conducting research on green infrastructure and provide communities with training and technical assistance on how to implement green infrastructure practices. The legislation would also provide funding to help communities develop green infrastructure technologies.

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Ruth Turner 301 888 2153

HOLIDAY CASINO TRIP

Come join us on our Martin Luther King Jr., Holiday Casino Trip to Delaware Park Slots & Casino Trip to Delaware Park Slots & Casino on Sunday, January 15, 2012. Bus will leave Park-N-Ride, Clinton MD at 10:30 A.M. and St. Philip's Church at 11:00 AM and returns at approximately 7:00 PM.

Fun package includes a \$30.00 (Actual cost is only \$10.00). Donation is \$40.00. There will be absolutely no refunds. Benefit: Doretha Savoy and Shirley Cleaves. Points of contacts for tickets are Doretha Savoy (301) 372-6173 and Shirley Cleaves (302) 690-4260.

SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK

Scholar of the week in Prince George's County Public Schools is Crossland High School Senior Dominica Beverley. She is in the 12TH Grade and has a GPA: 3.97. Her academics include AP Government, AP Language and Composition, AP Literature and Composition, AP World History, AP Calculus AB.

Dominica extracurricular activities include Girls' Basketball, Outdoor Track, College Summit Peer Leader, Student Government (Secretary), Yearbook, Academic Life, National Honor Society, Showcase Committee, Crossland Beautification Project, ACE Mentoring Program, and Peer Mediator.

Dominica has applied to Syracuse University, University of Miami, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, and University of Maryland College Park. She would like to major in architecture interior design and/or graphic design. Her long term goal is to become an architect and design her dream house inside and out. She enjoys singing, drawing, and designing flyers and posters. She has excellent computer skills and knows sign language.

FREE CREDIT REPAIR SEMINAR

Keller Williams will sponsor a Free Credit Repair Seminar on Tuesday, December 27, 2011 at 7:30 AM.

The location of the Seminar

is 9701 Apollo Drive, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, 20774. For more information call 703-593-5488.

HOLIDAY BREAK CAMP

Upper Marlboro Community Center located at 5400 Marlboro Race Track Road in Upper Marlboro, Maryland offers a Holiday Break Camp. The Camp will be available Tuesday, December 27, 2011-Friday December 30, 2011. The Camp will be open from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. The fee is \$20 /\$24 (NR). Call 301-627-2828 for more information.

FOSTER CARE/ADOPTION PROGRAM

The Prince George's County Department of Social Services Foster Care and Adoption Program offers a variety of services to assist current and potential foster families. If you have the time and talent to become a foster or adoptive family, please call 301-909-2000. Interpretation Services are available for Non-English Speaking customers. Please contact one of the Local Offices for assistance.

Neighborhood Events

Hoyer Condemns GOP Proposal Targeting Federal Employees Congressman Calls on Republicans to Put Forward Evenhanded Plan

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) released the following statement today after House Republicans released a proposal that would pay for the payroll tax extension on the backs of federal employees:

"Once again, Republicans are trying to deflect attention from their lack of real solutions to our fiscal challenges by singling out federal employees. Federal employees are already experiencing the effects of a two-year pay freeze, and it is not appropriate to call on them once again to sacrifice while not asking everyone else to contribute their fair share. These hard-working

Americans make critical contributions to our nation every day through their service. They ensure our safety as members of our defense and homeland security departments, help direct and support medical research to preserve public health, ensure that our air and water are clean and preserved for future generations, and prosecute crimes that threaten our communities, our businesses, and our markets. I will continue fighting to keep our federal workforce from being singled out to sacrifice more than their fair share, and I urge Republicans to put forward a balanced, responsible plan to pay for their proposal."

Residents Complete Construction Training through TeamBuilders Unemployed Residents are Matched with Local Employers

LARGO, Md. — A cohort of 24 students have completed three months of hands-on-training in the construction trade through Prince George's Community College's Team Builders Academy. The group, including 12 women, is prepared to enter career fields such as building maintenance engineering, residential weatherization and property preservation. The accelerated adult career training program matches eligible unemployed Prince George's County residents with local employers by providing job readiness and occupational trades-related technical skills training.

"We are recognizing 24 participants ages 17 through 57 in the TeamBuilders Academy's fall 2011 cohort for their commitment to training in construction and occupational trades," said Thomisha Duru, director of TeamBuilders Academy. "Traditionally, males have dominated the program by more than 90 percent. We are proud to see women exploring new and sustainable career paths," added Duru.

TeamBuilders Academy began in April 2009 and was inspired by former Prince George's County Council member Tony Knotts who recognized the need for a specialized job training program to support his community. TeamBuilders Academy is now open to all eligible adult residents of Prince George's County who are long-term unemployed and eager to enter the workforce but need training, guidance and assistance to establish a solid career path. Program completers will be recognized in a public ceremony, December 12, 5 p.m., in Largo Student Center, Community Room B. For more information on the TeamBuilders Academy, visit www.pgcc.edu/go/tba, call 301-322-0964 or e-mail teambuilders@pgcc.edu.

Prince George's Community College is a National Center of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance Two-year Education (CAE2Y) designated by the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security for the years 2010 to 2015. Established in 1958, Prince George's Community College provides transfer and career programs that help students transfer to four-year colleges and universities and prepare them for the workforce. Each year, 40,000 students take part in more than 200 academic programs and workforce development and continuing education courses. Located in Largo, Maryland, Prince George's Community College has additional sites at Joint Base Andrews, University Town Center in Hyattsville, Laurel College Center, Skilled Trades Center in Camp Springs, and Westphalia Training Center in Upper Marlboro. For more information, visit the college website at www.pgcc.edu.

By Joe Clark Public Relations Specialist Prince George's Community College

White House Calls on Organizations and Communities to Nominate Dedicated Volunteers

WASHINGTON, DC – As the 26th anniversary of Martin Luther King Day approaches, the White House and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) are joining forces to recognize outstanding volunteers nationwide with the MLK Drum Majors for Service program.

The Drum Majors program gives organizations and groups an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate those volunteers who perform extraordinary everyday acts of service with reliability and commitment, but who seldom receive recognition. Drum Major awardees receive an

award from CNCS designating that person as a "Drum Major for Service" with the Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

"As we call upon Americans to honor Dr. King's legacy through engaging in service, those who set examples for their communities deserve to be honored," said Melody Barnes, Director of the Domestic Policy Council. "In challenging times, Americans traditionally come together, support one another, and strengthen their communities, improving their own and their neighbors' lives."

In 1994, Congress designated the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday as a national day of service and charged CNCS with leading this effort. Taking place each year on the third Monday in January, the MLK Day of Service is the only federal holiday observed as a national day of service – a "day on, not a day off". The 2012 MLK Day of Service will include thousands of projects spread across all 50 states.

Building off of Dr. King's quote, "If you want to say that I was a drum major, say that I was a drum major for justice," this award honors those that are mission driven, serving throughout the year.

"We have seen time and time again as a nation that service is a critical tool of strengthening communities," said CNCS Acting CEO Robert Velasco II. "In this time of intense economic challenge for the nation, Dr. King's lessons and vision are more relevant than ever."

Drum Major Award recipients will be honored by at events in their communities. To submit a volunteer to be recognized as a MLK Drum Major for Service, please visit MLKDay.gov/awards, and please take a minute to tell us about the person you plan to honor, email us at MLKDay@cns.gov.

COMMUNITY

Rob from A1

ting, but we have indications that some of the people who participated in (the theft) came from a young person's birthday party," he said.

Police originally thought a similar mass theft by about 25 people from a 7-Eleven in Germantown in August was organized through social media. But they later learned that the plan was hatched by suspects during conversations at the Montgomery County Fair.

D.C. police, who have also had to deal with some thefts labeled as flash mob robberies, said they have no evidence that social media was used in any recent group crimes, spokeswoman Gwendolyn Crump said.

And social media may not play a huge role in organizing most mass thefts in the country.

A survey conducted by the National Retail Federation in July found that more than three-quarters of the retail companies surveyed said they were victim of mass thefts. However, only 10 percent of those companies reported to being victimized by "flash mob tactics" -- crimes organized through social media -- in the past year.

Whether criminals use social media or not, retailers and legislators are looking for harsher penalties for flash robbers.

Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher, D-Montgomery, plans to introduce a bill during next year's General Assembly that would charge each member of a flash rob crew with stealing the total value of all the merchandise stolen by the group, rather than what each personally took.

Pat Donoho, president of the Maryland Retailers Association, an organization representing more than 600 retailers in the state, favors the change, which could turn misdemeanor crimes into felonies.

"You have a situation where right now you need to steal \$1,000 for it to be a felony," Donoho said. "If 10 people walk out with \$500 individually, that's not a felony. If they get prosecuted by the total value of all the merchandise stolen, they all could be charged with a felony."

Still, Donoho said, his organization does not see flash robberies as the most pressing security concern for stores.

"We are not overly concerned about it, but it is a very real phenomenon, for lack of a better term," he said.

To catch flash robbers, police are turning to social media sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for help.

Montgomery County Police posted security footage from both the mass theft in Germantown and Silver Spring on YouTube to help identify suspects. Starks credited the videos with the arrest of 17 of the suspects from the Germantown crime.

The security footage of the Silver Spring crime had close to 400,000 views on YouTube as of last week.

Aside from using social media to combat flash robberies, Starks said retail managers and employees can protect their stores by calling the police as soon as they suspect a crime is about to occur.

"If you feel uncomfortable, go with your gut," he said. "Call the police, let us come out, because once it is occurring, folks can dial 911 but there is a given response time and the way these things occur it can end quickly."

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Hurry, event ends January 3!



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¹Based on CYTD sales, II/AI. ²Not all buyers will qualify for Ford Credit Red Carpet Lease. Payments vary, dealer determines price. Residency restrictions apply. ³Not all buyers will qualify for Ford Credit financing. 60 months at \$6.67 per month per \$1,000 financed, regardless of down payment. ⁴Total cash back on Ranger V6 includes \$1,000 Trade-In Assistance Bonus Cash + \$1,500 Bonus Cash. F-150: \$1,000 Trade-In Assistance Bonus Cash. Total savings includes \$2,000 Retail Customer Cash, \$500 3.7L Bonus Cash, \$500 XLT Convenience Chrome/Tow Pkg Discount, \$1,000 Ford Credit Bonus Cash, and \$1,000 Trade-In Assistance Cash and Super Duty Diesel: \$1,000 Trade-In Assistance Bonus Cash + \$1,000 Bonus Cash. Ford Credit Bonus Cash requires Ford Credit financing; not all buyers qualify. Trade-In Assistance Bonus Cash requires trade-in of 1995 or newer vehicle, or lease terminated 30 days prior to or 90 days after new retail delivery. Offers not available on hybrids, F-150 Raptor, F-650/F-750, Edge SE 4WD and Sport model. For all offers, take new retail delivery from dealer stock by 1/3/12. See dealer for qualifications and complete details.