Md. Falls in Providing Resources to Quit Smoking

WASHINGTON - Smokers in Maryland who want to quit have enough help to quit, according to a new report by the American Lung Association.

Maryland ranks third from the bottom of all states in providing resources to help smokers quit, according to the Lung Association.

"Last year, the number of smokers in Maryland was down, but this year they've started going up again in Maryland by any stretch," said the report.

"Maryland is doing fairly well, particularly compared to other states."

Maryland has cut the smoking rate more than 30 percent over the last 10 years -- double the national average, according to Vincent Del Duca, director of Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative. It now has the fifth-lowest smoking rate in the nation, according to the report.

For example, Oklahoma, which ranks fourth from the top in resources, has one of the highest smoking rates in the country at 24.7 percent of the adult population. Only 15 percent of Marylanders smoke.

Red light, Speed Cameras Remain Controversial Even as Numbers Grow

By JESSICA TALSON

Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - In the 14 years since the Maryland legislature approved red light cameras, about 200 of the ticket-writing machines have been installed in the state, according to a database compiled by A A-Mid-Atlantic.

That doesn't include speed cameras, which are numerous in Maryland, but for which there is no comprehensive database.

"The cameras are effective because they scare people," said Amanda Clark, 29, who has received four red light camera tickets and a speed camera ticket within the last five years. "People don't want to get hit with a [$40] ticket every day. But sometimes they're placed in the wrong places, like where people don't know the speed limit or if the speed limit changes drastically. But I think they should be in all school zones."

For example, after 14 years and hundreds of installed cameras, the debate over automated traffic enforcement continues.

Red light and speed camera supporters argue that they decrease accidents and save lives. Opponents say the cameras operate in questionable legal territory and provide a warped incentive to the private companies that maintain them.

"Cameras reduce crashes. Cameras save lives," said Anne Fleming, senior vice president of communications for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

For SMOKE, Page A5

Fracking Commission to Recommend Making it Easier for Landowners to Sue

By BRIE GAN MASTERS

Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - A commission tasked with advising Maryland on possible shale gas production supports a change in the law that would make it easier for landowners to bring claims against drillers regarding water contamination and other damages near hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," sites.

The new law, which commission chair and Towson University professor David Vanko said has "pretty broad support" from the commission, would shift the burden of proof to energy companies by creating a "rebuttable pre-


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Maryland Women's Lacrosse Looks to Rebound from Loss

By SARAH MEEHAN

Capital News Service

COLLEGE PARK - Brittany Dipper isn't dwelling on her last game in goal for the Maryland Women's lacrosse team.

After unexpectedly losing in the NCAA National Championship game, the amount of time since the championship, she has a new motto: New team, new year, no regrets.

"We may be young, but we have the depth," said Dipper, who was named national goalie of the year by several lacrosse groups that choose such players.

"I think it's supposed to be corrupt helps identify when corruption is most likely to occur."

"I don't think you can predict corruption, but you can identify the various conditions in which it is likely to arise," Duffly said. "Such an effort could be an important step toward understanding how to prevent and control corruption."
Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) released the following statement today on Maryland being selected as a winner of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant, as announced on December 15th. The amount to be awarded is not yet determined for Maryland, but it is estimated to be $50 million over four years.

Congressman Hoyer stated, “I echo the sentiments of President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in congratulating Maryland on this well deserved recognition. Maryland has long been a leader in education and health care reform and this recognition is a testament to the commitment of our state leadership. I look forward to having Maryland as an example for the rest of the country as we endeavor to prepare all of our children for a successful future.”

Governor O'Malley on the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant

State of Maryland to receive $30 million grant

Anne Arundel County School System, Prince George’s County and Montgomery County School System are among the winners of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant.

The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant is a major federal initiative to support states in developing and implementing high-quality early childhood education programs for children ages birth to five.

The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant is designed to support states in developing and implementing high-quality early childhood education programs for children ages birth to five. The goal is to prepare all children for success in school and beyond. Thirty-five states, DC, and Puerto Rico competed for the Challenge Grant, and the award process was open to all states.

The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant is designed to support states in developing and implementing high-quality early childhood education programs for children ages birth to five. The goal is to prepare all children for success in school and beyond. Thirty-five states, DC, and Puerto Rico competed for the Challenge Grant, and the award process was open to all states.

In applying for this grant, Maryland outlined a plan to increase access to high-quality manufacturing and health care, which will increase the number of low-income families, provide more resources for children from birth to age five, and prepare the state for the presidential election.

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Credit card stolen? Here's what you do

Despite high-profile media attention, the odds of having your credit or debit card stolen remains at historically low levels. Although it’s good to know what to do in case lightning does strike and someone steals your card, it’s more important to use your card. Left unchecked, these hackers will run up bills, drain your checking account or steal your identity.

Here are actions to take if this happens to you:

1. Report your card stolen immediately. You’ll find a toll-free number on the back of your card, on your billing statement or at the company’s website. Close the compromised account and open a new one with a different number. Change related passwords or PIN numbers and notify companies of fraudulent payments tied to the closed account so you make sure they don’t use your old information. Also alert a friend who has other card account(s) that you have lost your card.

2. Log all cards, letters and emails you have with your card issuer about the fraud – this will be helpful if you need to file a claim or police report.

Contact one of the three major credit bureaus: Equifax (888-766-0008), Experian (888-397-3742) or TransUnion (800-680-7245), and place an Initial Fraud Alert on your credit if you suspect you have been, or are about to be, a victim of identity theft. Whichever bureau you contact will notify the other two bureaus when it enters the alert. You can remove these alerts each quarter, free of charge. If you determine that you actually have been a victim of identity theft, you can also extend an Extended Fraud Alert, which will stay on your reports for seven years.

Placing a fraud alert entitles you to one free credit report from each of the bureaus in the past 12 months, and in fact makes it harder for someone to open new credit accounts in your name. It won’t necessarily prevent them from using existing accounts. That’s why it’s important to close compromised accounts and to carefully review your credit reports for errors, fraudulent activity, or unauthorized transactions.

You might also want to consider placing a fraud alert on your debit card. A fraud alert is activated when you lose or have your card stolen. It’s a simple yet effective way to prevent identity theft. By placing a fraud alert on your debit card, you can prevent thieves from using your account for fraudulent purchases. It’s important to keep in mind that a fraud alert is not the same as a credit freeze. A fraud alert only applies to debit cards and does not affect credit reports.

3. File a credit report with the police. The Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) website contains step-bystep instructions on how to file a report with the police. The FTC, which will enter the information into a secure online database, will alert all three credit bureaus to block your account. The police report should also be filed with your state’s attorney general’s office, as well as the FTC’s Identity Theft Resource Center (www.IdentityTheft.gov).

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6. Also send copies of the report – by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by fax – to each of the three credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion). In addition, report the fraud to your bank to have any unauthorized activity stopped and your account closed. You should also file a report with your state’s attorney general’s office and the FTC’s Identity Theft Resource Center. Your state’s attorney general’s office will contact the appropriate state regulatory agencies and law enforcement agencies in your state to alert them to the fraud.

7. If you identify someone has stolen your account or your identity has been otherwise compromised, file an identity theft report with the police. The Federal Trade Commission’s “Defend: Recover From Identity Theft” website contains step-by-step instructions on how to file an identity theft report with the police. The FTC, which will enter the information into a secure online database, will alert all three credit bureaus to block your account. The police report should also be filed with your state’s attorney general’s office, as well as the FTC’s Identity Theft Resource Center (www.IdentityTheft.gov).

If you determine that you have been a victim of identity theft, you can also file an Extended Fraud Alert, which will stay on your reports for seven years.

Fraud from A1

A political science professor at Johns Hopkins University. London-based journalist Paul Roberts has been swindled out of a job, but he's not the only one who has fallen victim to this scam.

Bickel is no exception to the widespread problem of these types of frauds, he has no idea why the thief would target him. Bickel himself was a victim of these types of frauds. He is also aware of two other frauds that have made the news recently.

The new records will have to be updated in the near future by graduating seniors Laura Mielke (49) and Susan Mielke, respectively, as the same information is included in the student's credit report. The above will be helpful if you need to file a claim or police report.

Frauding from A1

This change also has implications on how consumers can make better use of their card account. By following the advice of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), you can take steps to prevent identity theft and keep your financial information secure.

The FTC’s “Defend: Recover From Identity Theft” website contains step-by-step instructions on how to prevent identity theft and keep your personal and financial information secure.

The FTC recommends that you:

- Create strong passwords for all of your accounts and change them regularly.
- Keep your personal information secure, such as your Social Security number, driver’s license number, and passport number.
- Do not share your personal information with anyone you don’t trust, including        

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Washington, DC -- U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) said the following remarks following passage of the Conference Report on the National Defense Authorization Act:

The paradox of the Digital Age is that while we’ve seen great advances in technology, the issue of ensuring access to that technology hasn’t been as wide-reaching as we’d like. According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), nearly 55% and 57% of Black and Hispanic households, respectively, have internet access compared to 98% of White households. Furthermore, 95% of college students have access to the internet, whereas only 62% of adults 55 and older have access. These disparities increase when looking at income levels, with 74% of low-income households, 93% of middle-income households, and 99% of high-income households having access to the internet.

This is especially true in Maryland, where we have one of the highest levels of internet access in the country. Yet, we still see a stark contrast between those who have access to technology and those who do not. With so much at risk from the digital divide, it’s time that we work together to address this issue.

One way we can do this is by increasing funding for programs like the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), which was established to provide funding for technology projects in rural and low-income areas.

As we move forward, it’s important that we continue to prioritize digital equity and work towards closing the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not. This means investing in programs like BTOP and working with our partners to ensure that everyone has equal access to the technologies that are so important in today’s world.

Chairman Julius Genachowski recently put it, “Closing the digital divide is about achieving the basic American promise of opportunity for all.”

This is not just about providing access to technology; it’s about ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to take advantage of the possibilities that technology offers. Whether it’s finding a job, accessing educational resources, or connecting with loved ones, technology has the power to change lives for the better.

This is why I am proud to say that we were able to pass the National Defense Authorization Bill, which allocates $28.5 million in federal stimulus funds to the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). These funds will be used to support projects that increase internet access and adoption in underserved communities.

This is just one example of the important work that we are doing in Congress to address the digital divide. I am committed to working with my colleagues to ensure that everyone has equal access to the technologies that are so important in today’s world.

Thank you for your support, and I look forward to continuing to work on this issue in the coming years.