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The Maryland General Assembly

The Maryland General Assembly Convenes

By SARAH TINCHER AND MEGAN BROCKET
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - Gov. Martin O'Malley welcomed members of the House and Senate back to the State House on Wednesday to kick off the 434th legislative session, which will bring issues including minimum wage increase, the so-called "rain tax" and the legalization of marijuana to the forefront.

O'Malley called on lawmakers to engage in a bipartisan effort to make Maryland the most recent of the states — currently 20, plus Washington, D.C. — to raise its minimum wage above the federal level.

"I think whether we're Democrats or Republicans, we all agree that when people work hard and play by the rules they should be able to move their families forward,"

O'Malley told members of the House of Delegates.

The state's current minimum wage stands equal with the federal level at \$7.25 an hour, but state Democrats are working to raise it, despite Republican opposition.

Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller Jr. said the state is "going to raise the minimum wage" to help people who are struggling financially, but it will also try to

find ways to give breaks to business owners.

Republicans aren't so optimistic about the benefits of the legislation.

"This policy decision would put Maryland employers at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Delaware," said Sen. David Brinkley, R-Freder-

See ASSEMBLY Page A7

Maryland Tries to Restore Dwindling Bay Grasses

By SARAH POLUS
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS - Climate change and human pollution are reducing levels of grasses in the Chesapeake Bay, which are a crucial factor in restoring its health.

Bay grasses not only provide important habitats for wildlife, but experts are learning that healthy beds can be an important line of defense against severe coastal storms.

However, scientists are finding significant declines in the

health and diversity of grasses found in the Chesapeake.

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Program Chief Lee Karrh, there are at least 17 species of grasses in the bay. Species locations vary throughout the bay, depending on the water's salt content.

Wild celery and stargrass like to grow in fresher waters of the northern region of the bay, widgeon grass is commonly found in the middle regions, and eelgrass prefers areas of high salt content, such as the



Widgeon grass in the Chesapeake Bay. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

lower region near the Virginia state line.

Among the most common bay grasses are eelgrasses, Brazilian and common water-

weeds, wild celery and various kinds of pondweeds such as the

See GRASSES, Page A7

Abandoned Horses Struggle to Recover After Recession

By LESLIE SPACEK
Capital News Service

WOODBINE — Hundreds of Maryland's horses are homeless, abandoned by people who could not afford to care for them in the aftermath of the Great Recession.

Horse ownership increased in the decade prior to the economic downturn in 2009. But with the crash of the stock and housing markets, many owners were unable to afford the roughly \$5,000 a year it takes to care for a horse.

"Horses, like all animals, suffered during the recession but horses, being so expensive, suffered the most," said Valerie Pringle, equine protection specialist at the Humane Society of the United States. "There were many that were starving. People couldn't afford to feed them. A lot of the rescues in Maryland had very heavy loads during the recession."

Days End Farm Horse Rescue, a non-profit in Carroll County that rehabilitates abused and neglected horses, ran out of stall space in 2012 because it had taken in so many horses.

"During the recession we had many rescues that came in 300-400 pounds underweight," said Caroline Robertson, director of development at Days End. "Horses are essentially the forgotten pet."

Last month, new groundbreaking for single-family homes in the U.S. and the U.S. stock market reached historical highs, indicating that the economy is continuing to recover. But horse adoptions have not returned to pre-recession levels.

See HORSES Page A5

New Postage Rate Increase Jan. 26

NNA Calls USPS Decision Flawed

By PRESS OFFICER
NNA

The Postal Regulatory Commission handed everyone who uses the mail a lump of coal on Christmas Eve: approval of the U.S. Postal Service's proposal to raise postage rates by more than triple today's inflation.

The new rates will likely go into effect Jan. 26 if USPS elects to accept the PRC's decision.

The PRC did disagree, however, with the Postal Service's justification for a proposed "exigency" rate increase that it lost more than 53 billion pieces of mail because of the Great Recession. Rather the PRC continues to blame Internet diversion as the principal reason for Postal Service losses. The PRC only credits the recession with less than half the USPS financial loss — but granted the increase anyway — noting USPS needs the money.

National Newspaper Association President Robert M. Williams Jr., publisher of the Blackshear (GA) Times, said NNA respectfully disagrees with the Postal Service's request as well as the commission's decision. He insists a lack of action by Congress to enact postal reform is at the root of the problem.

"We are whistling in the dark," said Williams. "We cannot avoid the fact the Postal Service is operating in a new world. We all are. The longer the Postal Service and lawmakers avoid reducing core costs for the delivery network, the more pain will be inflicted upon all who use the mail. Fewer and fewer customers will be paying more and more. This approved postage increase solves nothing."

The Postal Rate Commission said it expects USPS to wean itself of the increase over time. Although USPS said it expects the effects of the recession to go on for an unforeseeable period, the commission declined to allow the additional \$1.8 billion it expects USPS to receive in contributions to overhead to go on forever. The ruling requires USPS to provide a plan by May for eliminating the extraordinary increase over a two-year time period.

Unless USPS can achieve serious reductions in operating costs without critically diminishing services, Williams is not optimistic this can happen.

"This latest action by the PRC only makes the Postal Ser-

See POSTAGE, Page A3

Maryland Homeless Student Population Continues to Rise

By ZAINAB MUDALLAL
Capital News Service

COLLEGE PARK - Danny Lamont Jones seems like an average high schooler. He goes to class, and comes home and writes music when he can't focus on his homework.

But for much of his high school career Jones, 18, wasn't living like an average student. He attended four different high schools as he moved in and out of homes and shelters in Baltimore city. When he turned 12, he said, he moved into a shelter in for homeless teenagers.

"I had to make me own way from there," said Jones, who now lives with his uncle.

Jones is one of thousands of students in Maryland who have experienced homelessness. The number of K-12 students identifying as homeless in U.S. public schools hit a record high 1.2 million during the 2011-2012 school year, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

In Maryland, 1.7 percent of students enrolled in all Maryland public schools — 14,691

— had no permanent place to call home during the 2011-2012 school year, the latest year for which data was available from the Maryland State Department of Education.

These totals do not include minors who are not enrolled in school and students who do not openly identify as homeless, like Miguel, who attends Heritage High School in Baltimore city.

Miguel, 15, hangs out with friends or plays football or basketball after school. After that, he makes his way home to Sarah's Hope Mount Street, a 24-hour emergency shelter for women and children in Baltimore, where he lives with his mother, Felicia, 43, and three younger sisters.

"I wouldn't want [my friends] to know," Miguel said. "People would treat me differently and I don't want that to happen."

Capital News Service agreed to Miguel's and Felicia's request to not print their last names.

See STUDENTS Page A3

INSIDE

Raising the Minimum Wage

Calling passing a higher minimum wage a highest priority for the upcoming Maryland General Assembly, the Montgomery County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly detailed its support for raising the state's minimum wage during a press conference in Kensington, Md.

Community, Page A3

Health Insurance Marketplace

January 1st marks not only the beginning of a New Year, but an exciting new day in health care as millions of Americans will now be able to access care, thanks to the coverage they found at the Health Insurance Marketplace. For many of the newly insured it will be the first time that they can enjoy health coverage.

Commentary, Page A4

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

The Federal Aviation Administration has selected the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership as one of the unmanned aircraft systems test sites. The University System of Maryland, through a Memorandum of Understanding will collaborate and partner on the FAA UAS test site.

Business, Page A5
Movie Review: "Saving Mr. Banks"

"Saving Mr. Banks" tells the heartwarming story of how icy authoress P.L. Travers was charmed by Walt Disney and his merry men into letting them turn her Mary Poppins books into a movie, and how she came to love and appreciate their artistic vision even though it was different from hers.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear Earth Talk

I recently heard the term "ocean sprawl," which was a new one on me. We all know "sprawl" as it manifests itself above sea level. But in the oceans? Can you enlighten?

— Bill Chadwick,
Nantucket, MA

Features, Page A7

Towns and NEIGHBORS

In and Around Morningside-Skyline

by Mary McHale 301 735 3451

Landover's Sears due to close, the final bell for Landover Mall

Travel back in time to 1972 when Landover Mall opened. Think about the anchor stores—Hecht's, Garfinckel's, Woodward & Lothrop and Sears. Do you remember the six-screen theater in the basement? How about the three fountains, adjacent to Hecht's, Sears, and in center court. During the holiday season the center fountain would be shut off and replaced with the mall's holiday displays featuring a gingerbread house, fairies, candy canes, snowmen, reindeer, sleigh ride, doves and the Cupcake Boat Ride.

I loved the two bookstores, the Georgetown Leather shop, Chinese restaurant and the ice-cream parlor. What did you like best and miss the most?

In the early '90s the anchor stores began to shutter, the last being Hecht's in 2002. Demolition began in 2006 and was completed in early 2007. Only Sears remained because it owned the land it stood on.

This month Sears announced it would not renew its lease with Lerner Enterprises and will close in March. There's speculation the land might be purchased for a future FBI Headquarters. That's nowhere near as exciting as Landover Mall forty years ago.

Missing woman struck, killed on Suitland Parkway

A woman pedestrian died after being hit by a car at the intersection of Suitland Parkway and Forestville Road, about 6 a.m., Dec. 27. Several days later the deceased was identified as Laura Townsend, 71, who disappeared from her home on Alabama Avenue on Dec. 26 and had been reported missing.

The driver had the green light when he struck Ms. Townsend who was apparently trying to cross the busy street.

He stayed at the scene. There's no crosswalk at the site, but quite a few break the law by crossing there anyway, to get to the bus stop. I hope some thought goes into changing the bus stop and/or adding a crosswalk.

Changes at Police District VI

Effective January 12, Major Douglas Garrett is no longer an Acting Major—he is a Major. He will continue as Commander of District IV in Oxon Hill. Captain Sheppard has been transferred to District VII as Assistant Commander. His replacement is Captain Genia Reaves.

Book signing at the Surratt House

Nathania A. Branch Miles and Monday M. Miles have authored a book that will interest many of you, Prince George's County and the Civil War: Life on the Border. One or both authors will be at the Surratt House Museum, 9118 Brandywine Road in Clinton, on Sat., Jan. 25, noon to 2 p.m. to inscribe a copy for you.

The book will be available for \$19, plus tax. (Add \$3 for mail orders.) For more information, call 301-868-1121 or go to www.surrattmuseum.org. Snow date for the signing will be Feb. 1.

Greeting cards find new life

When you get around to discarding those Christmas, and other, cards, remove the front panels, and send them to St. Jude's Ranch for Children, 100 St. Jude's St., Boulder City, Nev. 89005. However, if there's writing on the back of the front panel, they cannot be used. The fronts are glued to pre-folded stock and can be purchased at the online store, www.stjudesranch.org. For information call 877-977-7572.

Changing landscape

MGM Resorts International has been approved to build

a casino resort at National Harbor, following a 5-2 decision by the Lottery Commission. It's scheduled to open in mid-2016.

A site plan has been approved for 348 townhouses on the north side of Route 4, west of Melwood Road. The homes are the first phase of the Westphalia Town Center.

May they rest in peace

Thomas P. Cameron, 87, who had a veterinary practice in Camp Springs from 1957 to 1963 when he joined the Public Health Service, died Nov. 28 in Bethesda. He went on to become an official at the National Institutes of Health. Survivors include his wife of 62 years, Carolyn Rose Cameron, two children and four grandchildren.

John Timothy "Tim" Lane, 68, of Barnstead, N.H. and a 1963 graduate of Suitland High who lettered in soccer, baseball and basketball, died Dec. 29. The son of the late Henry and Mary "Molly" Lane, he grew up in Richmond, Va., and Keene, N.H., before moving to Maryland when he was ten. After college, he began a long career with American Airlines. Survivors include four children, ten grandchildren, and sisters Debbie and Penni. An avid fisherman, he requested his ashes be scattered in the Long Eddy, N.Y. area of his beloved Delaware River.

Milestones

Happy birthday to Dennis Seaman and Linda Cullinan, Jan. 19; June Nicholson and Gina Glagola Hull, Jan. 20; my great-grandson Jason Shearer, Jan. 22; and Mark Foland, Jan. 23.

Happy 43rd anniversary to Ernest and Margaret Vilky who were married Jan. 23, 1971, at St. Thomas More Church in Washington.

Brandywine-Aquasco

by Ruth Turner 301 888 2153

CAA WOMAN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP 2014

Join us Thursday March 13, 2014 and Sunday March 16, 2014 for the Woman's Basketball Championship 2014 at 2:00 PM. The venue is Show Place Arena located at 14900 Pennsylvania Avenue Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772. You can purchase your tickets on line at Ticketmaster.

JOHN ISABELLE ACRES FARM, INC.

John Isabelle Acres Farm, Inc. in Brandywine, Maryland has hay for sale. Contact Frank Deville, Manager for reasonably priced quality hay for horses, cows and goats at 301-466-8360.

THEATER AND SHOPPING TRIP

Come and join us for a Theater and shopping trip to Lancaster, PA. April 5, 2014. The trip is sponsored by Phyllis Slater (Fly under my wings) Flyundermywings@yahoo.com or 301-653-7345. The trip includes travel on a deluxe motor coach bus, continental breakfast served on the bus. We will have buffet lunch at Miller's Smorgasbord: ticket to see the new production of the play "Moses" at the Millennium Theatre and shopping at two outlets and door prizes.

Itinerary includes April 5, 2014 departure: 7:00 AM and return 10:00 PM (Clinton Park & Ride), Continental Breakfast, shopping at Tanger Outlets, ShowTime for the play is 11:00 AM, lunch 2:15 PM, shopping at Rockvale Outlets. Cost is \$135.00 (Adults) \$110.00 (13-18 Teen) \$95.00 (10-12 Child). Final payment has been extended to March 14, 2014. Refer (3) people and receive \$5.00 off. For more information you may contact Phyllis Slater at (301) 653-7345 or Deborah Proctor at (301) 275-2544.

CAPITOL-ALLENTOWN TUTORING SERVICES

Capitol-Allentown Tutoring Services tutor Pre-K through High School Students. They help prepare students to meet the Academic Challenges in school. Enhance Academic Skills and build Foundational Skills in Math, Phonics, Reading, Language, Study Skills, Science and Social Studies.

Many of the students gain and maintain Honor Roll Status.

Timely Drop off and pick up a must. They offer one-to-one tutoring, small group tutoring, daily assessments and weekly Progress Reports. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday: 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM and Saturday: 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Scheduled Events.

Capitol-Allentown Tutoring Services (Ministries of Capitol-Allentown Baptist Church) have two tutoring locations at Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 and Ft. Washington, Maryland 20744. Contact email address: mwhittington9@gmail.com.

BRANDYWINE CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Brandywine Civic Association donated and delivered hats, gloves, socks and coats to Brandywine Elementary School on December 19, 2013. Don't forget that the Civic Association meet the third Wednesday of every month at 700 PM in the Media Center at the Brandywine Elementary School.

Neighborhood Events

Delegates Tawanna Gaines and Anne Healey File for Re-Election in Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS -- Delegate Tawanna Gaines and Delegate Anne Healey filed together to run for re-election to their seats in the Maryland House of Delegates on Thursday at the Maryland State Board of Elections. They represent District 22 in Prince George's County.

Both Delegates have lived in their community for more than 35 years and have served in public office at both the state and local levels. Delegate Gaines was Mayor of Berwyn Heights before her appointment to the House of Delegates in 2001. Delegate Healey, who filed on her birthday, was first elected in 1990 after three years on the Hyattsville City Council.

The Maryland primary elections will be held on June 24th. Early voting will begin June 12th.

Healey and Gaines have also risen to leadership in the House. Healey is Chair of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee and Chair of the Environmental Matters Subcommittee on Local Government and Bi-County Agencies, and Gaines is Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and the Environment.

Together they have supported such landmark legislation as: the Bridge to Excellence public school funding formula, the Dream Act allowing the children of immigrants to access in-state tuition for public higher education, civil marriage equality, repeal of the death penalty, smart environmental and economic growth, and more. They also have successfully fought for funding for new schools, a new hospital and transportation projects. They are strong advocates for the Purple Line and transit oriented development. And they helped create the Arts District which has revitalized the Route One Corridor.

District 22 includes the municipalities of Berwyn Heights, Edmonston, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, New Carrollton, Riverdale Park and University Park, as well as unincorporated areas in Lanham-Seabrook, Glenn Dale, Whitfield Chapel, Dodge Park and Palmer Park.

The two women are running on a slate with the two other incumbents from District 22, Sen. Paul Pinsky and Delegate Alonzo Washington.

Prince George's County Will Deploy Crews in Preparation for Snow and High Winds Forecasted for Our Area

LARGO, MD – With the forecasts of snow, high winds and freezing temperatures, the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) will activate crews for a full operation for snow and ice removal. Employees from DPW&T, the Department of Environmental Resources, Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission will be salting and removing snow or slushy accumulations from County roadways to prevent slippery conditions.



Delegates Anne Healey and Tawanna Gaines filed together to seek re-election at the Maryland State Board of Elections.

"The forecasts for our area are calling for the snow to begin late this afternoon and continue into Friday morning with a possible accumulation of 1 to 3 inches," said Darrell Mobley Acting Director of DPW&T. "With the high winds forecast for the region, motorists are encouraged to stay alert, listen for updated forecasts and drive with caution."

To assist the crews with clearing the roads, DPW&T requests County residents to park on the even-numbered sides of residential streets or in their driveways, to shovel their driveways after plowing has occurred and to remove snow/ice from the sidewalks abutting their homes and businesses.

Residents are encouraged to wait 12 hours after the precipitation has stopped to call CountyClick at 311, the Snow Information Center at 301.350.0500 or go to the Snow Request Form to report snow conditions

National Arboretum Volunteer Gardener Training

Both beginners and avid gardeners will benefit from this training for Arboretum volunteer gardeners. Taught by professional garden staff, topics include botany, pruning, plant ID, soils, and integrated pest management. On completion of the training, volunteers will select a garden to volunteer in.

Call 202-245-4563 to sign up.

Van Hollen, Army Present Silver Star to Vietnam Veteran

Rockville, MD – Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen and Brigadier General Jeffrey Clark, Commander of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, presented George Carlton Bloodworth the Silver Star Medal, the Army's third highest honor. Mr. Bloodworth served in Vietnam and was awarded the Silver Star for his valor but never received the actual medal. His daughter, a resident of the Eighth Congressional District, contacted Congressman Van Hollen's office for assistance in obtaining his award.

"The recognition of Mr. Bloodworth's bravery and heroism is long overdue, and I'm proud to join Brigadier General Clark in presenting this Silver Star today," said Congressman Chris Van Hollen. "It is really a special moment when we can recognize the courage of the men and women who have served our country with such distinction."

Jan. 26 - "Building Your Own Theology" class on Sundays at noon.

Free; please call to make reservations with Director of Religious Educator, Peter Fontneau or email dre@dmuuc.org. Davies Memorial Unitarian Universalist Church 7400 Temple Hills Rd., Camp Springs, MD 20748. Web: www.dmuuc.org Phone: 301-449-4308

Prince George's County Updated "Warming Center" locations

Upper Marlboro, MD – Prince George's County is under another wind-chill advisory until Tuesday, January 7, 2014. With anticipated temperatures of 5 below to 15 below zero with wind gusts up to 35 mph, residents are encouraged to take precautionary measures from the cold.

The Prince George's County Office of Emergency Management, in collaboration with the Prince George's County Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, encourages residents without heat to utilize one of the following local warming centers. Please call for specific hours of operation or refer to the Warming Centers page for specific information.

Warming Centers

Harmony Hall Regional Center 10701 Livingston Road Fort Washington, MD 20744 301-203-6040

Suitland Community Park School Center 5600 Regency Lane Forestville, MD 20747 301-736-3518; TTY 301-203-6030

Bowie Community Center 3209 Stonybrook Drive Bowie, MD 20715 301-464-1737

Seat Pleasant Activity Center 5720 Addison Road Seat Pleasant, MD 20743 301-773-6685; TTY 301-218-6768

Kentland Community Center Park 2411 Pinebrook Avenue Landover, MD 20785 301-386-2278; TTY 301-445-4512

Deerfield Run Community Center 13000 Laurel-Bowie Road Laurel, MD 20708 301-953-7882; TTY 301-445-4512

Residents are encouraged to Stay Informed and utilize Notify Me Prince George's to receive updates regarding the weather or by texting 411912 to receive real-time notifications via registered mobile devices. Residents are encouraged to utilize Prince George's County's CountyClick 311 system to obtain information about public services.

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COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

Retirement Plan Limits Largely Unchanged in 2014

Anyone who's bought groceries, filled their gas tank or paid insurance premiums recently would probably be surprised to learn that, according to Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers (CPI-U), the rate of inflation is relatively flat — only 1.2 percent from September 2012 to September 2013.



That's bad news for people who were hoping to boost their contributions to an IRA, 401(k) plan or other tax-advantaged retirement savings accounts, since the IRS uses the CPI-U's September year-over-year performance to determine whether or not to make cost-of-living adjustments to many of the retirement contributions you and your employer can make in the following year.

Here are highlights of what will and won't change in 2014: Defined contribution plans. The maximum allowable annual contribution you can make to a workplace 401(k), 403(b), 457(b) or federal Thrift Savings plan remains unchanged at \$17,500. Keep in mind these additional factors:

People over 50 can also make an additional \$5,500 in catch-up contributions (unchanged from 2013).

The annual limit for combined employee and employer contributions increased by \$1,000 to \$52,000.

Because your plan may limit the percentage of pay you can contribute, your maximum contribution may actually be less. (For example, if the maximum contribution is 10 percent of pay and you earn \$60,000, you could only contribute \$6,000.)

Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). The maximum annual contribution to IRAs remains the same at \$5,500 (plus an additional \$1,000 if 50 or older — also unchanged from 2013). Maximum contributions to traditional IRAs are not impacted by personal income, but if your modified adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds certain limits, the maximum amount you can contribute to a Roth IRA gradually phases out:

For singles/heads of households the phase-out AGI range is \$114,000 to \$129,000 (increased from 2013's \$112,000 to \$127,000 range). Above \$129,000, you cannot contribute to a Roth.

For married couples filing jointly, the range is \$181,000 to \$191,000 (up from \$178,000 to \$188,000).

Keep in mind these rules for deducting traditional IRA contributions on your federal tax return:

If you're single, a head of household, a qualifying widow(er) or married and neither spouse is covered by an employer-provided retirement plan, you can deduct the full IRA contribution, regardless of income.

If you are covered by an employer plan and are single/head of household, the tax deduction phases out for AGI between \$60,000 and \$70,000 (up from \$59,000 to \$69,000 in 2013); if married and filing jointly, the phase-out range is \$96,000 to \$116,000 (up from \$95,000 to \$115,000).

If you're married and aren't covered by an employer plan but your spouse is, the IRA deduction is phased out if your combined AGI is between \$181,000 and \$191,000 (up from \$178,000 to \$188,000).

For more details, read IRS Publication 590 at www.irs.gov.

Retirement Saver Tax Credit. As an incentive to help low- and moderate-income workers save for retirement through an IRA or company-sponsored plan, many are eligible for a Retirement Saver's Tax Credit of up to \$1,000 (\$2,000 if filing jointly). This credit lowers your tax bill, dollar for dollar, in addition to any other tax deduction you already receive for your contribution.

Qualifying income ceiling limits for the Saver's Tax Credit increased in 2014 to \$60,000 for joint filers, \$45,000 for heads of household, and \$30,000 for singles or married persons filing separately. Consult IRS Form 8880 for more information.

Jason Alderman directs Visa's financial education programs.

To Follow Jason Alderman on Twitter:
www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney

Montgomery County Delegation to Support Raising the Minimum Wage in 2014 Session

By PRESS OFFICER
Montgomery County Delegation

County delegation chairs releases list of elected supporters of higher pay for Maryland workers

KENSINGTON, MD — Calling passing a higher minimum wage a highest priority for the upcoming Maryland General Assembly, the Montgomery County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly detailed its support for raising the state's minimum wage during a press conference in Kensington, Md.

All eight of the county's senators and a majority of the delegates have signed onto a letter of support circulated by Raise Maryland in support of a higher wage. Signatories call for legislation to raise the state's lowest wage that includes three key provisions:

Raise Maryland's minimum wage in three steps to \$10.10 by 2016;

Index the minimum wage to the cost of living thereafter so that it doesn't lose value over time; and

Increase the minimum wage for tipped workers from the current 50 percent to 70 percent of the prevailing minimum wage.

The press conference was attended by Sen. Jamie Raskin, Sen. Roger Manno, Del. Anne R. Kaiser, Del. Kirill Reznik, Del. Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher, Del. A. Shane Robinson, Del. Susan Lee and Del. David Fraser-Hidalgo, along with community activists.

"We need to put Maryland workers on the high road to prosperity," said Sen. Raskin (District 20). "We are thrilled to have the majority of our delegation actively engaged in this fight because when Montgomery County sticks together for progressive change, we make it happen."

Momentum has been building for Maryland to increase the state's minimum wage during the upcoming 2014 session of the Maryland General Assembly, which begins next week. Montgomery and Prince George's county councils each recently passed bills raising wages in those jurisdictions to \$11.50 by 2017.



Sen. Jamie Raskin

"We are committed to passing a bill that will not only raise the wage but will also be indexed so that the state's minimum wage doesn't lose value over time," said Del. Kaiser (District 14). "Low-paid workers in the state cannot afford to wait year after year for the legislature to drag its feet on preserving the value of their paychecks."

By failing to act to raise the wage floor during the 2013 Maryland General Assembly, state lawmakers effectively cut the pay of state workers as the value of the minimum wage continues to fall. By contrast, low-wage workers in

13 other states got a raise on January 1, including four states that recently raised the wage as well as nine states that annually index the minimum wage to inflation.

Research has found that approximately 472,000 Marylanders would benefit from the increase, putting \$466 million more in their pockets in the next two years. At the same time, businesses would benefit from nearly half a billion dollars in new consumer spending and would create more than 4,000 new full-time jobs as they expand to meet increased demand.

Postage A1

vice's survival challenge tougher and scarier. This decision opens the door to perpetual steep postage increases for American businesses, including ours, which strives to fill a deep desire by readers to receive a hard copy newspaper, even if they also read online."

NNA Postal Committee Chair Max Heath said he is

also disappointed the exigency rate increase is granted. Heath notes that although USPS certainly has been impacted by the recession, so has its customers and raising postage rates now is ill-advised.

"We calculated increases up to 7 percent for some of our critical newspaper mail categories. To the extent that USPS suffered from the recession, so did our business," said Heath. "It is too

bad the law doesn't allow for an "exigent decrease" in postage so we, who must respond to market realities, could be made whole as well."

Williams said NNA will renew its efforts to seek prudent postal reform legislation during the annual Newspapers Leadership Summit March 13, 2014, when publishers visit Capitol Hill to urge action.

The National Newspaper Association is a 2,200 member organization of community newspapers. Founded in 1885, it represents newspapers in every state and encompasses weeklies and small daily newspapers providing local news and information to their communities. More about NNA:

www.nnaweb.org

Students from A1

The Maryland State Department of Education data shows that the percentage of homeless students enrolled in Maryland public schools has increased by 0.17 percentage points since the 2009-2010 school year.

The recession helped drive the increase, with foreclosures and unemployment hitting poor and middle class families hard, according to homeless population experts. A report by the National Center on Family Homelessness found that the recession left one in 45 children homeless.

"If you do the math since the recession, you see a huge increase," said Carmela DeCandia, director of the National Center on Family Homelessness, on the homeless student population. "There's no doubt that the recession and economic impact has increased the numbers, but it's in a larger context that family homelessness has been steadily on the rise since 1980s."

Working a low-wage job in Maryland can bring families and individuals closer to the edge of homelessness because of a lack of affordable housing, according to Monisha Cherayil, staff attorney at the Public Justice Center, a nonprofit legal services organization.

In Maryland, minimum-wage earners need to work 135 hours per week, 52 weeks per year, in order to afford market rent of \$1,273, according to a study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition. If working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, the hourly wage a household must earn is \$24.47.

"We have a lot of clients that get evicted because some-

one loses a job," Cherayil said. "It's a major cause of homelessness and causes a lot of consequences for youth."

Miguel and his family were evicted from their home last year and have been staying at the shelter ever since.

Despite the lack of privacy that comes with living in a shelter — his family shares a room with four other families — Miguel said he fares well in his new community.

"It's a lot of grown ups, but I get along with all of them," he said. "They treat me really good, they're like family to me."

Although students often face challenges in a shelter environment, Miguel said he has no problems doing his homework.

But Jones said his grade point average suffered because of his constant relocating.

"School wasn't a priority," he said. "My living situation was."

But Jones' attitude about school ultimately changed.

"I soon came to realize that all I got is school," he said. "I didn't have a place to live, I couldn't control my family, the only thing I could control was school."

Homeless students have a hard time focusing in class if they haven't had a good night of sleep or a nutritious meal, said Lynne Weise, pupil personnel and homeless liaison at Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

And many students have trouble keeping up with classroom content because of absences, said

Denise Ross, supervisor of the Homeless Education Program of Prince George's County.

Jones said he got into a lot of fights at schools and experienced "a lot of stress."

"I felt like people had a certain type of attitude at me and saw me as less fortunate," said Jones, who said he has been open about his homelessness at school. "I felt like people were laughing at me because of my homelessness."

The increase in the homeless student population does not necessarily mean that more students and families are sliding into homelessness, said Angie McAllister, associate vice president of special initiatives at United Way of Central Maryland, a human service organization that serves the central counties of Maryland.

She noted that school systems are doing a better job identifying homeless students, she said.

Identifying homeless students is a "huge" issue, said Barbara Duffield, policy director of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, who said it is necessary to train employees — everyone from bus drivers to cafeteria workers — to identify students in need.

"These are largely invisible families so we really have to be looking for them," she said. "Schools can be the safest, most stable place for these kids."

Homeless student liaisons in Maryland have been working to identify and enroll students in public schools. McKinney-Vento, the federal homeless education assistance act, provides public school enrollment, transportation services, school meals, school supplies, uniforms, before and after school programs and tutorial support.

Weise said Anne Arundel County schools are providing these services to a growing number of homeless students,

focusing on immediate enrollment and school stability.

"I would say we're knocking [enrollment] out of the ballpark," she said. "Now it's just a matter of making sure kids stay in school and have high achievement levels"

Both Weise and Ross said they were working closely with school staff to help them better understand the level of stress that comes hand in hand with homelessness.

"Their entire lives have been disrupted," said Weise. "They don't know if they have a quiet place to do their homework."

Miguel hasn't had a problem with keeping up with his school work at Sarah's Hope Mount Street. He said he hopes to become a civil engineer one day.

"I like to build things," he said. "Or if I could pursue a sport it would be basketball."

And Miguel and his mother, Felicia, who just recently found employment, are hopeful that the shelter will only be a temporary home.

"Where we see us going is another place to stay that's permanent and stable," Felicia said. "As far as Miguel is concerned, I just want to push him to do more and pursue his dreams without all the stress that comes with being in homeless shelter."

Although Jones has been living in a stable home with his uncle for a year, he said he still has to find ways to cope with his years living in shelters. He said he no longer resorts to violence. Instead, he makes music.

"I like to write," he said. "Writing and making music was an escape route and still is."

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COMMENTARY

THE PRINCE GEORGE'S POST
A Community Newspaper for Prince George's County

By Kathleen Sebelius,
Secretary, Health and Human Services
of the United States



A New Day in Health Care Coverage

By Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, Health and Human Services

January 1st marks not only the beginning of a New Year, but an exciting new day in health care as millions of Americans will now be able to access care, thanks to the coverage they found at the Health Insurance Marketplace. For many of the newly insured — people like Molly from Charlottesville, VA or Mark from Austin, TX — it will be the first time that they can enjoy the security that comes with health coverage. For consumers whose Marketplace coverage begins on January 1, we're doing everything we can to help ensure a smooth transition period. If consumers have questions about their new private insurance coverage, they can contact their insurance company directly. Consumers can log into their account on HealthCare.gov to find their insurer's customer service line or browse through a directory on HealthCare.gov. Before you go to the doctor or pharmacy using your new insurance for the first time, check out this tip sheet, and make sure to:

Get your insurance card or a temporary card with your new plan's information. If you don't have your card yet, ask your insurance company to give you another way to confirm your coverage.

Make sure you know when your first premium payment is due and pay it by the due date;

Check to see which doctors and pharmacies are in your network.

And at your first visit:

Bring your insurance card with you to the doctor or pharmacy. If you don't have a card, ask your doctor or pharmacy what other proof of insurance they may accept.

If you thought you enrolled in health coverage but aren't showing up in the system, call your insurance company directly. If you don't have

your insurer's contact information call the Marketplace Call Center (1-800-318-2596) and a trained representative can provide it to you.

We've also developed a number of consumer tips on HealthCare.gov to help people understand their new private insurance coverage. The topics include:

Make sure you're covered. Consumers who think they've signed up for Marketplace health insurance, but haven't heard from their insurance company can get help finding out if they're covered.

Get prescription medication under your new plan. Marketplace health plans will help pay the cost of certain prescription medications. Consumers can get help finding out if their prescription is covered and how to apply for an exception if the medication is not currently covered by their plan.

Get medical care and find a doctor. Consumers can get help finding doctors and other health care providers covered by their new Marketplace plan.

Get emergency care. Consumers can get important information on utilizing emergency care, and making sure they know that their insurance company can't charge more for emergency room services at an "out-of-network" hospital.

Appeal a health plan decision. Consumers have the right to appeal a decision when an insurance company refuses to pay for a specific treatment or service. We can help guide consumers through the appeals process.

As we continue to give consumers information to help them understand their new Marketplace coverage, we're also continuing to work to ensure that every American who wants to enroll in Marketplace coverage by the end of the open enrollment period on March 31st, 2014, is able to do so—and enjoy the security and peace of mind that comes with having quality health coverage.

Marc Morial, President and CEO
National Urban League



Mayor Bill de Blasio Promises Progressive Change for New York City

"We are called to put an end to economic and social inequalities that threaten to unravel the city we love. And so today, we commit to a new progressive direction in New York."

New York Mayor, Bill de Blasio

A new year brought a new mayor and new hope for progressive change to America's largest city. With the inauguration of Bill de Blasio on January 1, New York, a city recently viewed as an incubator of urban innovations in the fights against crime, terrorism and cholesterol, is returning to its roots as a leader in the fight against economic inequality. In his inauguration speech, Mayor de Blasio made it clear that he intended to pick up the mantle of former New York progressives like Franklin Roosevelt, Frances Perkins, and Fiorello LaGuardia "who challenged the status quo, who blazed a trail of progressive reform and political action, who took on the elite, who stood up to say that social and economic justice will start here and will start now."

This is welcome news to the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers who swept the new mayor into office in November with 73% of the vote. It is also good news to the National Urban League, which is headquartered in Manhattan and has been leading the charge across the nation for many of the progressive ideas championed by Mayor de Blasio. These include his focus on job creation for all New Yorkers, proposals for more affordable housing, an expansion of community health centers, and reform of New York's "broken" stop-and-frisk policy that has unfairly targeted young men of color.

The new mayor also joins the National Urban League and a growing chorus of progressive voices in calling for an end to income inequality. We are especially encouraged by his plan to ask those earning more than \$500,000 a year to pay a little more in taxes to provide the city's children with a critical educational foundation by funding full-day universal preschool and after-school programs for every middle school student.

A native New Yorker, de Blasio got his start in public service as an aid to New York's first African American mayor, David N. Dinkins. He also served in the Clinton Administration as a HUD Regional Director and managed Hillary Clinton's 2000 campaign for the U.S. Senate. He represented his Brooklyn neighborhood for eight years as a New York City Councilman, and from 2010-2013, he served as New York City Public Advocate, the City's second-highest elected office.

Running a city the size and complexity of New York is a daunting challenge, made more so by the stark and often competing interests of Wall Street and Main Street. But Mayor Bill de Blasio has rolled up his sleeves and hit the ground running. He even shoveled his own walkway during the city's first major snowstorm last week. New Yorkers, hungry for leadership that understands the economic and social challenges they face every day, are hopeful they now have a special champion and kindred spirit in City Hall. We look forward to working with the new Mayor on the progressive policies he shares with the Urban League movement.



Open to the Public

The Inn & Conference Center, University of Maryland University College

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



A Concrete Way to Remember and Honor Nelson Mandela

A Concrete Way to Remember Last month, all across the world people joined together to mourn former South African president and freedom fighter Nelson Mandela. There was a deep shared sense of loss at the passing of one of the rare human beings who truly helped change the world. He suffered extraordinary hardships, spent 27 years in prison, including 18 on Robben Island under the harshest conditions, and walked out ramrod straight, unbowed, full of a spirit of reconciliation, and offering a hand of peace and hope. He became the first Black President of his country and transformed the way we view leadership and our individual human ability to make the impossible possible.

One of his legacies we can help realize and sustain is the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, whose mission is building a child rights movement and changing the way South Africa treats children and youths. Their work includes supporting children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic, empowering children with disabilities, and promoting youth leadership: "Nelson's Mandela's last wish was to build a children's hospital in Johannesburg to serve all children of southern Africa regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or ability to pay. The Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital (NMCH) will be Mr. Mandela's legacy and live by his creed that 'a society's soul is revealed by how it treats its children.'" I hope we all support this fund and hospital campaign.

In his acceptance speech after being awarded the 1993 Nobel Peace Prize, he said this about the promise of a new South Africa: "At the southern tip of the continent of Africa, a rich reward [is] in the making, an invaluable gift is in the preparation for those who suffered in the name of all humanity when they sacrificed everything ... This reward will not be measured in money. Nor can it be reckoned in the collective price of the rare metals and precious stones that rest in the bowels of the African soil we tread in

the footsteps of our ancestors. It will and must be measured by the happiness and welfare of the children, at once the most vulnerable citizens in any society and the greatest of our treasures. The children must, at last, play in the open veld, no longer tortured by the pangs of hunger or ravaged by disease or threatened with the scourge of ignorance, molestation and abuse." His commitment as a leader to South Africa's children was the extension of a principle that has governed leaders of traditional communities for generations: *If the children are well, then all of us are well.*

In his Presidential inaugural address President Mandela expanded on his simple vision for all of South Africa's families: "Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfill themselves." President Mandela's words echo Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Nobel Peace Prize speech where Dr. King said: "I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits," words now

etched in stone on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In September 2013, a statue of Nelson Mandela was unveiled in front of the South African Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington. Close by on the same Avenue is a beautiful statue of Mahatma Gandhi. Amidst all the monuments to wars and military leaders in our nation's capital, we now have lasting testaments to three great prophets of non-violence and peace to guide our actions at this inflection point in our nation's and world's history.

The lives of Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela show us what is possible. Let's don't just celebrate and mourn them. Let's follow them.

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund whose Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. For more information go to www.childrensdefense.org.

Mrs. Edelman's Child Watch Column also appears each week on The Huffington Post.

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

This Year Make New Year's Resolutions That Work

We all make New Year's resolutions. Unfortunately, most of us also tend to break most, if not all of them, sometimes before New Year's Eve is even over.

One problem with most New Year's resolutions is that we set unrealistic goals for change. It might be important to lose weight, stop smoking or improve a relationship, but simply deciding something must change doesn't mean it will. For a resolution to work, it requires actual planning, not just wishing.

Start by making realistic resolutions. Don't expect to shed all your excess weight by the end of January. Accept that breaking a long-term smoking habit may not succeed on the first try. Set goals that are realistic and attainable.

Next, develop a plan which takes into account that your resolution requires a meaningful change in behavior. Figure out what you need to do to help make your goal attainable, and accept that you may not be one hundred percent successful. Habits acquired over years don't change instantly.

Instead of focusing on the final, desired outcome, break big tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces. A resolution to exercise more might start slowly with a daily 15-minute walk, adding time each week as you get into better shape.

For weight loss, your achievable mini-goals might be changes in eating habits, rather than actual pounds lost. A first goal might be to cut out one high-calorie food each day. A second goal might be to replace one high-fat favorite with a new fruit or vegetable. Use mini-goals that focus on positive behavioral changes and use the successes of hitting those mini-goals as positive reinforcement to help keep you going.

The secret to success with resolutions lies up front, both in the resolutions you develop and in what you expect from yourself in terms of compliance. Once you have carefully and thoughtfully planned the resolution, and accepted that you may stumble a time or two on the way to your final target, you can rest assured that you have begun the process in good fashion and have a better than average chance of success.

Resolutions can offer a very positive opportunity to change areas in our lives that we would like to improve upon. Making a resolution can be one step toward this self-improvement and succeeding at a resolution can both improve our lives and bring a rewarding sense of accomplishment.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACA-corner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at: www.counseling.org

Business Spotlight

Statement by the President on the 50th Anniversary of the War on Poverty

As Americans, we believe that everyone who works hard deserves a chance at opportunity, and that all our citizens deserve some basic measure of security. And so, 50 years ago, President Johnson declared a War on Poverty to help each and every American fulfill his or her basic hopes. We created new avenues of opportunity through jobs and education, expanded access to health care for seniors, the poor, and Americans with disabilities, and helped working families make ends meet. Without Social Security, nearly half of seniors would be living in poverty. Today, fewer than one in seven do. Before Medicare, only half of seniors had some form of health insurance. Today, virtually all do. And because we expanded pro-work and pro-family programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, a recent study found that the poverty rate has fallen by nearly 40% since the 1960s, and kept millions from falling into poverty during the Great Recession.

These endeavors didn't just make us a better country. They reaffirmed that we are a great country. They lived up to our best hopes as a people who value the dignity and potential of every human being. But as every American knows, our work is far from over. In the richest nation on Earth, far too many children are still born into poverty, far too few have a fair shot to escape it, and Americans of all races and backgrounds experience wages and incomes that aren't rising, making it harder to share in the opportunities a growing economy provides. That does not mean, as some suggest, abandoning the War on Poverty. In fact, if we hadn't declared "unconditional war on poverty in America," millions more Americans would be living in poverty today. Instead, it means we must redouble our efforts to make sure our economy works for every working American. It means helping our businesses create new jobs with stronger wages and benefits, expanding access to education and health care, rebuilding those communities on the outskirts of hope, and constructing new ladders of opportunity for our people to climb.

We are a country that keeps the promises we've made. And in a 21st century economy, we will make sure that as America grows stronger, this recovery leaves no one behind. Because for all that has changed in the 50 years since President Johnson dedicated us to this economic and moral mission, one constant of our character has not: we are one nation and one people, and we rise or fall together.

Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership Selected as FAA Unmanned Aircraft System Test Site

By PRESS OFFICER
NAMIC

University System of Maryland to collaborate with MAAP on UAS research, testing and development

ANNAPOLIS, MD (December 2013) – The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) today announced it has selected the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership (MAAP) as one of six unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) test sites to support integration of UAS into the national airspace system.

The University System of Maryland, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with Virginia Tech and Rutgers University in September, will collaborate and partner on the FAA UAS test site, providing coordinated research and testing. The MOU highlighted the cooperative UAS research conducted by the three institutions, the research and testing proficiencies, and the potential for an efficient integration effort.

"Maryland is home to the world's leading center of UAS activity – the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) at Naval Air Station Patuxent River – and an array of other assets. At both the university level and among federal facilities, Maryland has been performing testing and development of UAS for more than two decades," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "The selection of MAAP as one of the UAS test sites leverages the unparalleled capabilities of three world-class educational institutions to create jobs and generate a significant economic boon to the state, the region and the nation."

Designation as an FAA test site under the 2012 federal law requiring integration of UAS by September 2015 carries with it requirements to support research and testing efforts that lead to future regulations governing the use of UAS, especially in the commercial arena, as well as features protecting privacy under such operations.

Horses from A1

"As people have pulled out of the recession, horses have not," Pringle said. "The number of horses being given up has decreased now, but people are not adopting horses at the rate they were before the recession."

Caring for a horse requires disposable income.

Estimates from the Humane Society of the United States place horse maintenance, not including initial costs or rental fees, at more than \$2,500 per year. This figure includes the cost of feed, hay and grains, veterinary and dental care, farrier services twice a year, bedding and vaccines. Depending on the location of the horse, boarding fees could cost an additional \$3,600 per year.

The price of horse food has increased over the past decade, according to the Hay Price Index. The USDA Agricultural Prices report shows the price of hay per ton — \$171 in November — has increased more than 200 percent since the 1990s. On average, horses eat 50 pounds — or \$4.28 worth — of hay a day.

Valerie Ormond of the Maryland Horse Council said it's difficult to track abused or neglected horses in Maryland, and nationwide. The equine industry is largely unregulated. So,

"The combined resources of the Mid-Atlantic states represent a majority share of the UAS research and testing assets in the United States," said Patrick O'Shea, vice president for research at the University of Maryland College Park, the state's flagship campus. "As a collaborative unit, our significant resources offer tremendous opportunity to satisfy the efforts envisioned by the FAA and the larger UAS community related to this important project."

"From research activities to innovation and economic development, we look forward to significant advances in unmanned vehicle technology in Maryland," said Darryll Pines, University of Maryland Clark School of Engineering Dean and Farvardin Professor.

Maryland's prowess in UAS research, testing and development is reflected in the University System of Maryland and other renowned educational institutions, federal facilities such as the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division at Naval Air Station Patuxent River and NASA Goddard Flight Center, local airports, and numerous industry partners to support research and testing efforts. The full support of the delegation representing Maryland was mobilized as well to reinforce the critical capabilities that are being brought to bear.

Sens. Mikulski and Cardin along with Congressman Hoyer of the Maryland delegation added in a joint statement, "With a number of premier federal assets, outstanding higher education institutions, and strong industry partners, our region leads in the area of autonomous systems. We appreciate all the resources that came together to partner on this effort, which will increase the safety, efficiency, and reliability of our nation's airspace and will support job creation in the region. We will maintain our nation's preeminence in these highly technical areas only by this kind of collaborative approach and look forward to partnering with all stakeholders as this effort moves forward."

precise figures are hard to gauge and it's nearly impossible to determine number of horses that go to auctions, slaughters, fosters or elsewhere, Ormond said.

The Maryland Horse Council works with the Unwanted Horse Coalition—a broad alliance of equine organizations in Washington, D.C.—to try to identify statistical and geographical data on horses.

Based on a 2009 study, the group estimates that more than 170,000 "unwanted" horses are abandoned or otherwise neglected every year.

Aside from the financial burdens, many novice adopters aren't ready for the time and energy commitment it takes to care for a horse, said Days End volunteer Katie Reed.

"People will just throw them in a field and not care for them," Reed said. "We can't save them all, we wish we could."

The Unwanted Horse Coalition found that many of the critical national issues with horse abandonment were present in Prince George's County.

The Prince George's Equine Industry Task Force worked with the Unwanted Horse Coalition to create the Unwanted Horse Survey. The report introduced issues affecting the horse industry in the county.

Notably, the survey found Prince George's County horse



PHOTO COURTESY MILITARY & AEROSPACE ELECTRONICS

By John Keller

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in Washington is getting ready to propose a new rule this year that would open up vast new opportunities for operating small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in non-controlled civil airspace. This is good news for developers, who have labored under sometimes-difficult FAA UAV rules that often require special FAA certifications to operate even the most small and simple UAVs from parking lots and back yards.

FAA officials say the new UAV regulations, which would make it easier to operate these small aircraft, could be as boon for law enforcement to conduct surveillance, traffic patrols, and other aerial work to replace or augment far-more-expensive manned helicopters.

Those who also could benefit are remote sensing companies, which could enhance satellite imagery with photo data taken from small UAVs, farmers who could use small UAVs to identify areas in their fields that need extra water or fertilizer, and even hobbyists designing new kinds of inexpensive sensor payloads for small UAVs.

It's those small sensor payloads, however, that are worrying some folks, because with enhanced access to airborne sensors, privacy advocates say the wrong kinds of eyes in the sky might be checking up on the wrong kinds of people. What about the celebrity Paparazzi who constantly are trying to get the latest photos of famous people. Put small UAVs in the hands of these people, and no one will have any privacy — ever.

Think also about celebrities who own large estates with well-guarded perimeters and other defenses against prying eyes. Do you think these people will be able to pay extra for aerial rights over their estates?

Let the lawsuits begin.

Reprinted from Avionics Intelligence

In collaboration with MAAP, the University of Maryland team will work closely with the FAA to define research outcomes and processes that will lead to the safe, efficient and robust integration of unmanned systems. That integration will be in stages over several years, with the FAA's rulemaking process guiding the way.

"We have the safest airspace in the world thanks to the FAA

and its supporting structures," said Matt Scassero, Director of the UMD UAS Test Site. "This will be an evolutionary process, implementing new technologies with time-tested methodologies to evaluate them, and a proven regulatory environment to enact the rules that will necessarily govern this new industry. We look forward to being a part of this exciting endeavor."

owners believed, "many people are unaware that most horse owners have been faced with the decision of selling, donating or euthanizing a horse." Only twelve percent of horse owners surveyed said they had not yet experienced having to make one of those decisions.

"Horse owners reported that the general public and media do not fully understand the challenges in feeding, caring for, training and maintaining horses," according to the survey.

As a private horse owner, Ellen Macks of Owings Mills, is familiar with the burdens of horse maintenance and care. Macks said the daily responsibilities of horse upkeep includes everything from exercise to monitoring their diets. Every horse has a different system and different needs, Macks said.

Despite their size, horses are incredibly fragile animals.

"Horses can't regurgitate, so you have to make sure they don't get a colic," Macks said.

Additionally, horse teeth and hooves continue to grow throughout their lives. Their teeth can tear the inside of their mouths if they aren't trimmed regularly, and improper hoof care can distort the structure of their feet.

"You need to be very, very careful about checking their systems," Macks said.

Horses' sensitive nature, fragility and mounting costs have all contributed to the inconvenient position they're in today. The irony of the horses' fate isn't lost on Robertson, of Days End. Americans once depended on horses for survival.

"It's interesting because they carried us in our wars, they supported us in our agriculture, they were our transportation for so many years," Robertson said. "But now that we don't need them for any of those things—we have engines, we have tanks to go into war—they don't really have a purpose in society other than providing love and affection."

But, the cost of that love and affection is out-of-reach for many families, still grappling to regroup from a poor economy.

"So, they're having to reinvent themselves, and find their new place in society in the United States and the world," Robertson added.

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OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review

“Saving Mr. Banks”

Saving Mr. Banks

Grade: C+

Rated PG-13, thematic elements concerning a turbulent home life; should probably be

PG

2 hrs., 5 min.

Grade: C+

“Saving Mr. Banks” tells the heartwarming story of how icy authoress P.L. Travers was charmed by Walt Disney and his merry men into letting them turn her Mary Poppins books into a movie, and how she came to love and appreciate their artistic vision even though it was different from hers.

You’ll notice I said the story is heartwarming, not true. It isn’t. Travers did relent in granting the film rights to Disney (obviously), but she hated the movie his team came up with. She loathed the whole experience so much that she wrote it into her last will and testament that if a Mary Poppins stage play ever came to be, no one involved with the 1964 film could be associated with it. (That’s why the 2004 live musical’s new songs weren’t written by the Sherman brothers, even though they were still alive and active.)

There’s something vaguely stinky about the Disney studio making a movie about how the Disney studio made “Mary Poppins,” and the prettying up of actual events – the Disneyfication of the story – confirms the odor. Yet I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t moved by “Saving Mr. Banks” when I watched it. Directed by skilled tear-yanker John Lee Hancock (“The Blind Side”), the film has an almost irresistible charm built into it: the prim, formal Travers is played by the flawless Emma Thompson, and everybody’s best friend Walt Disney is played by everybody’s best friend Tom Hanks. Travers could have been too cold and de-

manding, and Disney could have been too folksy and smooth – but not with Thompson and Hanks making the effort to give the caricatures some life.

The film focuses on the two weeks in 1961 that Travers spent in Hollywood, working with Disney’s people to hammer out a cinematic version of Mary Poppins that Travers could live with. Disney’s script writer, Don Gradi (Bradley Whitford), and songwriters Robert and Richard Sherman (B.J. Novak and Jason Schwartzman) show her what they’ve come up with; she rejects just about every detail. She hates the songs. She hates the idea of having songs in the film. She doesn’t want any part of it to be animated. She scoffs at the notion of Dick Van Dyke playing Bert. And on and on.

This is interspersed with flashbacks to Travers’ childhood in Australia, where her father (Colin Farrell) works at a bank but is otherwise the total opposite of the stern Mr. Banks of Disney’s “Mary Poppins” – affectionate, doting, playful, irresponsible, and drunk. In a movie that works properly, these flashbacks would explain why Travers is dead-set against the Disney team’s ideas, as well as why she eventually relents. In this movie, however, there is no such explanation. We realize immediately that everything Travers opposed wound up in the “Mary Poppins” we all know and love. So why did she change her mind? “Saving Mr. Banks” can’t explain it. (Maybe because it didn’t happen?)

Besides Thompson and Hanks’ winning performances, there is also Paul Giamatti as an unflappably friendly chauffeur who takes Travers from her hotel to the Disney lot every day. The relationship between these two is the only authentic-seeming one in the film – a testament



PHOTO BY DAVID DETTMANN

When Walt Disney's daughters begged him to make a movie of their favorite book, P.L. Travers' "Mary Poppins," he made them a promise - one that he didn't realize would take 20 years to keep. In his quest to obtain the rights, Walt comes up against a curmudgeonly, uncompromising writer who has absolutely no intention of letting her beloved magical nanny get mauled by the Hollywood machine. But, as the books stop selling and money grows short, Travers reluctantly agrees to go to Los Angeles to hear Disney's plans for the adaptation. For those two short weeks in 1961, Walt Disney pulls out all the stops. Armed with imaginative storyboards and chirpy songs from the talented Sherman brothers, Walt launches an all-out onslaught on P.L. Travers, but the prickly author doesn't budge. He soon begins to watch helplessly as Travers becomes increasingly immovable and the rights begin to move further away from his grasp. It is only when he reaches into his own childhood that Walt discovers the truth about the ghosts that haunt her, and together they set Mary Poppins free to ultimately make one of the most endearing films in cinematic history.

- Written by Walt Disney Pictures

to the value of fine, committed actors doing the best with what they’re given.

Historical revisionism aside, the film suffers from clunky writing (by Kelly Marcel and Sue Smith) and heavy-handed symbolism. Travers demands that you call her “Mrs. Travers,” not Pamela; Disney insists on being called “Walt,” no matter what; ho ho, what a mismatch! When Travers arrives at her California hotel and finds a fruit basket containing pears, she chucks the pears out the window into the pool, an act that contradicts her stern, reserved

demeanor in every single other scene. Why does she hate pears so much? As we later learn in a flashback, it’s because she was out buying pears when her father died. Ugh.

In the end, what works about “Saving Mr. Banks” has nothing to do with “Saving Mr. Banks.” The cast is charming, and the behind-the-scenes process of bringing “Mary Poppins” to fruition makes us think about how much we love “Mary Poppins.” That’s it. The film reflects light from other sources but doesn’t produce any of its own.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

Is it Getting Better? Chris Kluwe, Aaron Rodgers and LGBT Rights in Sports

In terms of football stature, it is difficult to imagine two more different players than former Minnesota Vikings punter Chris Kluwe and Green Bay Packers All-World quarterback Aaron Rodgers. In terms of courage in the face of homophobia, it is also difficult to imagine two more



different people than Chris Kluwe and Aaron Rodgers.

Kluwe released an article on Deadspin this week called, with his trademark subtlety, “I Was An NFL Player Until I Was Fired By Two Cowards And A Bigot.” He tells the backstory behind his release from the team after spending his off hours during the 2012 NFL season fighting to stop a Minnesota anti-gay marriage referendum.

He quotes Vikings coach Leslie Frazier telling him that he “needed to be quiet, and stop speaking out on this stuff.” Frazier also said, according to Kluwe, “a wise coach once told me there are two things you don’t talk about in the NFL, politics and religion.” We also hear from his special teams coach Mike Priefer, who allegedly told Kluwe he would “wind up burning in hell with the gays” and “we should round up all the gays, send them to an island, and then nuke it until it glows.”

Before we get to Mike Priefer, a brief aside to Leslie Frazier. Coach: there is zero empirical evidence that a player’s political interests interfere with team goals. In fact, opposite examples abound. From Bill Russell (eleven titles in thirteen years) to UCLA college star Lew “Kareem Abdul-Jabbar” Alcindor (three straight NCAA titles) to Steve Nash and Los Sunrallying around immigrant rights while upsetting the San Antonio Spurs in the playoffs, there are actually far more instances which demonstrate that players who also fight for a better world should be considered valued parts of any team.

Then there is the other part of Frazier’s statement that “politics and religion” are of equal concern in the locker room. This is farcical. Yes, politics are policed. But organizations like the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Athletes in Action, preaching a gospel of evangelical Christianity, are in almost every clubhouse. No one is ever called into the coach’s office for organizing a Bible study. Also, to be clear, it is not “politics” that set a coach’s teeth on edge. It is only a certain kind of politics that are against the clubhouse code: politics of resistance, politics that challenge oppression, politics that get you labeled a “distraction” and a “troublemaker.” Apparently, thinking that LGBT people are human meets these criteria. There is nothing politically “distracting,” assumedly, about a coach voicing his belief that LGBT people should be subject to nuclear genocide.

That brings us to Mike Priefer. The NFL is not a schoolyard, no matter what the Richie Incognito crowd thinks. It is a workplace. If Priefer believes that LGBT people should be nuked then he should by all means gather with fellow thinkers in the Westboro Baptist Church and shout it out at the nearest funeral. The idea that he would feel free to spew this in an NFL workplace speaks volumes. The fact that he can voice such things from a position of authority is a league-wide disgrace.

Kluwe’s article constitutes a brave, even whistleblowing act that could keep him permanently out of the league. He also dropped his story, coincidentally, the same week that Green Bay quarterback Aaron Rodgers took to the airwaves to dispel gay rumors most of us didn’t know existed. He said with gusto that he “really, really likes women,” as if they were his favorite cut of beef at Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse. He did not even throw down with a token “not that there is anything wrong with that.” (Straight men: the only three acceptable answers to “Are you gay?” are, “That’s my business,” “Not at the moment”, or “I fear I don’t have that privilege.”)

Rodgers’s dispiriting 2002 Mike Piazza answer, led some of my sportswriting brethren like Will Leitch, in an otherwise terrific piece at Sports on Earth, to despair that “people keep saying it’s getting better in professional sports. I’m not seeing it.” I disagree with this. The LGBT workplace protections enacted in the NHL and NBA last year are groundbreaking. The upsurge of athletic protest for LGBT rights leading up to the Sochi Olympics is historic. The courage of Britney Griner speaking out against sexual McCarthyism in women’s basketball and the un-retiring of Robbie Rodgers are too significant to just brush off. On the other hand, Jason Collins still waits for a team to call. On the other hand, Aaron Rodgers, an intelligent, mature human being, acted like being gay meant having cooties. That’s how progress works, in fits and starts. It’s not always smooth and not always pretty. But by breaking his silence about his release from the Vikings, Chris Kluwe has once again moved the ball forward.

The U.S. Has Taken Another Big Step in Reducing CO2 Emissions

By Merrill Matthews

It’s too early to break out the Champagne, but you might want to start icing down the bottle. U.S. carbon emissions from electricity-generating power plants dropped 3.8 percent in 2012, to their lowest level since 1994, according to the federal government’s Energy Information Administration (EIA). The United States hasn’t won the fight to reduce carbon emissions yet, but it’s headed in the right direction.

That recent reduction is not an anomaly: energy-related carbon emissions have declined in five of the last seven years, for a 12 percent reduction between 2005 and 2012.

The U.S. decline appears to be part of a long-term trend due primarily to power plants increasingly switching from coal to cheap and cleaner-burning natural gas -- which emits about half the CO2 that coal does -- and to a shift from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, which needs less energy to produce its products.

In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) keeps pushing regulations that

make it increasingly difficult and costly to use coal.

And that reduction trend may accelerate. While power plants are the primary source of carbon emissions, vehicles also play a role. The widespread availability of cheaper and cleaner natural gas also explains why there is a growing effort to shift long-haul trucks to natural gas instead of diesel fuel.

Engine manufacturer Cummins has begun building and shipping big-rig engines that run on natural gas. And United Parcel Service (UPS) intends to expand its fleet of 18-wheelers that run on liquefied natural gas (LNG) by nearly 800 percent by the end of 2014, according to the New York Times.

Transportation consultant Karl Ziebarth thinks the trucking industry will have largely shifted to natural gas within five to eight years. He notes another reason for the shift is being driven by EPA regulations that require new pollution-control technology that’s driving up the price of diesel engines. Challenges remain, including the need for a refueling infrastructure, but he says the growing demand will likely

induce truck stop operators to make the needed investment.

Cars are also following suit, though the numbers are small. The Washington Post cites Dave Hurst of Pike Research estimating that out of 14.5 million passenger cars and trucks sold in the U.S. in 2012, a little more than 20,000 ran on natural gas. But even more than long-haul trucks, people will need a convenient refueling infrastructure before natural gas-powered cars catch on.

And even trains may be headed down the same track. BNSF Railway announced earlier this year that it is working on a new engine that will run on LNG -- ironically, to transport what it hopes will be a million barrels of oil a day, according to CNBC.

But even as the U.S. makes progress in reducing carbon emissions, global CO2 emissions between 2005 and 2011 increased by 15 percent. The best way to make sure the rest of the world continues reducing carbon emissions is to remove a decades-old restriction on exporting natural gas to other countries without approval from the federal government.

Not everyone is happy about the U.S. CO2 reduction success story, however. Some environmentalists see the increased availability and adoption of natural gas as a failure because it relaxes the economic pressure on government to mandate individuals and companies switch to renewable energy such as wind and solar power.

Nothing creates more public support for renewable energy sources than high fossil fuel prices. Of course, nothing is worse for the economy than high fossil fuel prices, too.

The day may come when we can get most or all of the energy we need from renewable sources, but that day is a long way off even under the best of circumstances.

The public policy goal should be to meet out energy needs while doing as little damage as possible to the environment and the economy. Natural gas is helping us do that. With the right policies coming out of Washington and the states, we could start celebrating the CO2 reduction success story soon.

Merrill Matthews is a resident scholar with the Institute for Policy Innovation in Dallas, Texas.

Calendar of Events

January 16 — January 22, 2014

First Tuesdays At Abraham Hall

Date & Time: Monthly, First Tuesdays
Description: Abraham Hall, constructed in 1889, is the best example of an African American benevolent society lodge in Prince George's County. Located in the community of Rossville, it is the first African American historic site in the county to be fully restored using public funds. Home of M-NCPPC's Black History Program, please call the number listed below for more information about the First Tuesday program.

Ages: All ages
Location: *Abraham Hall*
7612 Old Muirkirk Road, Beltsville 20705
Contact: 240-264-3415; TTY 301-699-2544

Senior Days

Date and Time: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 8 am-12 noon
Description: Seniors (Prince George's County residents only) are allowed FREE use of both the fitness center and pool during these times.

Cost: FREE
Ages: 60 & up
Location: *Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex*
8001 Sheriff Road
Landover, MD 20785
Contact: 301-583-2400; TTY 301-583-2483

The Subdivision and Development Review Committee (SDRC) meeting

Event date: Friday, January 17, 2014, at 9:30 AM
Location: Room 4045 - Fourth Floor Board Room, CAB, 14741 Gov. Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
Date: Every other Friday (or other assigned days) Time: 9:30 a.m.
Location: *Room 4085 - 4th Floor Board Room, County Administration Building, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772*
Reports/Documentation: Friday, January 17, 2014 Meeting Agenda (TBA)
Contact: Development Review Division at 301-952-3520, TTY 301-952-4366.

Comments: The Subdivision and Development Review Committee (SDRC) meeting is held every other Friday in the CAB 4th Floor Conference Room at 9:30 a.m. This meeting is open to the public but is not a public hearing. SDRC is a coordination and interagency meeting early in the development review process with the applicant and M-NCPPC staff where the public can be invited to speak.

National Great Blacks In Wax Museum Excursion

Date & Time: Monday, January 20, 8 am-2 pm
Description: Join us for a visit to Baltimore and tour the Historic Blacks In Wax Museum. Explore the past during the colonial period and learn about the magnificence of Africa. On your own, enjoy lunch at a nearby restaurant. A continental breakfast will be provided. Pre-registration is required by January 16, 2014. Register for SMARTlink #1330421. Fee includes transportation and museum admission fee.
Cost: Resident \$30/person; Non-Resident \$36/person
Ages: 10 & Up (Children 17 & under must be accompanied by an adult.)
Location: *Prince George's Sports & Learning Complex*
8001 Sheriff Road, Landover 20785
Contact: 301-583-2582; TTY 301-583-2483

Charmed Fashion Show

Date and Time: Saturday, January 25, 2014 2-3 pm
Description: Come see for yourself the results that the 'Charmed' program can give kids! This fashion show will give benefits such as self-esteem, poise, etiquette and manners.
Cost: Free
Ages: 4-14
Location: *Baden Community Center*
13601 Baden-Westwood Road, Brandywine 20613
Contact: 301-888-1500; TTY 301-203-6030

31st Annual Choreographers' Showcase

Date and Time: Saturday, January 25, 2014 3 pm & 8 pm
Description: Enjoy a gala concert in the Dance Theater, featuring original dance works by area choreographers! Each performance is selected by adjudicators Sidra Bell and Zvi Goetheiner.
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: *Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (University of Maryland)*
Rte 193 and Stadium Drive, College Park 20742
Contact: For tickets, call the box office at 301-405-ARTS
For other information, call 301-446-3238; TTY 301-446-6802

Afternoon Aviators

Date & Time: Fridays, 2-4 pm
Description: Join us for fun, hands-on aviation-themed activities. A weekly series for children ages five and up. To schedule a group larger than 10, please call the museum to make a private group reservation.
Cost: FREE with museum admission
Ages: 5 & up
Location: *College Park Aviation Museum*
1985 Cpl. Frank Scott Drive, College Park 20740
Contact: 301-864-6029; TTY 301-699-2544

Annual Bridal Show

Date & Time: Sunday, January 26, 2014 1-4 pm
Description: Experience every aspect of planning your wedding at the Bridal Show! Meet with the experts from wedding coordinators, photographers to bakers and more that will help you create a stress-free, memorable day!
Cost: Resident \$5; Non-Resident \$5 (Admission is payable at the door)
Ages: All ages welcome
Location: *Newton White Mansion*
2708 Enterprise Road, Mitchellville 20721
Contact: 301-249-2004; TTY 301-446-6802

EARTH TALK ... "Ocean Sprawl"

Dear Earth Talk:

I recently heard the term "ocean sprawl," which was a new one on me. We all know "sprawl" as it manifests itself above sea level. But in the oceans? Can you enlighten?

— Bill Chadwick,
Nantucket, MA

We are all familiar with "urban sprawl"—the uncontrolled spread of urban development into areas beyond the city. But environmentalists warn that the next frontier in sprawl is on the high seas, where the proliferation of fishing, shipping, tourism, resource extraction, energy development, military exercises and other human activity has begun to call into question just how vast our oceans really are.

According to the non-profit Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), our oceans are already under siege from problems like pollution, overfishing and acidification, and increased industrial activity offshore—leading to so-called "ocean sprawl"—will jeopardize the food, jobs and recreation we have come to depend on the oceans to provide. It's hard to believe, given how much planning goes into various types of development and human activity on land, that the oceans are still like the Wild West—with various entities staking claims

on huge stretches of open water for different purposes.

A promising approach to combat ocean sprawl is called coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), a form of zoning for the seas to help define who can do what and where. Says the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the federal agency charged with predicting changes in climate, weather, oceans and coasts, CMSP "identifies areas most suitable for various types or classes of activities in order to reduce conflicts among uses, reduce environmental impacts, facilitate compatible uses and preserve critical ecosystem services to meet economic, environmental, security and social objectives."

"Marine planning places sound science and the best available information at the heart of decision-making and brings federal, state, tribal and other partners together to cooperatively develop coastal and marine spatial plans," continues NOAA. "This process is designed to decrease user conflict, improve planning and regulatory efficiencies, decrease associated costs and delays, engage affected communities and stakeholders, and preserve critical ecosystem functions and services."

President Obama's 2010 National Ocean Policy directs NOAA and other federal agencies to work with ocean users, industries and coastal commu-



CREDIT: JON ANDERSON/FICKR

The next frontier in sprawl may be on the high seas, where the proliferation of fishing, shipping, tourism, resource extraction, energy development, military exercises and other human activity has begun to call into question just how vast our oceans really are. Pictured: a fishing trawler on the high seas.

nities on ways to implement CMSP in America's off-shore waters to prevent ocean sprawl at home while setting an example for other nations around the world. Nine regional planning bodies are currently tasked with developing detailed plans for their own regions by early 2015, at which point federal policy makers will begin to coordinate implementation.

In response to momentum on CMSP, a coalition of industries including offshore energy, shipping, fisheries, recreation, mining and others formed the World Ocean Council to have a say in how and where marine spatial planning is implemented. The group organized a National Business Forum on Marine Spatial Planning in 2011 and will take part in a World Ocean Summit in San

Francisco in February 2014.

Those of us who appreciate the sea certainly hope that CMSP and other approaches will succeed in turning the tide for oceans and not be undermined by special interests only concerned with bottom lines.

CONTACTS: NRDC,
www.nrdc.org;
NOAA Coastal & Marine Spatial Planning,
www.msp.noaa.gov; World Ocean Council,
www.oceancouncil.org.

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Grasses from A1

American, curly and horned pondweeds, according to University of Maryland Atmospheric and Oceanic Science Professor Raghu Murtugudde

There have been "a lot of changes in what species are most common," Karrh said. "What's very concerning is [in the lower part of the bay] we're losing a lot of eelgrass." Karrh attributes this change to heat stress in the summers. "2005 and 2010 were very warm summers that impacted the eelgrass more so than other species," Karrh said, noting that eelgrass is very slow to recover.

Other parts of the bay, especially the middle regions, are experiencing a decline in grass species as well, and a general loss of diversity, Karrh said.

Other factors such as the bay's salt levels dictate grasses' growth. Salt levels increase with sea level rise and hurricanes and tropical storms, and drop with extreme rainfall on land.

According to Rich Batiuk, associate director at the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program office, good water quality is crucial to bay grasses' health, since polluted or clouded water can block sunlight, and therefore stunt its growth.

Nutrient pollution can pose a big threat to bay grasses, since algae thrive on nitrogen and phosphorus. When these algae overpopulate, algae blooms are created, which cast a layer over the water's surface that blocks out light, preventing underwater grasses from growing, Batiuk said.

Although nutrients and sedimentation are natural parts of river environments, humans have "modified the landscape extensively by urbanization, agriculture, deforestation, and so on which increases (sediment) loads," Murtugudde said.

According to Batiuk, runoff from agriculture and residential lawns carries fine, silty material into the bay.

According to Murtugudde, maintaining good water quality in the bay is necessary, because grasses are natural filters, and can

reduce harmful algae blooms. "We can hardly overemphasize their role," he said. "Sub-aquatic vegetation is part of the integrated ecosystem of the bay." How productive, resilient and biodiverse the bay is all depends on these grasses, he added.

Bay grasses are natural filters against strong storms and nutrient and sediment pollution from land, so they provide excellent habitats for everything from oysters, crabs and small fish to a very large number of microbes, bacteria, insects, and migratory and resident birds, Murtugudde said. "They are critical for maintaining required levels of oxygen for all living species."

Underwater grasses also help reduce wave strength. "Good grasses will reduce coastal erosion...they have a nice buffering capacity," Batiuk said. According to Batiuk, areas in Maryland with healthy bay grasses saw less shoreline damage after strong storms in recent years.

As the benefits of bay grasses are becoming clear, their popularity as a coastal protection device is increasing as

well. New York City recently decided to restore its Jamaica Bay marshes for coastal defense after Sandy struck. "We don't need to wait for a disaster to learn these simple lessons," Murtugudde said, adding that maintaining bay grasses is crucial for the bay's health.

According to Murtugudde, bay grass revival requires humans to reduce their pollution and runoff, which can be achieved by limiting nutrients used on lawns and agricultural farms, and using permeable paving materials to reduce runoff.

Batiuk said, "People who live in houses can do some simple things" like create rain gardens, place rain barrels under drainpipes to prevent runoff, and make smart public transportation choices, such as driving low-emission cars and taking public transportation. "This should extend to smart growth concepts and reducing commuter miles on the watershed," Murtugudde said.

According to Batiuk, public efforts can have "small but incrementally important impacts."

Assembly from A1

ick. "If it's to be changed, it should be done at the federal level so you don't have that jurisdiction differential."

Sen. Stephen Hershey Jr., R-Queen Anne's, also said that raising the minimum wage would "lead to job loss" and "bring an undue burden to the operational cost of businesses."

In response to Republican opposition, Miller said that the current wage doesn't cut it in areas where the cost of living is high, such as Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

"The 'haves' don't understand how tough the 'have-nots' have it at this point in time," Miller said. "They don't understand the cost of tennis shoes, for example."

The stormwater management fee, passed by the General Assembly in 2013 to help fund cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay,

is likely to be among the most highly contested issues of the session. A repeal of the law sits atop the agenda of Republicans, who have nicknamed the fee the "rain tax."

Hershey, one opponent of the tax, called the fee "another unnecessary burden" for Maryland businesses.

"We really need to focus on bringing businesses into Maryland and not continuing to put regulations that are making Maryland unattractive," Hershey said.

Brinkley added that he's not optimistic for an "outright repeal," but still wants to see some type of change to the legislation. Delegate Maggie McIntosh, D-Baltimore, House Environmental Matters Committee chairwoman, will sit once again at the forefront of lawmakers fighting to keep the stormwater law in tact.

"We have ... 4 years of incredible expansion of protections for our local stream and

waterways and the bay, and we want to keep those in place," McIntosh said.

While Miller is a proponent of the tax, he still agrees that it is not yet perfect.

"It's designed to keep the dog feces and the fertilizer on lawns out of our creeks and streams and tributaries which feed into the Chesapeake Bay," he said. "It needs to be modified. The effect on non-profits is too onerous, but it's needed."

The issues of marijuana legalization or decriminalization is also expected to return to the table this session after lawmakers passed a bill last year legalizing the drug for medical purposes.

Gubernatorial candidate Delegate Heather Mizeur, D-Montgomery County, is running on the platform of legalizing, regulating and taxing the distribution of marijuana and using the revenue toward early childhood education. Mizeur said she hopes lawmakers will make ad-

vancements toward legalization this session, but realizes it may take time.

"At a minimum, we need to walk out of this session with a decriminalization proposal to make sure that people stop going to jail for small amounts of possession," Mizeur said.

Mizeur pointed to what she said have been "shifting" views on the issue recently, including Miller coming out in support of legalization last week.

But during Wednesday's "Annapolis Summit" radio broadcast of the Marc Steiner show, O'Malley said he is against legalization or decriminalization of marijuana.

"I'm not much in favor of it ... because I've seen what drug addiction has done to the people of our state," O'Malley said during the show. "I also know that this drug, and its use — its abuse — can be a gateway to even more harmful behavior."

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