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Seafood Labeling Legislation Could Pose Problems for Maryland Restaurants

By SARAH TINCHER
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Marylanders — lawmakers included — take their crabs very seriously, which prompted a legislative proposal that would let residents know when their “Maryland style” crabcakes aren’t the real deal.

Some members of the seafood and restaurant industries fear that legislation introduced in the state House of Delegates proposing tighter regulations on seafood labeling could be impractical and costly for Maryland restaurants.

Currently, the Maryland Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act as well as guidelines set in place by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration prohibit mislabeling of seafood products. But, in an effort to inform consumers about what they’re eating and where it’s coming from, legislation has been introduced in the House Environmental Matters Committee to propose even tighter regulations on the labeling of seafood products, such as the requirement that restaurants clearly display state of origin for all seafood and state or country of origin for crab products on a sign or menu.

The bill, however, has met many opponents throughout the seafood and restaurant industry, most of

whom cite the potential costs and inconveniences the regulations could impose on restaurants.

Andrew Parks, owner of Annapolis seafood restaurant Sam’s on the Waterfront, said he has “no doubt” that there are restaurant owners who are not totally honest about how their food is sourced or where it was coming from, but said the proposed legislation might not be realistic.

“I’m sure people serve farmed fish and say it’s wild and vice versa, I think that’s just an ethical issue — they shouldn’t be doing it but I don’t know that our time is [best] spent trying to regulate that,” he said. “What do you do about the people who are serving blended cod or processed food? The fish could come from 10 different places.”

The biggest issue in Maryland surrounds one of the state’s icons: the blue crab.

Because Maryland crab is seasonal — and therefore not always available — restaurants often label a crabcake as “Maryland style,” though they’re using meat from other states or countries.

Although the Department of Natural Resources has not taken a stance on the legislation, Steve Vilnit, director of fisheries for the department,

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Some Fracking Commissioners Think Report Won’t Be Ready By Deadline

By LYLE KENDRICK
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — The commission examining hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, in Maryland has about five months left in its study to determine if — and how — the natural gas extraction practice can be done safely in the state.

But some commission members said they are not sure the commission will be able to adequately finish the report by the August 1 deadline.

“There’s a lot more work for us to complete,” said Del. Heather Mizeur, D-Takoma Park, a member of the commission and candidate for governor.

The commission, called the Marcellus Shale Safe Drilling Initiative Advisory Commission, was created by Gov. Martin O’Malley in 2011 to help lawmakers and regulators determine how extracting gas from the Marcellus gas basin in Western Maryland could be safely done.

The commission is working with the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Department of Natural Resources, and has met 26 times since 2011.

The governor is optimistic that the commission will finish the report but if the deadline slips, a few more additional

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Obama Takes Action To Protect Americans From Predatory, Poor-Performing Career Colleges

New ‘Gainful Employment’ Proposal Targets Training Programs That Saddle Students With Debt But Provide Few Opportunities For Success

PRESS OFFICER
Office of the White House

The Obama Administration announced new steps to address growing concerns about burdensome student loan debt by requiring career colleges to do a better job of preparing students for gainful employment — or risk losing access to taxpayer-funded federal student aid.

The proposed regulations released by the U.S. Department of Education will help to strengthen students’ options for higher education by giving all career training programs an opportunity to improve, while stopping the flow of federal funding to the lowest-performing ones that fail to do so.

“Higher education should open up doors of opportunity, but students in these low-performing programs often end up worse off than before they enrolled: saddled by debt and with few — if any — options for a career,” said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan. “The proposed regulations address growing concerns about unaffordable levels of loan debt for students enrolled in these programs by targeting the lowest-performing schools, while giving all programs an opportunity to improve.”

Background on the need for action and history of reform



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

President Barack Obama takes a question while talking with students from the 52nd annual U.S. Senate Youth Program in the East Room of the White House, March 13, 2014.

Career training programs offer millions of Americans an opportunity to further their education so that they can pursue their dreams of gaining a well-paying job, owning a home, and providing for their family. These values are the cornerstone of the nation’s economy and the gateway to the middle class.

By law, career training programs can only receive taxpayer-funded federal student aid if they “prepare stu-

dents for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.” Some of these programs, whether public, private, or for-profit, empower students to succeed by providing high-quality education and career training. But many of these programs, particularly those at for-profit colleges, are failing to do

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Democratic Gubernatorial Candidates Push for Emissions Reductions

By BRIAN COMPERE
Capital News Service

COLLEGE PARK — Maryland’s top Democratic gubernatorial candidates would all continue state efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say are contributing to climate change and rising sea levels globally and in the Chesapeake Bay.

In interviews with Capital News Service and prepared statements, the candidates said that if elected, they would make it a priority to incentivize the use of alternative energy sources in the state.

Maryland is projected to miss the target for greenhouse gas emissions re-

duction that were established in 2009’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act. That target requires a 25 percent reduction from 2006 levels by 2020. Without new legislation to increase the use of alternative energy sources, the state is projected to achieve a 16 percent reduction from 2006 levels by 2020.

With 7,700 miles of coastline, Maryland is particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels. The Chesapeake Bay is rising at two to three times the rate of worldwide sea levels. It rose more than a foot over the past 100 years and is expected to rise 2 to 5 feet within this century.

A sixth of the state’s population — an estimated 900,000 people —

live in neighborhoods likely to be affected by rising sea levels over the next 50 years, according to a CNS analysis of census and U.S. Geological Survey data.

Here are what the three leading Democratic candidates — Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, Attorney General Doug Gansler and Delegate Heather Mizeur, D-Montgomery — told Capital News Service about their plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown

For a coastal state such as Maryland, fighting climate change is a top priority,

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CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY MEGAN BROCKETT

Wicomico County Sheriff Mike Lewis speaks out against attempts to loosen Maryland’s marijuana laws before a House committee hearing on Thursday.

Law Enforcement Argues Against Marijuana Decriminalization, Legalization

By MEGAN BROCKETT
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Dozens of uniformed law enforcement officials from around Maryland showed up at the state capital on Thursday to push back against advancing efforts by some legislators to loosen the state’s marijuana laws.

“We as legislators, we as law enforcement officers, we have a duty and a responsibility to protect our children,” Wicomico County Sheriff Mike Lewis said at a hearing before the House Judiciary Committee.

Lewis and other opponents also voiced concerns about the dangers surrounding marijuana earlier in the day during a press conference, which at one point erupted into an angry debate between one speaker, substance abuse consultant Mike Gimbel, and a handful of marijuana reform supporters who were gathered outside the committee room where the hearing was held.

The debate inside the packed committee room became equally tense at times as lawmakers weighed measures that would either decriminalize small amounts of marijuana or legalize it outright for people 21 and older.

A bill sponsored by a gubernatorial candidate, Delegate Heather Mizeur, D-Montgomery, would reduce the use or possession of up to one ounce of marijuana from a criminal offense to a civil one punishable by a fine of up to \$100.

A similar decriminalization bill sponsored by Sen. Robert Zirkin, D-Baltimore County, is set to receive a vote in the Senate on Friday.

Mizeur, who has expressed support for full legalization, spoke earlier in the day at

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Legalization Bill Would Wipe Slate Clean for Some Past Offenders

One segment of Raskin’s legalization bill delves into an area left untouched by the laws in those states, where legalization has created a paradoxical scenario for people dealing with the consequences of having once been convicted of an offense that is no longer against the law.

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Concerns Over Recent Changes to Tricare

Concern over a recent change to TRICARE’s reimbursement policy, excluding more than 100 different Molecular Pathology Laboratory (MoPath) tests and other Laboratory Developed Tests (LDTs) with no notice to beneficiaries or to health care providers.

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Legislative Proposal Could Give the Wealthy a Break From Estate Taxes

Organizations such as Citizens for Tax Justice and the Maryland Center on Economic Tax Policy came to testify against the legislation. Many witnesses argued that giving tax breaks to the state’s wealthiest would take away valuable funds from the state budget.

Business, Page A5

Movie Review: “Neighbors”

Seth Rogen, Zac Efron and Rose Byrne lead the cast of “Neighbors,” a comedy about a young couple with a newborn baby forced to move into a new neighborhood and face unexpected difficulties following the establishment of a fraternity house in the adjacent residence. An intensive conflict between the two parties ensues.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

If “cap and trade” has worked so well in Europe for reducing greenhouse gas emissions there, why haven’t we tried something similar here in the U.S.?

— Sandra M.,
Bern, NC

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COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Jason Alderman

New Mortgage Rules Protect Against Risky Loans

Good news for people shopping for a mortgage — and for current homeowners facing foreclosure because they can no longer afford their home loan: New mortgage regulations drafted by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau recently took effect and they provide a slew of new rights and protections for consumers.



One of the cornerstones of the new mortgage rules is that lenders now are required to evaluate whether borrowers can afford to repay a mortgage over the long term — that is, after the initial teaser rate has expired. Otherwise, the loan won't be considered what's now referred to as a "qualified mortgage."

Qualified mortgages are designed to help protect consumers from the kinds of risky loans that brought the housing market to its knees back in 2008. But obtaining that designation is also important to lenders because it will help protect them from lawsuits by borrowers who later prove unable to pay off their loans.

Under the new ability-to-pay rules, lenders now must assess — and document — multiple components of the borrower's financial state before offering a mortgage, including the borrower's income, savings and other assets, debt, employment status and credit history, as well as other anticipated mortgage-related costs.

Qualified mortgages must meet the following guidelines:

- ❑ The term can't be longer than 30 years.
- ❑ Interest-only, negative amortization and balloon-payment loans aren't allowed.
- ❑ Loans over \$100,000 can't have upfront points and fees that exceed 3 percent of the total loan amount.
- ❑ If the loan has an adjustable interest rate, the lender must ensure that the borrower qualifies at the fully indexed rate (the highest rate to which it might climb), versus the initial teaser rate.
- ❑ Generally, borrowers must have a total monthly debt-to-income ratio of 43 percent or less.
- ❑ Loans that are eligible to be bought, guaranteed or insured by government agencies like Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and the Federal Housing Administration are considered qualified mortgages until at least 2021, even if they don't meet all QM requirements.

Lenders may still issue mortgages that aren't qualified, provided they reasonably believe borrowers can repay — and have documentation to back up that assessment.

New, tougher regulations also apply to mortgage servicers — the companies responsible for collecting payments and managing customer service for the loan owners. For example, they now must:

- ❑ Send borrowers clear monthly statements that show how payments are being credited, including a breakdown of payments by principal, interest, fees and escrow.
- ❑ Fix mistakes and respond to borrower inquiries promptly.
- ❑ Credit payments on the date received.
- ❑ Provide early notice to borrowers with adjustable-rate mortgages when their rate is about to change.
- ❑ Contact most borrowers by the time they are 36 days late with their payment.
- ❑ Inform borrowers who fall behind on mortgage payments of all available alternatives to foreclosure (e.g., payment deferral or loan modification).

With limited exceptions, mortgage servicers now cannot: initiate foreclosures until borrowers are more than 120 days delinquent (allowing time to apply for a loan modification or other alternative); start foreclosure proceedings while also working with a homeowner who has already submitted a complete application for help; or hold a foreclosure sale until all other alternatives have been considered.

For more details on the new mortgage rules, visit www.consumerfinance.gov/mortgage.

Bottom line: You should never enter into a mortgage (or other loan) you can't understand or afford. But it's nice to know that stronger regulations are now in place to help prevent another housing meltdown.

Legalization Bill Would Wipe Slate Clean for Some Past Offenders

By MEGAN BROCKETT
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — When Diamente Brown was 26 years old, she was pulled over for an unlit tag light and arrested when a police officer found a small amount of marijuana in her car, Brown said, stuffed inside a balled up pair of gloves in her passenger's purse.

Brown was a few years away from obtaining her master's degree in secondary education. The arrest, which never evolved into a conviction, would later halt her search for a teaching job when a Baltimore City school told her that a background search turned up the arrest record, making her ineligible to work or volunteer there.

A handful of lawmakers are now fighting for legislation that would downgrade the type of offense Brown was charged with from a criminal to a civil transgression, close in penalty to a parking ticket. Another group of legislators, led by Sen. Jamie Raskin, D-Montgomery, is pushing to legalize marijuana for people 21 and older in the state, similar to what lawmakers in Colorado and Washington have done.

But one segment of Raskin's legalization bill delves into an area left untouched by the laws in those states, where legalization has created a paradoxical scenario for people dealing with the consequences of having once been convicted of an offense that is no longer against the law.

Raskin's measure, as it now stands, would "expunge," or wipe away, the conviction of a person previously found guilty of any marijuana-related offense that would become legal if the bill becomes law.

According to supporters, the provision would tear down barriers to work and education that exist for large swaths of the population with minor marijuana-related offenses, some years old, on their records.

Leigh Maddox, a professor at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and a former captain of the Maryland State Police, said that her work holding legal-service clinics completely changed her thinking on the issue of marijuana and opened her eyes to what she called "the collateral consequences that never even occurred to me as a police officer."

Maddox and others run the clinics twice a week in Baltimore through the university. They offer people 30 minutes of legal advice from an attorney for \$10. She said that during nearly every clinic, someone inquires about expunging a drug charge.

"I have to tell them, 'Sorry, the expungement laws in Maryland are so tight right now that what you currently have isn't eligible for expungement, and the best you can do is make an application for a pardon, but that's a tough hill to overcome,'" Maddox said.

Often, Maddox asks them what's behind their request.

"Why are you so concerned with this [15-year-old] conviction?" she asks. "It's possession. Is it really bugging you that much?"

The answer is "yes," she said. Sometimes they tell her of jobs they applied to, and got, but had to leave after a background check turned up the charge. Sometimes they tell her that they're ineligible for housing aid, or federal loans for school, all because of a marijuana charge from when they were a teenager, she said.



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY MEGAN BROCKETT

Protesters voice support for loosening marijuana laws in Maryland during a rally outside the State House on Thursday. Capital News Service photo by Megan Brockett.

"I hear these stories over and over again," Maddox said. "And it's just like, wow, we shut people out of society, effectively, — poor people — ... over something that is just so silly."

In Maryland, a person can only expunge a conviction if it falls into a narrow category known as "nuisance crimes," according to David Waranch, a criminal defense attorney who deals with expungements.

Marijuana convictions are not included in that category, he said, rendering a large number of residents ineligible.

Maryland had the fourth-highest arrest rate for marijuana possession in the country in 2010, with more than 23,000 recorded in all, according to a report released by the ACLU in October.

But many opponents of legalization and decriminalization, especially those in the legal field, point out that few first-time marijuana possession cases end in a conviction.

"This concept that there are people in jail for possession of marijuana in the state of Maryland is completely wrong," Scott Shellenberger, State's Attorney for Baltimore County, said.

Shellenberger said that most jurisdictions have diversion programs, which allow first-time offenders who complete certain steps, like a drug awareness class or a drug evaluation, to have the charges against them dismissed. Legislation is before lawmakers this session that would require all counties to institute diversionary programs.

Second-time offenders, Shellenberger said, typically receive what is called "probation before judgement," which is also not a conviction and can be expunged after a wait time that is typically three years.

"People who have a conviction on their record for possession of small amounts of marijuana are usually on their third or fourth arrest," Shellenberger said. "I just don't see this as being a tremendous problem for people with having to wipe this off their record. It's typically not on their record."

But in some cases, such as Brown's, the arrest alone can prevent a person from getting a job.

When Brown received a probation before judgement, agree-

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Fracking from A1

weeks or months would be acceptable, Nina Smith, press secretary for O'Malley, wrote in an email.

Roy Meyers, a political science professor at University of Maryland, Baltimore County said the commission will be very important in the statewide fracking discussion because Maryland uses more commissions and task forces to shape policy than most other states.

He said most environmental policy commissions, like O'Malley's, take a long time to finish because they require extensive studies.

Mizeur proposed a bill to the House Environmental Matters Committee called the "Shale Gas Drilling Safety Review Act of 2014."

The bill would prohibit the Maryland Department of the Environment from issuing fracking permits for 18 months after the report is issued.

She said this would enable legislators and their constituents a full General Assembly session to weigh in on the results of the commission's findings.

The commission still does not have a completed risk assessment, a public health study, an economic study or a best management practices study, said David Vanko, chairman of the commission and dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Towson University.

Some commissioners said they have not met all of their timetables.

"It's much more complicated than we thought," said Stephen Bunker, a commissioner and director of conservation programs at the Maryland Office of the Nature Conservancy.

According to commission minutes, deadlines for the best

management practices report, which the Department of the Environment contracted to the University of Maryland, were moved back several months in 2012 and an extension was made in 2013 for the public comment period.

Towson University is conducting the economic study and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science is conducting the health study which means much of the remaining work is out of the commission's control, Vanko said.

Vanko said he expects most of these unfinished studies to conclude by the end of the spring.

In addition to the studies in Maryland that are in progress, some health studies looking at the effects of fracking around the U.S. are just being released, said Ann Bristow, a member of the commission and a psychology professor at Frostburg State University.

One study released in January in Colorado by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences found an association between natural gas wells within a 10-mile radius of a pregnant woman's home and congenital heart defects and potential neural tube defects in her child.

"It takes a while for the science to be produced around these issues," Bristow said.

While the science of fracking is still ongoing, some members of the commission said they also think the commission should have more funding to finish its own studies.

Legislation failed in 2012 that would have partly paid for some of the studies by imposing a fee on natural gas prospectors who leased land in Maryland.

Since then, O'Malley allocated \$1.5 million for this fiscal year to support research for the study.

Vanko said the Maryland Department of the Environment and the Department of Natural Resources are using the funding for the economic study, the public health study and some scientific studies of surface water, groundwater and air quality in Western Maryland.

Bunker said while some money has been spent on groundwater studies, more studies would help the commission get a better idea about how Western Maryland's geography could be affected by fracking.

Some citizens raised their own funds for an independent risk assessment.

Last fall, the Chesapeake Climate Action Network and Citizen Shale, a Garrett County group, hired Ricardo-AEA, a British environmental consulting firm, to do a risk assessment.

Paul Roberts, a cofounder of Citizen Shale and a commissioner, said the action network used foundations and Citizen Shale used money from residents in Mountain Lake Park in Garrett County to fund the study.

According to that study's findings, surface water contamination and groundwater contamination are among the high risks Maryland would face if fracking occurred.

Vanko said that while groups outside the commission have paid for an independent study, the work the commission is already doing is technically a risk assessment.

But not all of the commissioners think more funds would benefit the study.

William Valentine, an Allegany County Commissioner and member of the fracking commission, said more funds might prolong the commission's work because it would enable it to look deeply into any potential concern, including unnecessary ones, raised by members.

Valentine said he does not think the report will be entirely ready by August.

Some commission members said, while they think their work has been efficient, some of the studies are looking into theoretical, extraneous problems rather than practical ones.

Shawn Bender, president of the Garrett County Farm Bureau and a member of the commission, said areas like transportation are already regulated by the state and federal government and the commission should not spend too much time on that study.

"You can study things to death," said Sen. George Edwards, R-Allegany and Garrett. "You don't need to reinvent the wheel."

Edwards said while the commission has been effective, fracking is the most studied issue he can remember in recent state history.

"It's kind of strange to make it go that long," he said.

Some commissioners said a continued moratorium by the Maryland Department of the Environment before it could allow fracking, like the kind proposed by Mizeur, is unnecessary.

"This isn't, 'finish the report and turn the switch, then drilling rigs show up the next day,'" said Jeffrey Kupfer, a senior advisor for Chevron's government affairs and a commissioner.

Vanko said the commission is proposing a requirement for gas companies that come to Maryland to provide two years of site-specific environmental baseline data before they can drill.

Vanko said there is consensus in the commission that making two-year baseline plans mandatory is a good idea. If adopted, the measure would make Maryland the first state to have that requirement.

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COMMENTARY

Barbara A. Mikulski

United States Senator for Maryland



Mikulski, Bipartisan Senators Express Concerns Over Recent Changes to Tricare

WASHINGTON— U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), a member of the Senate Military Family Caucus, along with Senators Richard Burr (R-N.C.), Kay Hagan (D-N.C.), James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel expressing concern over a recent change to TRICARE's reimbursement policy, excluding more than 100 different Molecular Pathology Laboratory (MoPath) tests and other Laboratory Developed Tests (LDTs) with no notice to beneficiaries or to health care providers.

"We have a sacred trust with those who have risked their lives so that we may live in freedom. Part of that sacred trust is making sure we provide our veterans with the care and benefits they have earned and deserve," Senator Mikulski said. "I'm so pleased to stand alongside my Senate colleagues, holding TRICARE accountable and fighting to ensure that our servicemen, service women, and their families are not denied coverage and reimbursements for Laboratory Developed tests. Our military families must receive the best care and treatments possible."

"Our military's health insurance should adhere to the widely held standards of care accepted by the medical community at large," said Senator

Burr. "Our members of the military and their families should have the same access as other government employees and civilians in the private sector and not be penalized for receiving care at a private facility."

Despite such a large change in policy, which took place January 1, 2013, no notices were given to either beneficiaries or providers, and doctors continued to order the tests, while major laboratories shouldered the costs in hopes that the Defense Department would reverse the policy.

In their letter, the Senators highlight their concerns about how TRICARE's refusal of coverage will affect military families and patients.

"We are concerned that TRICARE's refusal of coverage and reimbursement for certain LDTs outside of a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) denies military families and patients access to care simply because they either choose to receive care at a civilian medical provider or are unable to access a MTF," the Senators wrote. "Additionally, it is concerning that TRICARE changed a reimbursement policy which may negatively impact a significant population of patients and military families. It is our understanding that MoPath tests and other LDTs are standard practice of care for many providers."

Marc Morial, President and CEO

National Urban League



Common Core State Standards – Part Two: Closing the Achievement Gap

"Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments...It is the very foundation of good citizenship...In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms." Chief Justice Earl Warren, 1954 Brown v. Board of Education

Sixty years after the landmark Brown v. Board of Education ruling ending segregation in America's public schools, separate and unequal is still a pervasive reality. While de jure, or legal segregation has been abolished, de facto, or the actual practice of segregation, is greater now than it was 40 years ago. Black and Brown students are less likely to share classrooms with white students. We also see separate and unequal levels of expectations and resources in our schools that continue to break down along the color line. The unfortunate result of all of this is a widening achievement gap between the races.

The achievement levels of Black and Brown students, especially those burdened with the economic and social disadvantages of poverty, are falling further and further behind their white peers, even as our entire nation loses ground globally. This is a recipe for economic and social disaster, but it can be avoided if we make closing the achievement gap a national priority, guided by a commitment to a common set of principles. That is a commitment that 45 states and the District of Columbia have made with the adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—that all students will have the same expectations for learning regardless of their zip codes.

In a recent column, I aimed to clear up much of the misinformation that has been used to create confusion and distort the facts around the Common Core State Standards for math and English language arts that are now being implemented in most states. The National Urban League supports this historic reform, largely because it is geared to better prepare all students for college and the jobs of today and tomorrow. Higher standards for every student, implementation that is resourced equitably, instruction based on real-world problem-solving rather than rote learning, and clear and consistent expectations will also help close the widening achieve-

ment gap between races and economic classes. These standards are also benchmarked against international standards.

The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study finds that only 16 percent of Black students are reading at or above grade level compared with 44 percent of white students, a gap of 28 percent. At the same time, the achievement gap between students in the United States and their European and Asian peers is also widening. According to 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, students in 25 other countries are doing better than American students in math, while 16 other countries exceed U.S. achievement levels in reading. In fact, other study data shows that our below average performance in math can be addressed through the Common Core, since CCSS math standards align with what other students are learning around the world. Clearly, we must do better, and implementing the Common Core is an initial step we can take to improve educationally among states and nations. Education is not only the civil rights issue of our times, it is also increasingly the fault line that will determine winners and losers in the global economy.

We will not be able to close the achievement gap if we continue to have different expectations for different students. All students should have access to college and career ready standards, but the Common Core State Standards alone cannot close the achievement gaps in our nation. Achieving equity and excellence in education requires an approach which also includes reducing income inequality and poverty, equalizing public school funding, and supporting greater parental involvement.

We recognize that there have been implementation challenges with CCSS that need to be addressed. We know that the resources, tools and training need to be in place to meet the promise of these standards. Once these implementation wrinkles are ironed out, we believe that over time, a commitment to higher standards for every student will go a long way towards closing the achievement gap.

In a future column, we will share findings from research that the National Urban League recently commissioned on parental perceptions of CCSS. As long as critics unfairly characterize and misrepresent Common Core State Standards, we will continue to work to replace confusion with clarity.



Belair Mansion

Open to the Public

BELAIR MANSION

This magnificent structure represents the history of Bowie circa 1745. The beautiful five-part Georgian plantation house was once the home of Samuel Ogle, provincial governor of Maryland. Enlarged in 1914 by the New York architectural firm of Delano and Aldrich, the mansion was also the home of William Woodward, a famous horseman in the first half of the 20th century. Restored to reflect its 250-year-old legacy, the mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Open Tuesday through Sunday 12 noon to 5 p.m. Tours for groups of 10 or more are available by appointment. Admission is free; donations are welcomed. For more information call 301-809-3089.

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



Make Hard Work Pay — Again

One of our country's most cherished values is the idea that if you work hard you can get ahead, be part of the middle class, raise a family comfortably, and ensure your children will do better than you did. But this is a hollow promise to countless families today. The sad truth is you can work full time in America and not be able to meet your family's basic needs. A parent working full time at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour earns \$15,080 a year before taxes. That's \$4,700 below the poverty level for a parent with two children. Two-thirds of the 16.1 million poor children in America live with an adult who works, and 30 percent live with an adult who works full time year-round.

As CDF's recently released The State of America's Children 2014 report highlights, in no state can a parent working full time at the minimum wage afford a fair-market rent two-bedroom apartment and have enough left over to pay for food, utilities, and other necessities. Child care costs alone can eat up more than half of a parent's paycheck: the average cost of center-based child care for an infant is \$9,500 a year. Most experts agree that families need to earn twice the poverty level to be able to begin to provide adequately for their children.

Today we have an opportunity to begin to realign our values by enacting the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2013 which would raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour, the first increase since 2009, and raise the minimum wage for tipped workers for the first time since 1991. The current federal minimum wage is worth 32 percent less in inflation-adjusted terms than at its peak in 1968. If it had grown at the same rate as wages for a typical worker in America since 1968 it would already be \$10.65 an hour. But if it had grown at the same rate as productivity of the economy during that period it would be \$18.30 today. So increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour would restore the minimum wage closer to what it would have been if it had kept up with average wages but still leave it far below what it should be,

given productivity and economic growth since the late 1960s.

Nationwide, increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 would increase a full-time worker's salary to \$21,008 and put \$31 billion additional dollars in the pockets of as many as 24.5 million low-wage workers according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), Congress' official budget arbiter. It would lift 900,000 people above the official poverty threshold. Nearly 90 percent of those benefiting would be 20 years or older and over half would be working full time. According to the Economic Policy Institute those affected by the minimum wage increase earn on average half of their family's total income. The Economic Policy Institute has also found more than a quarter of those benefiting would be parents.

Most importantly, the increase to \$10.10 an hour would improve the lives of an estimated 14 million children — nearly one in five children in America — by helping their parents put nutritious food on the table, keep a roof over their families' heads, and make sure their children get the health care they need to ensure they can develop to their full potential. And an increase in the minimum wage

would not cost the government anything — as the CBO acknowledged, it might even save money in the short term as people with increased incomes need fewer government benefits and pay more in taxes.

The increase also would help spur the economy. Recent research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago found that raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 could increase U.S. gross domestic product by up to 0.3 percentage points in the short term. Some resist a minimum wage increase because of fears it would lead to job losses, but after extensive research the latest consensus in the field is that this is not the case. This is why more than 600 economists, including seven Nobel Laureates, have endorsed the increase to \$10.10, saying in a joint letter to President Obama and congressional leaders: "In recent years there have been important developments in the academic literature on the effect of increases in the minimum wage on employment, with the weight of the evidence now showing that increases in the minimum wage have had little or no neg-

See WATCH, Page A8

The Prince George's Post

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Is An Aging Parent Overwhelming Your Life?

Improved health care and lifestyle changes have many more Americans living into their 80s and beyond. The result is that the grown children of many of these seniors now find themselves facing increasing demands for help. Sometimes it's a hard demand to meet.

While none of us wants to abandon an elderly parent facing mounting physical and psychological challenges, the needs of our own lives and families can make it difficult to always be available.

The result is often increased personal anxiety and stress, and a negative affect on family life. Providing the money, time and emotional energy that an elderly parent may require might mean that the grown child's own life and immediate family is paying the price as their own needs are neglected.

It's an increasingly common situation with no easy cures. But if such stress is something you're facing, try asking yourself some basic questions:

- ❑ Are the needs of your aging parent real, or simply the demands of an elderly parent who feels you "owe" help when and where he or she wants it?
- ❑ Can siblings help? Even children who are living far away, or are emotionally not close to that parent, can sometimes surprise with offers of aid when invited to help.
- ❑ Are there other sources of help? Neighbors or friends may be eager to offer help and reduce some of your burden. Your local Council on Aging can provide advice on appropriate services available.
- ❑ Are you prioritizing your time and activities? Your own family, as well as you yourself, deserve your attention and care. Sometimes saying "no" because your own needs and those of your family must be met is simply something that must be done.
- ❑ Are you managing your time well? Create a schedule to help an aging parent with small chores, like shopping or bill paying, rather than just being available on demand.

While it's natural to want to provide needed help as parents become older and less capable on their own, it's important to recognize that each of us has limits. Overextending yourself to help that elderly parent can result in negative consequences for you and your family that can bring a heavy price. Be realistic and reasonable about the help that you can provide and you'll better benefit yourself, your own family and your aging parent.

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

Get Your Tax Refund Fast With A Prepaid Card

(NAPS)—For those who want convenience and speed when it comes to getting their tax refund, they should consider the option of receiving their refund on a prepaid debit card, a convenient tool to manage everyday finances.

Direct deposit of a refund onto a prepaid debit card is free, eliminates the need to pay for check cashing services and will arrive faster than a paper check.

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Direct deposit of a refund onto a prepaid debit card is free, eliminates the need to pay for check cashing services and will arrive faster than a paper check.

Legislative Proposal Could Give the Wealthy a Break From Estate Taxes

By SARAH TINCHER
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Two legislative committees simultaneously weighed a proposal Wednesday that would raise the estate tax exemption. But opponents of the measure told lawmakers that the proposal amounted to a tax break for Maryland's wealthiest citizens.

The state currently imposes a 16 percent tax on estates worth more than \$1 million. But, if passed, the proposal sponsored by Senate President Thomas V. "Mike" Miller Jr. and House Speaker Michael E. Busch, would raise the tax threshold in three annual increments of \$1.75 million, \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million before reaching the Federal level, which currently stands at \$5.34 million, by Jan. 1, 2017.

With Maryland being one of only 14 states plus Washington, D.C., to impose the estate tax, supporters of the bill say the threshold increase will help make the state more nationally competitive. Proponents of the measure said the state's estate taxes play a large role in forcing people to move away when they retire.

"We are in competition with the sister states," Miller told the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee. "All of the states we're in competition with have eliminated the estate tax."

Lawmakers in the House Ways and Means Committee also considered the proposal Wednesday.

According to IRS data, Maryland lost \$7.04 billion in annual adjusted gross income between 1992 to 2010, of which \$4.16 billion went to Florida, \$1.35 billion went to North Carolina, \$1.3 billion went to Virginia, \$1.09 billion went to Pennsylvania and \$714.66 million went to West Virginia — none of which impose estate taxes on their residents.

Citing a Forbes financial magazine article titled "Where Not To Die In 2013," which listed Maryland, Miller said the message of the piece published last year was: "If you want to save money, move. ... You won't have to pay this tax if you cross over the line into Virginia."

However, Kate Planco Waybright, executive director of non-profit advocacy organization Progressive Maryland, told lawmakers that this logic is a myth.

"Conservatives have repeatedly made the false claims that liberal states lose billions of dollars each year due to tax flight. They've been so convincing, that now some members of the left have adopted these claims," Planco Waybright said. "But research ... shows that tax flight is simply a well-debunked myth."

In addition to Planco Waybright, representatives from organizations such as Citizens for Tax Justice and the Maryland



PHOTO COURTESY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Center on Economic Tax Policy came to testify against the legislation. Many of these witnesses argued that giving tax breaks to the state's wealthiest residents — less than 3 percent of the population — would take away valuable funds from the state budget.

"If you want an innovation economy, you have to pay for it," Richard Phillips, a research analyst for Citizens for Tax Justice told the committee. "You have to pay for universities, you have to pay for the education system. The estate tax raises millions of dollars to pay for those things."

Planco Waybright agreed with this notion, adding that the legislation could also affect income inequality on the state.

"Obviously [the exemption increase] takes away funds from Maryland's budget ... that pays for programs that middle

and lower class families depend upon, like education, public services, transportation [and] safe roads and highways," she said in an interview. "At a time in which we know that reducing income inequality is such a priority for Americans and for Marylanders, it's unfathomable to us that a priority of so many Democrats here in Maryland is to reduce the taxes paid by the wealthiest 3 percent."

In addition to sponsors Miller and Busch — both Democrats — 56 Democratic delegates and 23 Democratic senators co-sponsor the legislation. Eight Republican senators are also co-sponsors.

"What that says to me, is that the Democrats who have signed up to support these proposals are out of touch with those that they represent back home in their districts," Planco Waybright said.

Clean Slate from A1

going to a probation term without conviction, she asked the judge if it would affect her employment, and was told she would be able to answer "no" on job application questions that asked if she had ever been convicted of a crime.

What she didn't know, Brown said, was that some agencies, like the school system, ask more than if you have ever been convicted.

"They ask, 'Have you been charged?' ... 'Have you ever received a probation before judgement?' 'Have you ever been arrested?' Those were things that I couldn't say 'no' to," she said.

Brown now serves as director of Out For Justice, an organization that focuses on breaking down barriers for past offenders.

"We think anybody who has offended should be responsible for their actions, and they

should take responsibility," she said. "But after you complete your punishment, unfortunately society doesn't know when to end [it] ... It's like you just have this scarlet letter for the rest of your life, despite the fact that you've completed the sentence you were given."

Raskin's legalization proposal would wipe away prior minor marijuana arrests and convictions.

But a decriminalization measure sponsored by Sen. Robert Zirkin, D-Baltimore County, and passed Friday by the Senate does not contain a provision that would expunge prior marijuana convictions.

Zirkin said he fully supports the expungement provision in Raskin's bill, but left it out of his proposal in order to give it the best chance of passing.

He noted that his measure would shield any civil citations issued for marijuana possession from public view, and said another

piece of legislation, the Maryland Second Chance Act, might provide the best opportunity for backward-looking expungements.

An analysis of Raskin's legalization bill by the Department of Legislative Services raises concerns that the "automatic expungement" of eligible convictions could prove problematic.

It notes that certain information necessary for carrying out expungements under the bill, like the amount of marijuana involved, may be difficult or impossible to obtain in some cases.

Shellenberger agreed that the retroactive nature of the provision would be problematic, and said enforcing it would likely be costly and create significant work for courts and law enforcement.

"It's one thing to say 'OK let's change the rules going forward.' It's whole different thing to say, 'Let's change the rules going backward,'" Shellenberger said.

But for some advocates of legalization and of criminal justice reform, a retroactive rule change is important because they find the system flawed in a way that creates what Brown called "perpetual punishment" for past offenders.

The resistance to change, they believe, does more harm than good.

"People always wanna make it seem like it's a phase and it's a young thing, and when you get a certain age you shouldn't smoke marijuana anymore, you shouldn't get in trouble anymore," Brown said.

"You can be an idiot at any time ... I just happened to be an idiot at 26," she said. "I got caught ... It's really that simple ... I could be an idiot again at 70. It's not an age thing, it's not an economic thing, it's not an environment thing. It's just, everyone makes mistakes. That's all. Everyone's human."

Seafood from A1

said that only about 2 percent to 4 percent of crab in the country actually comes from Maryland.

According to some opponents of the bill, however, this issue is unavoidable, and isn't worth the costs and inconveniences of implementing new rules.

"We source crab based on where it's available in the market," Melvin Thompson, a senior vice president of the Maryland Restaurant Association, told the committee. "We'd love to have Maryland crab featured all the time, it's just not available. Sometimes we will have to substitute and sometimes we don't know until we actually receive that delivery."

Gavin Gibbons, a spokesman for the National Fisheries Institute, agreed, saying the legislation "ignores the reality of restaurant sourcing."

"Off the top of my head, I could name nine different places a restaurant could source crab. No restaurants should be expected to have nine different menus at-the-ready based on

what crab they're using in their crabcake sandwich," Gibbons said. "It's cost prohibitive and it doesn't do anyone any good."

Gibbons also suggested that a "Maryland-style" crabcake that's sourced from places other than Maryland really isn't "fraudulent" at all, asking: "When you purchase a Philly cheesesteak, are you under the impression it was made in Philadelphia?"

Some who take issue with the legislation also say that the source of the switch may be hard to identify; in other words, it's hard to tell whether the restaurant or retailer is mislabeling the food, or if it's coming misidentified from the supplier.

"There are no restaurants — at least no members of ours — that intentionally mislabel fish," Thompson said. "If fish is misidentified or mislabeled, usually that is a problem that happens at the wholesale level."

In contrast, Craig Sewell, chef and owner of Annapolis seafood restaurant A Cook's Cafe, disagrees with this argument.

"You have to trust the people



CAPITAL NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY SARAH TINCHER

Sam's on the Waterfront, a seafood restaurant in Annapolis, serves up an Ocean City Flounder Florentine special from fish caught off the shores of the Maryland beach town.

that are your suppliers," he said.

Unlike most restaurant owners, however, Sewell knows his local supplier — Gaylord Clark, owner of Two Oceans True Foods — personally, and only sells crab products while Maryland crab is in season. Sewell also favors the legislation, saying that the idea that the regulations would be too costly or inconven-

ient for restaurants is "silly." "We're selling people things that they put in their mouth — they sustain them, they nourish them, they should be healthy for them," he said. "The more people can know about where their food is sourced, how it is raised and if it has any additives to it — that's all good. People need to know."

OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review "Neighbors"

Neighbors
Grade: B+
Rated R, pervasive
language, strong crude and
sexual content, graphic nudity,
and drug use throughout.
1 hr., 30 min

You might expect an R-rated comedy starring Seth Rogen and Zac Efron, directed by the guy who made *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and *The Five-Year Engagement*, to be loose and sloppy, like Rogen's torso. But *Neighbors* turns out to be tight and lean and eminently watchable, like Efron's torso. It's boisterously funny, yet also focused and perceptive. Who knew a Rogen movie could be all of those things at once?

Rogen and the suddenly indispensable Rose Byrne play Mac and Kelly, new parents working through the mixed emotions of loving their adorable baby girl while missing their old, fun lives. After a few lukewarm gags along the usual lines (they want to go to a late-night party but fall asleep instead!), we get to the crux of the matter as a fraternity moves in to the house next door. Under the guidance of dude-bros Teddy (Efron) and Pete (Dave Franco), the frat behaves exactly the way Mac and Kelly were afraid they would, with raucous nightly parties. (For some reason they're the only neighbors bothered by the noise.)

The new situation intensifies Mac and Kelly's insecurity about becoming grown-ups. They want to be cool, and even more than that, they want to be cool in the eyes of hot college kids (Mac unhesitatingly calls Teddy "the sexiest man I've ever seen"). With a joint as a peace offering, the couple gets on the frat's good side and they all promise to be considerate neighbors.

That doesn't work out, obviously, and war is declared.



Seth Rogen, Zac Efron and Rose Byrne lead the cast of "Neighbors," a comedy about a young couple suffering from arrested development who are forced to live next to a fraternity house after the birth of their newborn baby. "Neighbors" is directed by Nick Stoller ("Forgetting Sarah Marshall," "Get Him to the Greek").

And here comes the movie's saving grace. Where the usual formula would be Mac vs. Teddy with Kelly staying on the sidelines rolling her eyes, the film (written by first-timers Andrew J. Cohen and Brendan O'Brien) makes Kelly an equal partner. She wants these douchebags out as much as her husband does, and Byrne is every bit as foul-mouthed and righteously angry as Rogen. So instead of being the voice of reason — oh, how actresses must get tired of playing the voice of reason in male-oriented comedies! — Kelly is a co-conspirator, using her female point of view to devise plans to bring the frat down by getting it in trouble with the university's headline-averse dean (Lisa Kudrow) or by driving a wedge between best bros Teddy and Pete. No joke, Mac and Kelly have one of the best, most functional marriages of any movie couple so far this year.

The escalating pranks and sabotage are hilariously executed by director Nicholas Stoller and his cast, which also includes Christopher Mintz-Plasse as a frat member, Ike Barinholtz as Mac's eager-to-destroy buddy, and a handful of funny lesser-known actors like Craig Roberts and Jerrod Carmichael. The physical comedy and sight gags are well choreographed, but the film doesn't lean too heavily on jackassery for its laughs. Nor does it treat the frat boys solely as adversaries, giving us scenes from Teddy and Pete's point of view to flesh them out (and "flesh" is definitely the right word). It would be easy in a comedy like this to do nothing but make fun of frat boys, but *Neighbors* doesn't take the easy way out.

Stoller summons a few appropriate cameos for a brief sequence describing the frat's history, and delivers good-natured raunch throughout.

(It's the clean kind of raunch, too — sex, not poop.) A minor subplot with the Barinholtz character's estranged wife hooking up with a frat boy is oddly underdeveloped, but the gags associated with it are solid. This could be the big studio comedy to beat for 2014.

Note: This was a "work in progress" version of the film that played at South By Southwest. It ran about 90 minutes and didn't have the closing credits. "Work in progress" at SXSW often means "the film is finished but we want to have an official 'world premiere' later," but who knows. The theatrical version may vary.

The Upside: Pretty much start-to-finish funny

The Downside: Wouldn't surprise me if that Barinholtz subplot gets snipped

On the Side: Turns out Dave Franco does a killer De Niro in *Meets the Parents* impression

College from A1

so — at taxpayers' expense and the cost of students' futures.

For-profit colleges can receive up to 90 percent of their revenue from taxpayer dollars, with the additional revenue frequently coming from veterans' benefits and private student loans.

Students at for-profit colleges represent only about 13 percent of the total higher education population, but about 31 percent of all student loans and nearly half of all loan defaults. In the most recent data, about 22 percent of student borrowers at for-profit colleges defaulted on their loans within three years. Most students at for-profit gainful employment programs who graduated with an associate degree were also left with federal student loan debt, which averaged \$23,590, while the majority of students at community colleges did not borrow. And of the for-profit gainful employment programs the Department could analyze and which could be affected by our action

today, the majority — 72 percent — produced graduates who earned less than high school dropouts.

These students — including veterans — enrolled to become equipped for the workforce, but often they didn't get what they need. Instead, they found confusing or misleading information, excessive costs, poor quality, low completion rates, and programs that provide training for low-wage occupations or, in some cases, where there simply are no jobs.

Widespread concerns prompted the Obama Administration to embark on a multi-year negotiation with the higher education community over new regulations that ensure students are being prepared for gainful employment. Following last year's court decision, which affirmed the U.S. Department of Education's authority to regulate in this area in order to protect students and taxpayers, the Department undertook new efforts to make career training programs affordable pathways to good jobs.

"For too long, some of these programs have measured success

by how many students they enroll — and that needs to change," Duncan said. "Success in career education should be measured by how many students graduate prepared for a good job with sufficient earnings. And while state attorneys general across the country and allies like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau have taken steps in recent months to stop programs from preying on students, we know more can be done at the local, state, and federal level to stop this abuse."

New proposal to better prepare students for gainful employment
The proposed regulations follow on public hearings the Department held last year. The affected programs include nearly all programs at for-profit institutions, as well as certificate programs at public and private non-profit institutions, such as community colleges.

The Department has proposed a framework with three components: certification requirements, accountability metrics, and public disclosures. The proposal

distinguishes programs that provide affordable training that leads to well-paying jobs from those programs that leave students with poor earnings prospects and relatively high amounts of debt, or which lead to high student loan default rates.

While all programs would have an opportunity to improve under the proposed regulations, those with the worst outcomes — high debt-to-earnings rates or high loan default rates — would lose eligibility to participate in federal student aid programs to protect students and taxpayers.

The proposed rule also increases transparency about gainful employment programs by requiring institutions to tell current and potential students about key outcomes, like average debt levels, earnings, loan repayment rates, loan default rates, and completion and withdrawal rates. This information would help students identify programs that may serve them best and help them make more informed decisions about their educational investment.

The Edge of Sports

by DAVE ZIRIN

My Years of Magical Thinking: Thoughts on the 1980s Showtime Lakers

Jeff Pearlman is the author of the new book *Showtime: Magic, Kareem, Riley, and the Los Angeles Lakers Dynasty of the 1980s*. Showtime is both like an excavation of a long-lost era, as well as a pulsing, utterly relevant roadmap into our twenty-first-century sports celebrity culture. It is a fascinating window on the last time when fame not only opened doors but also then closed them behind you.

The book is also reminding me just how emotionally connected I was as a kid to these particular Laker teams. Growing up in New York City, it was a rare year when I did not find a way to get what was then a \$10 ticket to see the Showtime Lakers on one of their two annual trips to Madison Square Garden. With a perennially middling-to-awful Knicks team to root for, I first shouted myself hoarse for the Lakers.

But I really loved these Lakers to death because of Earvin "Magic" Johnson. Magic was the synthesis of two extremely different styles of playing that, as a short, athletically challenged basketball obsessive, I could at least try, through sheer will, to replicate. He couldn't really jump, he rarely dribbled in a fancy manner and he had an ugly push shot that looked like it was borrowed from a grainy 1950s video. What he could do, like no one before or since, was combine this olde-timey game with a twenty-first-century brand of flair. He saw angles no one could see and could throw no-look passes that smacked people right in the hands, ready to shoot. I would go to 77th and Amsterdam and chalk a Lakers yellow circle on the wall no bigger than a grapefruit and whip different kinds of no-look passes — chest, baseball, behind the back — and see how many would hit their mark. Sure, I would never be Magic, given that he was six-foot-nine, could rebound like a power forward and dribble the length of the court in seconds, but I could feel like Magic any time one of my no-look passes didn't break a window and instead found someone for a layup.

I took this approach to the courts with confidence far beyond my game. As a Caucasian playing ball in New York City, a 12-year-old who would loiter on the courts until the big kids would let me play, I was a bit of a curiosity, treated with more affection than I probably deserved. I would hit shots and people would yell "Bird!" I would grit my teeth and say, "Call me Magic!" This was always good, if nothing else, for a laugh.

The Showtime Lakers were a rolling party and to be a fan felt like you were getting a secondhand high off of their vapors of glitter, glamour and glory. They also projected an image of Los Angeles, especially for us cloistered East Coasters, as a place of endless celebrity and sunshine.

As if being a teenager isn't dramatic enough, this love became gothic tragedy, as both Showtime and my dreams of Los Angeles skidded to a stunning end. Magic Johnson, after years of abundant unprotected sex, became HIV-positive and quit the game he loved in 1991. The Los Angeles Times described the public reaction to the news like "an icon had been shot down in mid-stride.... The news was treated like the death of a head of state or the outbreak of war." It was assumed, in our collective ignorance, both that he had to quit and that he would slowly die over the course of the next several years. In life, he was already being mourned.

But then, in a manner that was both upsetting and confusing for a kid who went to school in the East Village and whose mom had worked in an AIDS clinic, Johnson also felt the need to emphasize repeatedly that he had contracted the virus only by having a lot of random, condom-free, heterosexual sex. I remember watching *The Arsenio Hall Show*, more puzzled than angry, as the crowd cheered when Magic said, "I'm far from being a homosexual, you already know that." This made him acceptable. President George Bush even gave him a position as head of AIDS Awareness. Thank God for Martina Navratilova. I remembered that she did not go along with this narrative and, for this article, I looked up what she said exactly, and it is even more bracing than I remember. The tennis legend said, "There have been other athletes who died from AIDS and they were pushed aside because they either got it from drugs or they were gay.... If it had happened to a heterosexual woman who had been with 100 or 200 men, they'd call her a whore and a slut and the corporations would drop her like a lead balloon. And she'd never get another job in her life."

Her reaction prompted outrage from the mainstream press and demands for an apology. But in her follow-up comments, she said, "I certainly don't want him to take it personally because it is not meant as an offensive thing to him. But the double standard is there, and it makes me mad as hell.... This Magic thing is another example of women losing power, and we are taking steps backwards." Holy crap. If an athlete of her stature said that today, Twitter would implode.

As if Magic's retirement wasn't enough for those of us seeing the fall of Showtime's seductive imagery, that very spring, during the same season when Magic retired, the so-called "LA Riots" took place after the Simi Valley verdict was handed down, clearing the LAPD officers who were captured on videotape beating Rodney King. For the young and ignorant, myself surely in those ranks, Los Angeles was revealed, beneath the dazzle, to be a cesspool of police brutality and institutionalized racism.

The aftermath of the "LA Riots" brought a level of hysteria that cannot be put into words. At my high school in New York City, administrators shut the school down at noon and I was assigned, as an upper-classman, to walk younger children home, presumably out of fear that they would be attacked by looting black teenagers. (These marauding teens were, alas, a figment of the NYPD's imagination.) As an administrator openly wept and children cried at the thought of never seeing their parents again, a friend on the basketball team turned to me, like he was Marlin Perkins surveying a scene on *Wild Kingdom*, and said, "Damn. White people are crazy." That was prophetic. After the LA Rebellion, we saw the ramping up of the tough-on-crime legislation of the 1980s that brought us to a point where our prison system now represents a "New Jim Crow," packed with young black men serving mandatory sentences.

If I am fascinated by Jeff Pearlman's book, it is because it has brought me back to a time before I felt like the world was too often just floating unconsciously from one set of injustices to the next. Obviously, there was evil aplenty in the 1980s, and I was just too young and too sheltered to see it. But it definitely took the fall of Los Angeles, both the team and the city, for me to be shaken out of a youthful slumber where a bad day could be remedied with a successful no-look pass. If I still cannot get enough of the Showtime Lakers — as profoundly hackneyed as this sounds — it's because it reminds me of what it once felt like to feel the presence of magic.

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Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

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Fax (301) 839-1721
E-mail: Office FHBC@verizon.net
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BAPTIST

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Wed. Night Bible Study - 7:45 p.m.
Elder Willie W. Duvall, Pastor

Watch from A4

ative effects on the employment of minimum-wage workers, even during times of weaknesses in the labor market." And even if you don't believe the newest research is the most valid, and look instead at all the research combined, as the Congressional Budget Office conservatively did in its February 18th report, CBO's best estimate was that this change would reduce employment by 0.3 percent. Should we really deny a certain income boost to 24.5 million workers to spare a much smaller number uncertain job loss? Of course not. If Congress is worried about uncertain job losses from a minimum wage increase, they could offset them through complementary policies like changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit, which boosts employment among low- and mid-income earners, or private or public sector jobs programs. Increasing the minimum wage would give an immediate pay raise to millions of workers in America who are still waiting

for the country's economic recovery to reach them. No one in rich America should be working full time and be forced to live in poverty. That's why nearly three-quarters of Americans support raising the minimum wage, including a majority of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. There is no reason for Congress to continue to deny hard-working Americans, many of them parents, a long overdue and needed pay raise. It's long past time to begin to make work pay again.

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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