



Dear Friends,

Last week bill hearings were held on three bills that I sponsored this session. The first of these hearings was on the need for an economic analysis to be conducted before changes to the existing phosphorous site index are implemented. Grain and poultry farming are so crucial to our economy and heritage here on the shore and we need to fully understand the impact of such a big change on that industry. The second hearing was on my bill to allow businesses to deduct from their state taxes certain taxes they pay on tipped employees. This legislation will put Maryland in line with the federal tax code. My final bill will have the POW/MIA flag fly on state buildings. It is important that we honor our brave combat veterans who have been deemed missing in action or prisoners of war, and whose fate is still unknown. I will keep you informed about the status of those bills as they move through the legislative process.

The Eastern Shore delegation had a productive meeting on Friday, January 31. Dominick Murray, secretary of the Department of Business and Economic Development, spoke to us about several projects in his department, including the proposed increase in the state budget for tourism. He also spoke about the benefits of Wallops Island, noting that one half of the employees from Wallops Island live in Maryland. Richard Hall, secretary of the Department of Planning, updated the delegation about, among other topics, the planning taking place to assist in the recovery of Somerset County and available federal funds for Hurricane Sandy reconstruction efforts. We also heard from the Maryland Tourism Board. The tourism directors from several of the Eastern Shore counties were present, including Greg Shockley, president of the Maryland Tourism Board. The group spoke to us about tourism being a \$2 billion industry in Maryland, and how the Hospitality and Tourism Management program at UMES contributes to it.

I share in Senator Colburn's concern about comments that were allegedly made by Joe Gill, acting secretary of Department of Natural Resources, to members of the watermen community. State officials, whether elected or appointed, have a responsibility to act courteously and to provide the best possible services to the people they serve, regardless of any philosophical or professional differences they may have.

Coming up this week, bill hearings are scheduled for the following pieces of legislation that I have sponsored:

[SB 441, Wednesday, February 5, 1:00 p.m.](#): SB 441 will abolish the Worcester County Bingo Board and transfer the Board's responsibilities to the Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting. Abolishing the Bingo Board would save the county up to \$3,000 a year by streamlining the county government. SB 441 was requested by the Worcester

County Commissioners. The hearing for SB 441 will be held in the Budget & Taxation Committee.

[SB 438, Thursday, February 6, 1:00 p.m.](#): SB 438 will allow local municipalities to request that local offices and ballot questions to be placed on state election ballots. This change will simplify municipal elections and save money for local boards of elections by not requiring them to run a second election for local offices. SB 438 was requested by the mayor and town council of Ocean City. The hearing for SB 438 will be held in the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs committee.

Knowing how crucial small businesses, agriculture, tourism, and watermen are to our way of life on the Shore, I've included links below that will take you to the General Assembly website and let you see all the bills filed on those topics. Click the following links to read legislation that has been sponsored dealing with those issues:

- Click here to see legislation related to [Agriculture](#)
- Click here to see legislation related to [Tourism](#)
- Click here to see legislation related to [Small Business](#)
- Click here to see legislation related to [Watermen](#)
- Click here to search legislation by a [large variety of subjects](#)

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, I am responsible for reviewing legislation related to energy, health insurance, labor law, transportation and a variety of other important issues. Last week, the Finance Committee had a busy week of bill hearings and voting sessions; follow everything that the Finance Committee does by [clicking here](#).

For more information on these bills, or any other bills, please reach out to our office at 410-841-3645 or toll-free at 1-800-492-7122, ex. 3645. You can also email me at james.mathias@senate.state.md.us. As always, if I can be of assistance to you, please contact me anytime.

Always working for you...and together getting the job done,

Jim