



Dear Friends,

Last week bill hearings were held on two bills that I sponsored this session. The [first of these hearings](#) was on abolishing the Worcester County Bingo Board and transferring its responsibilities to the Worcester County Department of Development Review and Permitting. This legislation was requested by the Worcester County commissioners and would save the county up to \$3,000 annually, it has received a favorable report by the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and should pass the Senate by the end of the week.

The [second hearing](#) was on my bill to allow local boards of election to include municipal offices on state ballots. This legislation was requested by the Ocean City mayor and town council. Allowing state ballots to include municipal elections would save municipalities money since they will not have to incur the costs of holding an additional election.

The Eastern Shore delegation had a productive meeting on Friday, February 7th. Earl “Buddy” Hance, secretary of the Department of Agriculture, discussed updates to the manure transport program, including funding for this program being increased to \$1.2 million in this year’s budget proposal. This program is essential for our poultry farmers and will make it easier for them to move their poultry manure to other locations where it can be utilized.

Additionally, I spoke about the importance of the proposed economic impact study on the Phosphorous Management Tool and how critical it is that a thorough study be undertaken before any changes are made to the Phosphorous Site Index. Secretary Hance assured me that the study would meet the guidelines I laid out in [Senate Bill 27](#). The LEAD Maryland Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to identifying and developing leadership for agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities, also joined us at the delegation meeting.

Keith Moore, president of the Delmarva Poultry Industry, informed us that the poultry industry on the Eastern Shore produced 7,000 jobs and 3.2 billion meals in 2013. The delegation also welcomed local mayors from across the Eastern Shore, including Bruce Morrison of Pocomoke, PJ Purnell of Crisfield, MML President Carl Anderton of Delmar, and Gee Williams of Berlin.

I am pleased to inform you that following a promise from Governor O’Malley to veto it, [HB 905](#), which would have established a five cent tax on each chicken a grower produces, has been withdrawn from the House of Delegates. Also, [HB 145](#), which would have allowed the Department of Natural Resources to amend fishery seasons by public notice, rather than the normal regulatory process, has been referred to an interim study.

Earlier this week, a bill hearing was scheduled for the following piece of legislation that I have sponsored:

[SB 440, Tuesday, February 11th, 1:00 p.m.](#): SB 440 will allow Somerset County to create a volunteer service and reward program for qualified members of volunteer fire departments, ambulance companies, and rescue squads; this bill was requested by the Somerset County Commissioners. This legislation is crucial because it will allow Somerset County to set up a fund to pay benefits to those volunteer fire company and ambulance company members who have served their community for 20 or 25 years, respectively. The men and women of our volunteer fire companies and ambulance rescue squads are vital to the safety and wellbeing of our communities on the Eastern Shore and this bill will help retain their crucial services. The hearing for SB 440 was heard 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 that will take you to the General Assembly website and let you see all the bills filed on those topics. You can also click [here to search for legislation on other topics](#).

With the forecasted snowstorm coming, it is important that we all stay up-to-date with the latest weather reports. Please [click here](#) to find updated weather reports, and [click here](#) to get up-to-the-minute news from the Maryland Emergency Management Association. Keep an eye on local news and weather broadcasts for information about the storm.

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