

Prosperity Pledge for Maryland

After decades of one-party rule, the Democratic leadership view themselves as our rulers rather than our representatives. They erect marble palaces with Tiffany glass and name them in their own honor. In the meantime, Maryland finds itself with record unemployment, high taxes, and billions of dollars in projected deficits well into the future.

This state is at a crossroads and the choice is very clear. Maryland can choose to continue down the path of one-party Democratic rule. A path of reckless spending and high taxes that send businesses, economic opportunity, and jobs to other states. A path of good ol' boy politics with backroom deals and tax hikes in the dark of night. A path where the safety of our children and neighborhoods is compromised by committee chairmen who can single handedly block the passage of good laws on a whim. A path where our state's sovereignty is being exchanged for federal bailouts. A path where liberty is denied and the nanny-state government makes all of the decisions.

There is another way. Maryland can move beyond the constant cycle of deficits and temporary fixes. We can lower our tax burden on our citizens and make our state welcoming to businesses. We can protect the sovereignty of our state and our citizens from the overreaching grasp of the federal government. We can restore the citizen's faith in a government that is transparent, accessible, and accountable to the people.

We, the undersigned Republican Members of the Maryland House of Delegates and citizens seeking to join that body, in order to restore prosperity to the citizens of the State of Maryland, pledge the following:

- ~ ***Roll back and Repeal the O'Malley Tax Increases of 2007***...we must end the spend-and-tax cycle of Maryland's government. After historic tax increases in 2007 that were to forever eliminate our structural deficit, Maryland's fiscal outlook has not improved. Clearly, Maryland has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. We have proposed and will continue to pursue a budget plan that will finally get Maryland on an even fiscal footing and allow for a repeal of the O'Malley Tax Increases. We will also reform the pork barrel spending in Maryland's Capital Budget. Maryland cannot continue to mortgage our children's future to pay for pet projects. We will also push for the passage of a Taxpayer's Bill of Rights. We will put an end to Maryland's constant budget deficits and reduce our citizens' tax burden.
- ~ ***Bring jobs back to Maryland***...while many states are struggling with the challenges presented by the economic downturn Maryland is ranked as one of the nation's worst states to do business in. Maryland has lost approximately 3,000 small businesses over the last year alone. Corporations like Northrop Grumman are choosing to locate their headquarters in neighboring states with lower taxes, like Virginia. We will end the choke hold of high taxes and overregulation that are pushing jobs and economic opportunity out of the state.

- ~ ***Restore Maryland's sovereignty***...we must demand that the federal government halt and reverse its practices of assuming powers and imposing mandates on the states for purposes not enumerated in the constitution. We must not succumb to the temptation of federal funds at the risk of jeopardizing Maryland's sovereignty. The most egregious example of the federal government overstepping its bounds is the recent federal health care overhaul. We will affirm and protect the sovereignty of Maryland under the Tenth Amendment and put the federal government on notice that we will not allow any attempt to require individuals to purchase health insurance or attempts to limit the type of health care a citizen may choose to purchase.

- ~ ***Make Maryland's Government Transparent and Accountable to the Citizens***...Maryland's citizens have lost faith in their government for good reason – the passage of massive tax increases in the dark of night in a hurried and unnecessary Special Session, committee chairman blocking important votes to protect our children from sex offenders and our families from drunk drivers, citizens coming to Annapolis to testify on bills being treated like second class citizens because they dared to voice an opinion that differed with the majority party, these are only small examples of why citizens have lost faith. We believe a government of the people, by the people, and for the people should operate in the full light of day, and be accessible and accountable to the people. Change must happen - the duration of committee chairmanships must be limited so one individual does not have the power block good legislation for decades. Not only should every bill get a hearing, but it must also get a vote. Fiscal notes and bills must be updated and made available to the public and to legislators at least 48 hours before a final vote. We will restore the public's trust and make Maryland's government open and inclusive.

Taxes and Spending

Tax increases are a direct result of overspending. We must end the spend-and-tax cycle of Maryland's government. After historic tax increases in 2007 that were to forever eliminate our structural deficit, Maryland's fiscal outlook has not improved. In fact, it has gotten much worse. Maryland citizens are voting with their feet and leaving the state because of its high tax and regulatory burden. According to the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, over the past eight years, more than 85,000 people have left the state moving to high growth, lower tax states like Virginia - our chief competitor for economic development. Our reputation in the business community is negative. The non-partisan Tax Foundation lists Maryland 45th out of 50th in terms of our business competitiveness.

We pledge to implement a systemic budget and tax reform plan by identifying the core functions of government and structuring state agencies accordingly. We categorically reject any new taxes or tax increases and will vigorously fight them if introduced. Maryland's budget can be balanced and the taxes from the special session repealed. Over the next four years, we face chronic deficits of over \$6.6 billion; alternatively this equals \$2,858 per family in the State of Maryland. If not addressed, it will most definitely lead to higher taxes, the last thing Maryland needs in this economy. Clearly, Maryland has a spending problem, not a revenue problem.

In the 2010 legislative session, the Republican caucus offered a comprehensive plan to reduce Maryland's budget by over \$800 million and repeal many of the tax increases from the special session that have been devastating to Maryland citizens and businesses. Our plan offers a meaningful alternative to balance the budget, repeal the sales tax increase, and repeal the increase in the corporate tax rate. It will prevent higher taxes and send the right message to businesses and citizens that our fiscal house is in order and we are making strides to improve our tax climate. We pledge to adopt this common-sense budget plan and return Maryland to prosperity.

Maryland's government agencies need a top-down examination through an independent audit process. We need to identify the core functions of government and efficiently meet those functions. We offered a plan in 2010 to use recovery audits to save over \$200 million from the State's Medicaid program. The independent federal Governmental Accounting Office estimates that the current error rate of this program is over 10%. We simply cannot tolerate this level of waste of the taxpayers' money. Recovery audits can save money and ensure that the people's money is being spent appropriately.

Maryland must end its addiction to pork barrel spending and the Capital Budget process must be reformed. We cannot afford to continue to borrow money to pay for pet projects to satisfy certain constituencies and aid in the reelection of legislators. We must stop mortgaging our children's future.

We also pledge to enact the Taxpayers Bill of Rights. This commonsense legislation would restrain government growth to a reasonable level and prevent new taxes.

Bring Jobs Back to Maryland

Maryland must lower its tax burden on businesses and entrepreneurs. Businesses are rapidly leaving the state or just not coming at all. They take jobs and economic opportunity with them.

The Tax Foundation ranks Maryland 45th in its list of worst business climates in the nation. The numbers are staggering.

In 2008 alone, Maryland lost population to 38 states, and lost a net assessable tax base of \$993 million.

In the last year alone, approximately 3,000 of Maryland's small businesses have closed. Over the last few months alone several companies have announced closures and the job losses are astounding: 600 jobs with the closure of the JP Morgan Chase credit card center, 500 jobs with the closure of the Solo Cup plant, and 200 jobs with the closure of Rosecroft Raceway.

We will support the expansion and building of the third reactor at Calvert Cliffs and the high paying jobs it will bring to the state.

We will institute the E-verify system to ensure that employers who contract with the State only employ those who are lawfully present and eligible to work.

Sovereignty

The Tenth Amendment to the Bill of Rights reads as follows: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

The scope of the power described under the Tenth Amendment means that the federal government was created by the states specifically to be an agent of the states and defines the scope of the federal power as being the power expressly granted by the Constitution of the United States and no more.

Today, the states are treated as agents of the federal government. Many powers assumed and mandates imposed on the states by the federal government are in direct violation of the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. It is the duty of Maryland’s elected officials, to demand that the federal government halt its practices of assuming powers and imposing mandates on this or any other state for purposes not enumerated under the Constitution of the United States. It is also the duty of our elected state leaders to see repeal of the assumption of powers and mandates unlawfully imposed on the states by the federal government.

Our state leaders must affirm and protect the sovereignty of Maryland under the Tenth Amendment.

A state’s primary duty should be to protect the freedom and liberty of its citizens. Therefore, Maryland should pursue legislation that protects the freedom of its citizens to make health care choices that fit their particular needs.

Maryland should pursue Health Care Freedom legislation that tells Washington D.C. that the State of Maryland affirms its sovereignty and the sovereignty of its citizens. Maryland must put the federal government on notice that we will not allow any attempt to require individuals to purchase health insurance or which attempts to limit the type of health care a citizen may choose to purchase.

While we recognize the need to make health care available and affordable, the freedom and liberty to choose whether to be insured or which type of health insurance to purchase should not be limited by any federal government mandates.

Accountability and Transparency

We pledge to work toward an unprecedented level of accountability and transparency in Maryland State government. Our goal will be to restore public trust and establish a system that the citizens of Maryland will view as open and inclusive.

Maryland government should be accountable. Maryland's elected officials should be accountable to the citizens of Maryland. They must work within the framework of the constitution and the powers that the constitution grants each branch of government. Committee chairmanships should be limited to four years so no chairman has the power to prevent the passage of good legislation for decades. Good policies should not be log-jammed or bottled up in committee because of partisan politics. Accountability keeps elected officials from over stepping their bounds and abusing authority.

Maryland government should be transparent. Voting records and information on actions taken by these elected officials should be available to the public in a timely manner. Taxpayers must have access to the details of how their money is spent. Maryland must move forward with making the details of every state grant and loan accessible to the public. Given today's technology, there is no reason that this cannot be accomplished. We will push for the full funding of the Maryland Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2008 – an initiative that the O'Malley Administration neglected to fund.

Maryland's elections must be transparent and secure. We must ensure that those who vote in Maryland's elections are legally authorized to do so by requiring voters to show valid photo identification in order to vote. Photo identification is required for so many mundane day-to-day activities, it is not unreasonable to require it to protect the security of our elections.

Maryland government should be accessible, open and inclusive. A government of the people, by the people and for the people should operate in the full light of day and be accessible by everyone. Anything less is a disservice to the citizens of Maryland. Dates and times of committee meetings, floor sessions and committee voting sessions should be posted publicly. Those meetings should also be available on the Internet via streaming video. Bills and updated fiscal notes should be posted online for 48 hours before they are given final passage so the public can have time to read them and contact their representatives if necessary. Back room meetings and last minute deals behind closed doors need to become a thing of the past.