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Drop in General Assembly's Conservation Scores Suggests Maryland has "Raised the Bar" on Environmental Legislation

Conservation Scores Down Overall for State Legislature as Conservation Group Scores Many Committee and Floor Votes; Regional Differences are Apparent in Scorecard

Annapolis, MD. Today the Maryland League of Conservation Voters released its annual legislative scorecard. The 2008 Maryland General Assembly Scorecard grades each member of the state legislature on key environmental votes in this year's legislative session, including committee, amendment, and floor votes.

Overall, scores were down in 2008 compared to last year. The average score for the Senate was 59 percent, compared to 69 percent in 2007, while the average score for the House of Delegates was 54 percent compared to 80 percent in 2007.

A total of eighteen legislators scored a perfect 100 percent, and 7 legislators scored a 0 percent. Twenty-four legislators earned scores below 20 percent. Candidates endorsed by the Maryland League of Conservation Voters in the 2006 elections earned well-above average scores of 79 percent in the Senate and 80 percent in the House of Delegates.

"This was a tough year, not just for legislators but also for advocates. Against the backdrop of a failing economy, state budget shortfalls, and last fall's unpopular special session, our Senators' and Delegates' environmental scores dropped across the board. Conservation groups like the Maryland League of Conservation Voters had to work hard to pass strong legislation this year," said Maryland League of Conservation Voters Executive Director Cindy Schwartz.

Ms. Schwartz noted that even though the environmental community had wins on three out of four of its top priorities—the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fund, Critical Areas Act reform, and a package of energy efficiency bills—there were fewer pro-conservation votes this year than in 2007.

Ms. Schwartz continued: "We think scores are down because Marylanders are 'raising the bar' when it comes to real results for the environment in the Annapolis. Simply put, the grades are down this year because there are more questions on the test. In both the Senate and House, we scored 10 committee votes and 10 floor votes. The increase in votes that we were able to score is due in part to the fact that committee chairs are bringing more environmental bills to their committees. We were also helped by increased public attention to environmental issues."

In the 2008 General Assembly Scorecard, Senate President Mike Miller scored an 89 percent and Speaker of the House of Delegates Mike Busch scored a 90 percent. "Strong leadership from the Senate President and the Speaker of the House, along with the O'Malley Administration's adoption of this year's top environmental priorities, helped us have a successful session," said Ms. Schwartz.

Senator Paul Pinsky, who earned a perfect 100 percent, was the lead sponsor of one of the failed bills scored this year, the Global Warming Solutions Act. Senator Pinsky said: "Talking about improving the environment is not enough, measuring those improvements and providing accountability is a necessary task. There are many challenges to our environment and I am proud to be a voice promoting solutions to these challenges."

(over)

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters is a non-partisan organization that works across party lines to pass pro-conservation policies. This year Delegate Steven Schuh, District 31, shares the highest Republican score of 80 percent with Delegate Wade Kach, District 5B. Delegate Schuh said: “As a committed conservative, I view conserving the environment as integral to our philosophy of government. I’m proud to share the strongest environmental score for Republican members of the General Assembly this year.”

One of the trends noted by the Maryland League of Conservation Voters was the difference in regional scores. “Looking at the low scores on the Eastern Shore and in Western Maryland, we see an obvious disconnect between the threats to natural resources in these areas—particularly from global warming and over-development—and the way the elected officials in these regions are voting,” said Ms. Schwartz.

“In summary, this was a tough year,” said Ms. Schwartz. “The scores are in, and it’s not all good. The second year of this legislature’s term is a good time for Maryland voters to evaluate whether their elected officials are really representing them when it comes to protecting our air, land, and water—as well as fighting global warming.”

The *2008 General Assembly Scorecard* measures floor and committee votes on a wide range of important conservation issues that are chosen by the Maryland League of Conservation Voters’ Board of Directors in conjunction with the staff of Environment Maryland. The full scorecard is available online at www.mdldcv.org. Download the PDF at http://www.mdldcv.org/files/mdldcv_2008_scorecard.pdf

2008 General Assembly Highest Scores

Senate (100%): Frosh, Madaleno, Peters, Pinsky, Raskin, Rosapepe

House (100%): Bobo, Bronrott, Cardin, Davis, Frick, Hucker, Manno, Mizeur, Olszewski, Rice, Riley, Robinson

Lowest Scores (below 20%)

Senate (below 20%): Brinkley, Colburn, Greenip, Haines, Harris, Jacobs, Kittleman, Mooney, Pipkin, Stoltzfus

House (below 20%): Bates, Boteler, Dwyer, Haddaway, Impallaria, Jennings, McConkey, McDonough, Miller, O’Donnell, Serafini, Shank, Stifler, Stocksdale

Highest Scoring District = District 20, Montgomery County = 97.5%

Senator Raskin 100%, Delegate Hucker 100%, Delegate Mizeur 100%, Delegate Hixson 90%

Lowest Scoring District = District 7, Baltimore/Harford County = 6.5%

Senator Harris 7%, Delegate Pat McDounough 10%, Delegate Impallaria 9%, Delegate Jennings 0%

Averages	2008	2007	05–06	03–04
Senate	59%	69%	59%	68%
Republicans	12%	38%	13%	18%
Democrats	79%	82%	79%	90%
House	54%	80%	67%	73%
Republicans	29%	50%	26%	32%
Democrats	85%	91%	85%	92%

2008 Regional Scores

	Senate	House
Western Maryland	16%	43%
Baltimore County	57%	64%
Howard County	59%	60%
Montgomery County	86%	90%
Prince George's County	86%	87%
Southern Maryland	79%	65%
Anne Arundel County	53%	64%
Harford County	11%	37%
Eastern Shore	5%	56%
Baltimore City	70%	83%

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For more than 25 years, the non-partisan Maryland League of Conservation Voters has served as the independent political voice for the environment. We advocate for sound conservation policies, promote environmentally responsible candidates, and hold individual elected officials accountable through our scorecards and reports.