



MARYLAND LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

Press Release

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Strong Session for the Environment Saw Major Action on Energy Efficiency and Bay Protection but Inaction on Global Warming

*Three out of Four Environmental Priorities Succeed in 2008 General Assembly;
Advocates Praise Strong Support from Governor O'Malley,
Lament General Assembly's Missed Opportunity to Act on Global Warming*

(ANNAPOLIS, Md.) – As Sine Die came to a close, environmental groups cheered the passage of bills addressing three out of four of their priorities for the 2008 legislative session: reforming the Critical Areas Act (SB 844/HB 1253); increasing Maryland's energy efficiency (205/HB 374 and SB 268/HB 368); and finalizing a trust fund to protect the Chesapeake Bay (SB 213/HB 369). A top priority that came down to the wire but did not pass was the Global Warming Solutions Act (SB 309/HB 712).

Cindy Schwartz, Executive Director of the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, said: "This session we made major strides in increasing energy efficiency and protecting our shorelines and the Chesapeake Bay. The Maryland League of Conservation Voters was very pleased to have the strong support of the O'Malley Administration, whose leadership on critical conservation and energy issues will translate into real results for Marylanders and for our air, land, and water. We were proud that the Administration introduced legislation addressing three of our environmental priorities and that they fought for the Global Warming Solutions Act."

Ms. Schwartz continued: "Each of the priority bills that passed is hugely significant in its own right; to have passed them all in a single legislative session is a big victory. This year, environmentalists had an ambitious agenda and we are glad that our negotiations resulted in strong legislation to limit development on fragile shorelines, to solidify a trust fund that will help to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, and to reduce Marylanders' energy use — which will help us all save money today and for years to come even as we reduce our pollution."

Ms. Schwartz continued: "However, the General Assembly missed a huge opportunity. By not passing the Global Warming Solutions Act, the General Assembly missed their chance to put Maryland at the forefront of a 'green' economy solution to a problem that's not going away. They let down tens of thousands of Marylanders from all different walks of life – including business leaders, faith communities, students, labor groups, and health advocates – who have been demanding action on this issue through visits, calls, and emails to their legislators and attending rallies in Annapolis."

Ms. Schwartz continued: "Caving to the fear-mongering of well-paid industry lobbyists instead of doing something positive for Maryland was short-sighted, and it's an enormous disappointment. Other states have faced the choice of taking action on global warming in the face of dire rhetoric of economic downturns and have realized that the threat of global warming is a real and present danger to all citizens. It is a shame that Maryland remains behind in the game when it comes to setting targets for reducing global warming pollution, and we may pay the price both economically and environmentally."

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The top four priority issues established by the Citizens' Campaign for the Environment, a coalition of the major environmental groups that lobby in Annapolis, for the 2008 Session were:

- **Energy Efficiency -- EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act of 2008 (SB 205/HB 374) and Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Program (SB 268/HB 368)**: These bills would reduce energy consumption per capita 15% by 2015 and give the Maryland Energy Administration resources to offer energy efficiency services through the sale of carbon allowances to power plants as part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).
- **Critical Areas -- Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Protection Program (SB 844/ HB 1253)**: This bill revises the Critical Area Act, which protects the 1,000 foot buffer around the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays and the tidal portions of their tributaries, by providing the Critical Area Commission with tools it needs to better administer and enforce the law. Limiting development through the enhanced protection of critical buffers will result in reduced sediment and contaminated runoff, cleaner water, and improved habitat for the Bay's fish and crabs.
- **Chesapeake Bay -- Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund (SB 213/ HB 369)**: In November's Special Session, the General Assembly passed a bill creating an annual \$50 million dedicated fund to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. This legislation ensures the funds are used effectively and efficiently to get the Bay off the federal "dirty waters" list. Unfortunately, the dim economic outlook for Maryland prompted the General Assembly to cut the funding in half to \$25 million in its first year.
- **Climate Change -- Global Warming Solutions Act (SB 309/ HB 712)**: With 3,100 miles of tidally influenced coastline, Maryland is highly susceptible to the negative impact of global warming. This bill would have set science-based, targeted reductions of global warming emissions of 25% by 2020 and established a timeline that directs state agencies to design programs to meet those reductions.

Additional pro-environment initiatives that passed include:

- Renewable Portfolio Standards (SB 209/HB 375)
- Green Buildings (SB 208/HB 376)
- Transit-Oriented Development (SB 204/HB 373)
- Solar and Geothermal Tax Incentive and Grant Program (HB 377/SB 207)
- Clean Air Permit Fees (SB 442)
- BRAC development zones (SB 206/HB 366)
- Program Open Space park development funds (SB 259)
- Next Generation Farmland Program (SB 662)
- Full funding for Program Open Space in FY09
- Bay Restoration Fund (HB 581)
- Wetlands and Waterways Permit Fees (HB 1056)

Additional pro-environment initiatives that did not pass include:

- Mercury Switch Removal (HB 835)
- ICC bills to eliminate funding, halt the project, and study impact (HB 1471, HB 1416, HB 1595)
- Standing (HB 1341)
- Lead Paint (HB 1241)

The one major anti-environment piece of legislation to pass was the Phosphorous Reduction bill (SB 710/HB 1189), which delays the implementation date of the phosphorus ban passed in 2007. A delay of just six months will add an additional 7.5 tons of phosphorus to our waterways.

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