

# MARYLAND TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

*Week of Feb 29-Leap Year*

If you wish to no longer receive these emails, please reply with the simple message "unsubscribe." Conversely, if you wish to be added, please reply with "add me."

If this year isn't exciting enough with a Presidential election the likes of which the country seldom has experienced, the General Assembly has some really, really bad bills before it that would hurt the good citizens of Maryland. What a week we have coming up! You will want to be contacting your legislators.

## ON THE VOTE

The **automatic and universal voter registration bills** for everyone of a certain age threaten to further endanger the integrity of elections. These bills would net even more voters that are supposedly currently ineligible. The big ones, already heard, are **SB 11**, **SB 19** and **SB 350** (all Senate Education, Health and Environment), but are still in committee. More of this ilk will be in House Ways and Means on Thu, Mar 3. They are: **HB 1007 (more automatic registration)** and **HB 1032** to allow the Montgomery County Council to set qualifications for voting in that county. A side effect would be to **allow non-citizens to vote** in School Board Elections. **Maryland is the only state in the union that allows non-citizens to vote** but only in 5 municipalities and only for, **supposedly**, municipal elections, in Montgomery County. The potential impact of this bill, should it pass, is hugely negative for the state. Another point about the vote: It has been found **that non-citizens called to jury duty refuse same for the reason that they are not citizens**. It was found, in Frederick County, however, that many of these same non-citizens voted. **HB 1122** (House Judiciary on Wed, Mar 2) **would require that such prospective jurors be removed from the voting rolls**. Currently, they are **not removed**.

The Governor's bill (**SB 380** on Thu, Mar 3 in Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs) **would create a General Assembly and Congressional Redistricting and Apportion Commission**. The purpose is to draw fair, non-gerrymandered voting districts. MD may be the most gerrymandered state in the nation. The bill needs to be passed.

## ON PREVAILING WAGES

On Fri, Mar 4, House Economic Matters will hear a bill (**HB 721**) as follows:

Expanding the applicability of the prevailing wage rate law to political subdivisions, agencies, and public works on property where the State, a political subdivision, or an agency is the owner or lessee by altering the definition of "public body"; providing that the prevailing wage rate law applies to public work contracts greater than \$25,000; requiring that prevailing wage rates be calculated using wage rates established by specified collective bargaining agreements; etc.

Currently, prevailing wages apply to contracts when state funding exceeds 50% or \$2 million for non-school construction and exceeds \$500,000 for school construction. The latter was lowered just a couple of years ago. Typically, tying construction to prevailing wages adds another 15% to the overall cost of a project. To lower limits to \$25,000 and to tie prevailing wages to current collective bargaining agreements would mean state spending on construction would amount to millions and millions more. Winners would likely be unions, the construction workers, and the campaign coffers of those who vote in favor of this bill (likely only Democrats). The state's piggy bank would be even emptier as would the pockets of taxpayers. Passage would signal greed first and constituents last.

### **DON'T ERASE HISTORY, LEARN FROM IT**

Another bill, , will be heard in Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs on Fri, Mar 4. **It would remove the statue of Roger Taney from Lawyers Mall and put it in storage.** This is a "feel good, PC" bill. Supreme Court Justice Taney, a Maryland slave owner, authored the infamous Dred Scott Decision before the Civil War. Scott was a slave who sued for his freedom when he was taken by his owners to free territories. The decision against Scott was derided by many in the North, and was one of the precursors to the Civil War. **Today the statue faces the one of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall**, America's first black justice, also from Maryland, and one of the great civil rights leaders. . The scene conjures up some of the real, sometimes turbulent history of Maryland. Perhaps in no other state were passions so high for one side or the other during the Civil War. Too many fought and died. In the century and a half since the War, the fight was different but no less hard for the civil rights of the descendants of former slaves. **The juxtaposition of these two statues seems so fitting to the state's historical experience. Removing the one that reminds us of slavery is to forget the meaning and struggles of our own past and the good that has come.**

### **TAXES**

Fri, Mar 4 is a busy day for notable bills. **HB 812** (House Ways and Means) is another attempt at bringing in **combined reporting for corporations with business in multiple states**. Memory is still vivid of a call to MTA several years ago by a corporation headquartered in New Jersey with about 1000 employees in Maryland. This company was set to cease operations in MD should combined reporting pass. Maryland is commonly considered to be anti-business. Changing income tax reporting at this time when it is clear that the state must move to a more pro-business stance is not a good idea.

Other bills in Ways & Means: A bipartisan bill, **HB 561** on Wed, Mar 2, would provide **small business owners a \$100,000 exemption on the personal property tax**. This is another idea to incentivize small businesses.