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Legislative District 37B
Caroline, Dorchester, Talbot,
and Wicomico Counties

ASSISTANT MINORITY WHIP

Chair, Talbot County Delegation

Economic Matters Committee

Joint Committee on Federal Relations



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Legislative Wrap Up March 12, 2010



Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio & Delegate Addie Eckardt donated children's books to schools in their district this week in honor of the Read Across America program and the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

Child Advocacy Centers

Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio announced this week that she has cosponsored House Bill 1043 which would benefit Child Advocacy Centers in the State of Maryland. Child Advocacy Centers are child-friendly facilities that investigate, diagnose and treat children who may have been abused or neglected. They also provide a platform for law enforcement, prosecutors, departments of social services and mental health professionals to interview child victims, conduct medical examinations and provide therapy. This collaboration helps ensure that children are not re-victimized as they go through the system. There are currently twenty one centers in Maryland including in Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester and Wicomico Counties.

Mandatory Shift Breaks

House Bill 1299, called the Healthy Retail Employee Act, would require an employer with 50 or more employees or that owns more than one retail establishment with the same trade name to provide a 15 minute break for every 4-6 hours of work and a thirty minute break for every 6 or more hours of work. The bill also allows an employee to file a civil action against an employer in court for violation of the law.

Similar bills have been introduced in the past and have failed due to the hardship it would present to home care workers, restaurants, manufacturers, printers and other businesses with continuous operations.

Workers Compensation – Credit for Benefits

House Bill 751 would allow an employer or their insurer to receive a credit against future permanent disability awards for compensation paid to an employee that is temporarily totally disabled when medical treatment is delayed or suspended due to another unrelated medical condition. Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio is a cosponsor of this legislation which takes into consideration the worker's need for uninterrupted benefits during their disabled period but also provides a fair remedy to employers who should be credited for disability compensation during that time.

Restaurants

Thirty bills have been introduced this year in the Maryland General Assembly that would affect restaurants. A synopsis of three of those bills follows:

Trans Fats – House Bill 747 would prohibit a restaurant or food service facility from using food or ingredients that contain artificial trans fats. A hearing was held in the Health and Government Operations Committee on the bill in late February, but no further action has been taken.

Menu Labeling – House Bill 758 would require chain restaurants (having more than 20 locations nationally) to list nutritional information for standard items on their menu. The nutritional information must include caloric value, total grams of fat, milligrams of cholesterol and sodium, grams of carbohydrates, sugars and dietary fiber. Violators are subject to a \$500 fine for a first violation and \$1,000 fine for a second or subsequent violation. . A hearing was held in the Health and Government Operations Committee on the bill in late February, but no further action has been taken.

Automatic Gratuity – House Bill 1339 would prohibit a restaurant from adding automatic gratuity to your bill if your party includes fewer than 10 guests. Restaurants that violate the law would receive a warning for a first offense and would be subject to a civil penalty of up to \$500 for a second offense. For a third or subsequent offense, a restaurant would be subject to a civil penalty of up to \$5,000. Each invoice on which a restaurant includes an automatic gratuity would be considered a separate offense. The Division of Consumer Protection within the Office of the Attorney General would be responsible for enforcement of the bill's provisions. A hearing was held on this bill Wednesday in the House Economic Matters Committee.