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ASSISTANT MINORITY WHIP

Chair, Talbot County Delegation

Economic Matters Committee

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Legislative Wrap Up March 19, 2010



Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio met with former Governors Marvin Mandel and Robert Ehrlich this week to discuss current affairs in Maryland.

National Agriculture Week

In recognition of National Agriculture Week (March 14-20) Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio is providing the following update on bills pending in the Maryland General Assembly that affect agriculture and farming...

Nutrient Trading Program

House Bill 974 was on second reader this week and directs the Maryland Department of Agriculture to establish a voluntary nutrient trading program for agriculture in Maryland. Nutrient trading uses a market-based approach to water quality protection by establishing a total amount of allowable pollution in an area and allocating those amounts among voluntary participants. The participants can then trade their allocations based on local watershed quality goals. It also creates an incentive for participants to reduce nutrient pollution beyond what is required of them because they can sell the excess credits. The bill will be on third reader in the House of Delegates on Friday and Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio will be voting in support.

Maryland Estate Tax

Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio is a cosponsor of House Bill 221 which would provide an exemption to Maryland's estate tax for agriculture property that is inherited. The recipient of the land must enter into an agreement to use the land for agricultural purposes to be eligible for the exemption. "This is an important step toward protecting the family farm," Haddaway-Riccio said. "We have to continue to find ways to support Maryland agriculture and encourage young farmers." A hearing was held on February 2 in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action has been taken.

Locally Grown

House Bill 421 authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to adopt standards for the use of terms such as "locally grown" when the term is used in advertising agricultural products. The bill also prohibits a person from falsely advertising or identifying agricultural products as locally grown. In a 2009 public opinion poll in Maryland, 78% of respondents said that they were more likely to select fruits, vegetables or other farm products in their local grocery store if the products are identified as grown in Maryland. Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio voted in favor of the legislation which has passed in the House. A hearing is scheduled in the Senate for March 23, 2010.

Organic Farming

Last year, Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio cosponsored legislation with Delegate Roger Manno that established a Maryland Organic Transition Investment Pilot Program (MOTIPP). MOTIPP provides incentives for farmers who want to transition into organic farming in the State. As a follow up, House Bill 1551 has been introduced this year to extend the deadline for the program to 2015 which will provide more opportunities for farmers to participate. The bill will be assigned to the House Environmental Matters Committee however a hearing has not been scheduled yet.