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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 19, 2010

Haddaway-Riccio Named 1st Vice President

This week Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio was elected 1st Vice President of the Women Legislators of Maryland. The Women Legislators of Maryland, also called the Women's Caucus was formed in 1972 and was the first statewide organization of its kind.

Sara's Law

The Eastern Shore Delegation introduced legislation that would toughen Maryland's child sex offender laws. Delegates Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Addie Eckardt and Jim Mathias presented the bill to the House Judiciary Committee this week. The bill would add a civil commitment option in Maryland, require lifetime supervision and eliminate diminution ("good time") credits for the worst offenders. It would also require that sex offenders who are arrested for a crime appear before a judge before they can be released or detained. Under current law they can appear before a district court commissioner and be released on their own recognizance. All of the elements of the bill are aimed at improving Maryland's version of Jessica's Law but also specifically address the Sara Foxwell case. Sara Foxwell was an 11-year-old Wicomico County resident who was kidnapped and murdered by a known sex offender. Delegate Haddaway-Riccio started her testimony by commending the thousands of volunteers and community members who came together to search for Sara and to raise money for the family.

Boating in Maryland

A total of 33 bills have been introduced this year on the subject of boats and ships. An overview of some of those bills follows.

Abandoned Vessels – House Bill 527 reduces the length of time that a vessel must be left on private property before it is declared to be "abandoned". Current law states that a boat is "abandoned" after 90 days. The bill would change this to 30 days. Private property includes a private marina, private boatyard, a private dock or near the waters' edge on private property.

Sightseeing and Tour Guide Boats – House Bill 988 would transfer oversight of “for-hire” water carriers to the Department of Natural Resources. Currently “for-hire” water carriers are regulated by the Public Service Commission. A “for-hire” water carrier is a vessel used to carry passengers for transportation between points along State waters in exchange for a fee and sightseeing or a tour boat/sightseeing boat that charges a fee. Under current law, a vessel owner must show proof of insurance to the Public Service Commission before they can register their vessel with the Department of Natural Resources. Transferring the regulatory authority to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would streamline the process by allowing vessel owners to do both through DNR.

Drinking and Boating – House Bill 1024 would require the operator of a marine vessel to take a blood alcohol test or a drug test if a police officer detains them on suspicion of being under the influence. If a person refuses to take the test, the detaining officer must advise the person that upon conviction in court they will face penalties including being prohibited from operating a vessel on State waters for a year.

Overboard Discharge – House Bill 1257 would designate Maryland as a no-discharge zone (NDZ) by July 1, 2010. The bill also changes which marine sanitation devices would be acceptable for use. It also authorizes the Natural Resources Police (NRP), law enforcement officers and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) personnel to board and inspect your boat and perform dye flush tests for purposes of enforcement. The maximum penalty would be \$10,000 per occurrence.