

NEWS FROM.....SENATOR RICHARD F. COLBURN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 12, 2010

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Senator Colburn Reports from Annapolis (This Week)

ANNAPOLIS – Senator Richard F. Colburn (R. Eastern Shore) reported on events that took place this week. Senator Colburn stated, “On Monday night, March 8<sup>th</sup>, members of the Eastern Shore Delegation and I met with Governor Martin O’Malley on issues specifically pertaining to the Eastern Shore, and particularly the Delmarva Poultry Industry. This issue was directed to the Secretary of the Environment, Shari Wilson and to Buddy Hance, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. So called ‘river keepers’ have begun making allegations against Eastern Shore farmers. In a recent press release, the Governor stated, “Maryland is developing “rapid response teams” led by MDA with MDE to evaluate the conditions on farms when environmental issues arise and help farmers take corrective actions if necessary. These teams reinforce the existing MDA-MDE partnership to jointly respond to water quality complaints on farms. The plan is to swiftly make available existing technical expertise and financial assistance to avoid delay in identifying and resolving on-farm environmental impacts if they exist to protect water quality.”

The Governor also discussed ways in which the state of Maryland can support farmers who are struggling to clean-up and recover from the snow related damage to over 40 chicken houses. Originally, the Department of the Environment (MDE) wanted farmers to have all materials from the houses transported to a permitted disposal facility which would have cost approximately \$20,000 - \$35,000. After many phone calls made by Senator Lowell Stoltzfus and myself to the Secretary of the Department of the Environment, Shari Wilson, the Secretary of Agriculture, Buddy Hance and to the Governor's office, a less costly decision was made to burn the wooden remains of the houses. The date for the burning of the structure was to occur before by March 21, 2010. Because of inclement March windy and rainy weather, the Governor has announced that the Maryland Department of the Environment will extend the deadline date to April 18, 2010 to allow temporary burning of poultry houses. I commend the Governor on his proactive response to the needs and concerns of Eastern Shore poultry farmers.

On Tuesday, March 10, approximately 200 watermen gathered in Annapolis to voice their support for four bills heard before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. One of those bills that I sponsored, Senate Bill 222 (Natural Oyster Bars – Authority to

Designate) prohibits the Department of Natural Resources from designating the location of oyster sanctuaries in State waters by regulation. It would require Maryland General Assembly approval for any oyster sanctuaries designated by the Department. Under current law, oyster sanctuaries have been established via statute and regulation. Provisions designate several oyster sanctuaries which are protected oyster restoration areas in State waters. They are located throughout the Chesapeake Bay, including areas of the Corsica, Choptank, Nanticoke, and Patuxent Rivers. In December 2009, Governor O'Malley proposed a new management and restoration plan for oysters. The problem is that those people who make a living harvesting oysters were not included in the decision making of the location of these sanctuaries. The main purpose of the bill would be to require General Assembly approval of future oyster sanctuaries.

The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee heard Senate Bill 808 (County Oyster Committees – Public Shellfish Fishery Area – Power Dredging). This is a bill sponsored by Senator E.J. Pipkin (R. Caroline, Cecil, Kent and Q.A. Co.) and myself. This bill would specify that county oyster committees authorize the use of power dredges to catch oysters in public shellfish fishery areas. Senator Pipkin stated, “Oystermen who work the waters feel as if their opinions and ideas are being ignored.

Giving the authority to designate dredging areas to oyster committees would give the power to the people who work these waters every day.”

The Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee also heard Senate Bill 809 (Natural Resources – Designation of Oyster Sanctuaries – Prohibition). This bill would prohibit the Department of Natural Resources from designating a new oyster sanctuary in State waters before October 1, 2011. The bill would make the Act an emergency measure.

Also on Tuesday, March 9, the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee heard Senate Bill 747 (Truancy Reduction Pilot Program – Caroline and Talbot County). This bill would allow Talbot and Caroline County to participate in the Truancy Court Pilot Program. Truancy courts fall under the office of problem solving courts in the Maryland Judiciary and are aimed at improving school attendance and youth attitudes about education. This program provides an important platform for bringing the school system, the family and the courts together to address problems with the youth who are chronically truant. It also provides an alternative to strict punishment which is significant given the fact that truancy is often an indicator of other underlying problems.

On Wednesday, March 10, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee heard Senate Bill 264 (State Board of Education – Financial Literacy Curriculum – Graduation Requirement). This bill would require the State Board of Education to develop curriculum content for a course in financial literacy and require county boards of education to implement this curriculum content in high schools. It would require county boards of education to implement this curriculum in high schools. Students would learn the basics of financially managing a household. They would learn how to write checks, reconcile a bank statement, manage household finances, manage a credit card account, understand the importance of saving money, and manage money for college expenses and medical costs. Years ago the public school system taught a course in Functional Reading. When the federal “No School Left Behind” program began mandating performance level testing, the Functional Reading courses went to the wayside. Now, many public school administrators and parents are seeing the need for such curriculum and are quick to want to incorporate this in to their systems. While some counties across the state offer financial literacy as an elective, Talbot County has become a state leader in financial literacy programs, implementing a stand-alone course graduation requirement along with Carroll and Allegany counties.

A similar bill, Senate Bill 1030, was also heard in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee on Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>.”

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Senator Colburn Reports from Annapolis (Next Week)

ANNAPOLIS – Senator Richard F. Colburn (R. Eastern Shore) reported on events that will take place next week. Senator Colburn stated, “ March 13<sup>th</sup> marks the 60<sup>th</sup> day of the 2010 Maryland General Assembly Session. This means we have reached the two-third point of the 2010 Session. With just 30 days remaining, well over 1,100 Senate Bills and almost 1,550 House Bills have been introduced. The last day of Session will be Monday, April 12 at midnight.

On Thursday, March 18, at 8:00 a.m., the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee will hear Senate Bill 974 (Optional Retirement Program – State and Participating Governmental Unit Employees – Participation). This bill would exempt new state employees hired on or after July 1, 2010 from the Maryland State Pension system. The legislation would also include

teachers, state troopers, and other state employees hired after that date.

Employees would become eligible for an optional retirement program set up by the State of Maryland. This bill would help address the rapidly increasing built-in structural deficit in Maryland's pension plans. It would also better insure that those employees currently in the system (s) receive their full pension benefits. And finally, it would help the State of Maryland address major budget deficits for future years.

On Tuesday, March 16, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee will hear Senate Bill 746 (Natural Resources – Land Acquisition – Notification and Approval). This bill would require the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources to provide information about proposed land purchases by the Department of Natural Resources to counties. It would also prohibit the State from acquiring land for open space purposes in Dorchester County unless the County Council of Dorchester County approves the purchase. Currently the State of Maryland owns approximately 41,637 acres of property in Dorchester County which includes agricultural property, forest land and marshland. The State provides a payment in lieu of taxes for 11,659 of those acres. The County receives no compensation for the remaining 29,978 acres. Since property taxes are approximately 41% of the county's FY 2010 budgeted general fund

revenues, any additional purchase of land by the State in Dorchester County will have a significant impact on future budget years, which may result in the reduction or the elimination of programs and services to the public.

On Wednesday, March 17, the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee will hear Senate Bill 423 (Legislative Community Initiatives Loan of 2004 – Wicomico County – Wicomico County Library). The bill adds the words “studies” and “planning” to the authorized uses of the Wicomico County Library grant, as established by the Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2003.”