

## **Vote on Montgomery curfew won't come soon**

**By Victor Zapana, Published: September 13**

The Montgomery County Council will not vote on a proposed youth curfew until November at the earliest, slowing action on a controversial proposal that would ban those under 18 from public places late at night.

Phil Andrews (D-Gaithersburg-Rockville), chairman of the County Council's public safety committee, said Tuesday that the panel will hold at least two work sessions on the measure, which would set curfews at midnight on weekends and 11 p.m. the rest of the week.

County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) said he was surprised the process would take that long. "You don't need two work sessions. Just extend the one you have," he said. "It just seems like, from his perspective, to be an obvious delay."

Andrews said Leggett is "off base." A town hall meeting scheduled for mid-October, controversy over the bill and amendments that Leggett proposed earlier this summer "have slowed the process down," said Andrews, who opposes the curfew.

"It deserves a lot of scrutiny, and the council should take the time to ensure that that happens," he said.

The council is beginning to hash out details of the bill this week, and a meeting is scheduled Thursday. Meanwhile, officials from Leggett's administration and county police are meeting with residents and making a pitch that the measure would protect juveniles and prevent youth crime. They said that the bill would serve as a tool for law enforcement agents to curb youth violence and enforce parenting responsibility.

But some council members, including Andrews, are challenging the efficacy of the bill. Others want to include additional amendments, such as having the measure expire after two years unless extended, adding reporting protocols and granting Leggett the authority to issue long-term curfews at his discretion.

Andrews and other critics say surveys suggest a curfew in Montgomery would not affect youth crime rates. In 2010, 92 percent of assaults and 83 percent of robberies for which juveniles were arrested in the county occurred outside the proposed curfew's hours.

Critics who attended a Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board meeting Monday said they were concerned about potential problems enforcing the bill. For instance, since a person walking around does not need to show an ID if asked by a police officer, youths could lie about their age and not be stopped, they said.

Leggett also challenged the usefulness of studies of curfews, saying Montgomery may be different, in part because it is next to two jurisdictions — the District and Prince George’s County — with curfews in place.

But Andrews rejected that. “I don’t agree that social science can’t tell us something about the effectiveness of the law,” he said.

Also on Tuesday, state Comptroller Peter Franchot (D) wrote to Leggett, Andrews and Council President Valerie Ervin (D-Silver Spring) in support of the curfew. He wrote that he “felt an obligation” to comment on the bill, which he thinks would “substantially affect” the state economy.

“I think some of their arguments [against the proposal] have validity,” he added in an interview, “but overall, the curfew is important . . . for quality of life. And that overrides some of the arguments that are made.”