

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

March 15, 2012

TO: Roger Berliner, President, Montgomery County Council

FROM: Isiah Leggett, County Executive Sich Tiggett

SUBJECT: FY13 Operating Budget and FY13-18 Public Services Program

In accordance with the County Charter, I am pleased to transmit to you my Recommended FY13 Operating Budget and FY13-18 Public Services Program.

This budget reflects the concerns and policy issues that I heard County residents express during the many Town Hall Meetings, Budget Forums, On-Line Chats, and other community meetings I have held over the past year to better understand the hopes, expectations, and needs of the people of our County. I am also grateful to the County's advisory boards and commissions for their input during my deliberations.

This budget supports my priority policy objectives:

- Children Prepared to Live and Learn
- Affordable Housing in an Inclusive Community
- Safe Streets and Secure Neighborhoods
- A Responsive and Accountable County Government
- Healthy and Sustainable Communities
- An Effective and Efficient Transportation Network
- A Strong and Vibrant Economy
- Vital Living for All of Our Residents

For the past several years, the County has experienced the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. This has resulted in service cuts for our residents, wage freezes and furloughs for all County employees, and significant reductions in County staff. As we struggled to adjust to the new economic realities, I stated that we would emerge from this recession a stronger, though leaner organization. In fact, this is occurring. As the details of the budget will show, County employees continue to provide our residents with an exceptional level of service. Despite the downturn in the economy and reductions in staff, many measures indicate that employee productivity is continuing to increase. These productivity improvements have occurred while we have reduced salaries and benefits and placed larger workloads on remaining staff as total staffing numbers have declined.

Despite these successes, the necessary steps we have taken to address the budget gaps have resulted in significant public service reductions which have negatively affected the quality of life that our taxpayers and residents expect. Library hours essential for the education and enrichment of our residents have been reduced and recreation centers serving all ages, from youth to seniors, have seen significant service cutbacks. Our public safety services have also not kept pace with our growing population, placing a strain on the public safety systems and placing our residents at higher risk. County facility maintenance has noticeably deteriorated and many County roads are awaiting repair.

The FY13 Operating Budget that I am presenting to you today seeks to strategically restore some of the most critical and important services that will more appropriately address the needs of our residents. I have also included funding for most County employees to receive a \$2,000 lump sum payment that will not add to the employee's base salary. For Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery College, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), I am assuming that their respective governing bodies will provide their employees with comparable one-time payments.

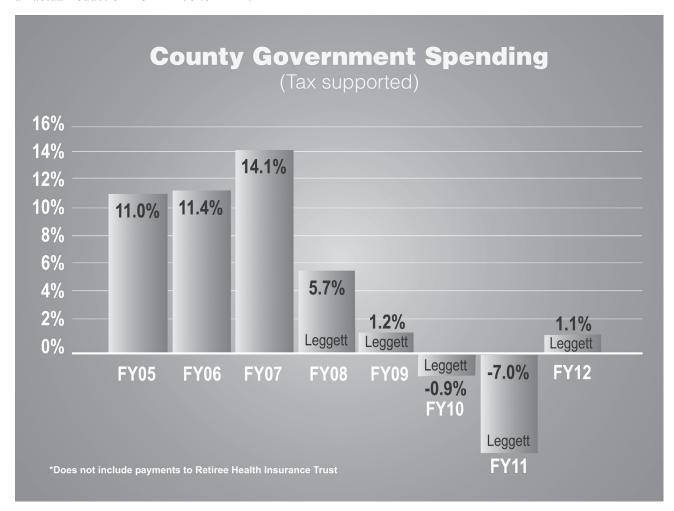
While addressing these concerns, I maintain my commitment to prudent and fiscal policies that we have mutually agreed are critical to maintaining the County's sound fiscal management. Consistent with County law and policy, I increased our reserve levels to cushion the County against any additional unanticipated economic setbacks. I have also included in the recommended budget increased funds for retiree health benefits, as required. The funding level for retiree health benefits that I am recommending is the minimum funding level that we need to contribute in order to maintain our commitment that we mutually made to the rating agencies. I have increased the County's contribution by \$61 million in FY13 which maintains a deliberate, though not precipitous pace. My recommended amount keeps us on track to fund retiree health benefits by FY15 as we have committed to the rating agencies, while increasing our ability to fund necessary restorations in critical services.

My approach to this budget continues my principal goal of achieving our economic objectives with balanced impacts on direct public services, taxpayers, and employees. The budget continues prudent policies which advance long-term fiscal stability through commitments to a healthy reserve and funding our current and future obligations.

Economic Context and Fiscal Consequences

Targeted increases in critical services must be seen in the context of the drastic reductions that the County budget has experienced in the last several years. Rather than building on an ever increasing budget, I am recommending pulling back on some of the reductions that have most negatively affected the County's quality of life.

Below is a chart that illustrates the downward trend in the growth of the operating budget, culminating in an actual reduction from FY08 to FY12.



Since taking office, I have made restoring fiscal prudence a major priority of my Administration. Responsible fiscal practices are not only essential but are the foundation for ensuring that County government is able to serve our nearly one million residents, as well as our employees – both in the short term and in the long term. We established cost containment strategies and productivity improvements that have dramatically slowed the rate of growth in the operating budget and have saved County taxpayers millions of dollars. In partnership with the Council, I have also reestablished responsible reserve and other fiscal policies that will carry this County into the future with improved, sustainable fiscal health.

In my first FY08 budget, the County faced a \$200 million budget shortfall. We reduced the tax supported rate of increase in spending by County Government from 14.1 percent to 5.7 percent. In FY09, as a result of a

plummeting real estate market and the economic downturn, our projected shortfall increased to \$401 million. In response to this challenge, we imposed a hiring freeze, produced midyear savings of more than \$30 million, abolished over 225 positions, implemented a retirement incentive program, and slowed the rate of growth in the County Government to 1.2 percent. In the FY10 budget, we closed a projected gap of \$590 million without a tax increase by reducing costs, abolishing nearly 400 positions, and eliminating general wage adjustments for most employees. In developing the FY11 budget, we faced a daunting and historic projected gap of over \$970 million. To respond to this challenge, we abolished almost 450 positions, implemented furloughs across most agencies, and achieved a contraction in the overall size of the County Government of 7.0 percent. For FY12, while the budget challenge of approximately \$300 million was relatively small compared to previous gaps, it was even more difficult to close because of the many deep reductions in County services that had been made in previous budgets.

The cumulative amount of budgetary shortfalls that I have resolved in the six budgets that I have developed and recommended to the Council is over \$2.6 billion. That, simply put, is unprecedented.

The strategic increases that I am recommending in FY13 do not restore the reductions that have been made to most of the County Departments and agencies over the past five years. Rather, they address serious deficiencies in our ability to provide basic services.

Legislation currently under consideration in Annapolis would also do great damage to our County's finances and long-term budget sustainability. Bills to shift teacher pension costs to the counties are advancing and could potentially cost \$47 million in FY13, climbing quickly to \$71 million annually by FY17. Such an enormous shift in costs would mean either significant tax increases for our residents and businesses or further reductions in services than have already been sustained.

Other legislation that would alter the structure of the Maintenance of Effort provisions requiring local governments to level fund per pupil costs would impinge on our ability to allocate scarce resources. The proposed legislation would provide the State Board of Education with the unfettered ability to judge how dollars are distributed between school boards and other local government functions. This legislation is extraordinary in its usurpation of local government prerogatives and endangers our ability to fund vital services such as public safety.

We must work with our State delegation to defeat these bills and be mindful of the significant effect they could have on our revenues and our bond rating.

Creating a Sustainable Budget that Meets our Residents' Needs

As noted above, I am recommending strategic increases in a number of critical County services such as education, public safety, libraries, seniors, and youth that have experienced unsustainable reductions over the past few years.

My Recommended Budget:

- Fully funds tax-supported budget requests from the Montgomery County Public Schools (at Maintenance of Effort), Montgomery College, and the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission;
- Makes needed strategic investments by increasing resources for Police by providing additional patrol officers and investigative positions to target crime "hot spots" in each district;

- Provides additional Fire & Rescue Service funding to fill critically needed posts;
- Restores operating hours for libraries and increases the budget for reading materials both print and electronic:
- Boosts spending on two of my major initiatives serving potentially at-risk populations Positive Youth Development and Vital Living for Seniors and continues to fund programs that protect our most vulnerable people;
- Increases funding for the creation of affordable housing units particularly for low-income seniors;
- Funds our collective bargaining contracts with unions representing general government workers, firefighters, and police that provide for a \$2,000 lump-sum payment for employees in lieu of cost-of-living increases and increments the first increases in three years;
- Fully funds County reserves at the policy level of \$300.2 million;
- Funds PAYGO at 10 percent of current revenue in PAYGO to match bond funding in our capital budget:
- Funds \$122 million to meet retiree health benefit obligations;
- Continues multi-agency efforts to identify long-term savings in restructuring government organization and make County services more efficient by identifying long-term savings, sustainable and stable revenues, and adopting productive and cost-effective business practices;
- Keeps property tax revenue at the current level by recommending a level below the Charter limit; and
- Retains the energy tax at the level approved by the Council in 2010, preserving a broad-based revenue source that includes federal institutions based in the County.

For the past five years, tax-supported program spending for County government has not increased. Said a different way, these expenditures have had a cumulative zero percent increase. That was necessary, first, to make County budgets more sustainable and, second, to respond to the severe economic downturn that began in the fall of 2008.

Working together, we protected the County's Triple-A bond rating. We changed our policy to increase the amount of money set aside in County reserves, renewed our commitment to phase-in full funding of our retiree health insurance obligations (Other Post-Employment Benefits, or OPEB), committed to meet our 10 percent PAYGO target, and, for the first time, set aside significant resources in advance to address snow and storm costs, which were funded previously by drawing down reserves.

Notwithstanding my longstanding (and continued) support for collective bargaining, I was unable at that time to include in my budget funding for wage agreements that would have compromised my obligation under the County Charter to present a fiscally responsible budget.

County government deferred purchases, stretched out the "life" of technology, vehicles, and other systems, deferred maintenance on County facilities, and stretched our existing resources – human and otherwise – so as to cause the least disruption in services to County residents.

None of this was easy. I made difficult choices.

Thanks to all this, I believe Montgomery County will emerge from this recession with a sustainable budget that maintains a commitment to quality services while increasing efficiency, and produces prudent fiscal policies that will serve us well into the future.

Although I have proposed strategic spending increases after five years of zero growth in tax-supported spending, I want there to be no mistake: we cannot return to the unsustainable spending of the past.

The restorations that I have proposed in FY13 are strategically focused on our highest priorities – public safety, our youth, education and our most vulnerable, including senior citizens. These restorations do not bring County spending even to the level it was five years ago.

This budget continues to balance meeting our critical needs with a prudent fiscal policy that funds our reserves, our PAYGO, and our retiree health obligations. It also keeps faith with the people who pay the bills – our County taxpayers – by matching our critical needs with the revenues available or necessary.

The Numbers

- I recommend a total County budget (which includes debt service, grants, and enterprise funds) for FY13 of \$4,565,696,206, an increase of \$199 million from the FY12 Approved Budget a 4.6 percent increase.
- The overall FY13 tax-supported budget of \$3,973,610,920 (including debt service) will increase by \$188,637,223 from the FY12 budget. This represents a 5 percent increase.
- I recommend to the County Council that tax-supported funding for Montgomery County Government programs increase by \$64.7 million or 5.5 percent, not including required payments to the Retiree Health Insurance Trust of \$60.3 million.
- Of the \$124.9 million spending increase for County Government, \$60.3 million is for required Retiree Health Insurance Trust payments, \$37,749,979 is for Public Safety, and \$26,905,570 is for other employee compensation and benefits, fixed cost increases and non-public safety programs.
- Over the past three years, I have reduced the County Government workforce by 1,254 positions over 10 percent. This budget strategically restores 92 positions among them, 58 in the Police Department through increased staffing and the consolidation of 911 call-takers and 15 in libraries.
- Reductions totaling \$14 million in current County Government spending, including \$6 million in electricity costs through energy conservation savings.
- Funding for the Montgomery County Public Schools will increase by \$50.7 million a 2.6 percent increase from FY12. The budget funds 100 percent of the Board of Education tax-supported request.
- The budget for Montgomery College increases by \$381,823, a 0.2 percent increase. The budget funds 100 percent of the College tax-supported request.
- Funding for the M-NCPPC increases by \$5.4 million, a 5.3 percent increase and 100 percent of Park & Planning's tax-supported request.

FY08 to FY13 Operating Budget Agency Rate of Growth*						
	FY13					
	FY08	FY12	Recommended	FY12-13	FY12-13	FY08-13
Tax Supported Budgets	Approved*	Approved*	Budget*	\$ Change	% Change	% Change
Montgomery County Government	\$1,248,525,220	\$1,175,833,680	\$1,240,489,229	\$64,655,549	5.5%	-0.6%
Montgomery County Public Schools	\$1,836,100,947	\$1,950,909,291	\$2,001,643,842	\$50,734,551	2.6%	9.0%
Montgomery College	\$196,811,472	\$218,004,776	\$218,386,599	\$381,823	0.2%	11.0%
MD-National Capital Park & Planning Commission	\$101,892,900	\$99,017,030	\$103,579,700	\$4,562,670	4.6%	1.7%
Subtotal Tax Supported Agency Expenditures	\$3,383,330,539	\$3,443,764,777	\$3,564,099,370	\$120,334,593	3.5%	5.3%
Debt Service	\$239,480,290	\$291,574,070	\$298,792,040	\$7,217,970	2.5%	24.8%
Total Tax Supported Expenditures	\$3,622,810,829	\$3,735,338,847	\$3,862,891,410	\$127,552,563	3.4%	6.6%

^{*} Excluding funds for pre-funding retiree health insurance. The FY13 County Government tax supported appropriation includes a total contribution of \$107.4 million, including contributions of \$61.9 million on behalf of Montgomery County Public Schools and \$1.9 million on behalf of Montgomery College. The Park & Planning Commission tax supported appropriation includes a contribution of \$3,364,500.

Priorities in the FY13 Recommended Budget

The chart above indicates that since my first budget as County Executive in FY08 through the FY13 operating budget, the total tax-supported funds for County Government have actually decreased — even with the targeted increases I am recommending. This reality is just one indication of the unsustainability of the reductions experienced by County Government in the last four years.

In that same five year time period, all tax-supported agency expenditures increased by 5.3%, also a modest level of growth. It is important to note that the growth in debt service surpassed all agency expenditure growth, climbing by nearly 25% from the FY08 approved to the FY13 recommended. This disproportionate growth underscores the need to carefully control our levels of debt issuance. In fact, by reducing our annual bonds from \$320 million to \$295 million, we will reduce the rate of growth in debt service from 8.5% to 2.5% in FY13.

Under this budget, our Police Department would see a 6.9 percent increase which will include an increase of 43 additional officers – part of my three-year plan to add 120 new sworn officers and 23 Police civilian employees. This increase will provide each Police District with the resources to address problem areas or issues when they arise and will use officers strategically and efficiently. This budget also adds a second new recruit class of 30 officers and moves the County to a unified 911 call center, which will help improve efficiency and response times to emergencies.

The Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) would see a 9.2 percent increase under this budget. This funding would increase the size of each of the two FRS recruit classes from 30 to 55 each and provide additional funding to ensure minimum staffing requirements are met with reduced overtime.

Over the past five years, the Department of Public Libraries has seen the deepest reductions, 29 percent between FY07 and FY12. This budget increases library spending by nearly 10 percent and adds 15 positions. It increases materials acquisitions, expands hours at libraries open on Sundays to five hours, funds two additional Sundays at those libraries open on Sundays for a total of 47 Sundays a year, and restores longer hours in the Rockville, Quince Orchard, Wheaton, Bethesda, and Germantown libraries.

As County Executive, I implemented two initiatives that cross departmental lines of responsibility — Positive Youth Development and Vital Living for Seniors. I believe that by focusing on these service areas in a more holistic manner, we can better serve County residents and businesses by ensuring that these services are provided in coordination and comprehensively. In the past few years, both of these service areas have been reduced significantly and as a result, essential services were eliminated or reduced. In this recommended budget, I am restoring funding for some of the most critical programs that serve these more vulnerable populations.

Funding for my Positive Youth Development initiative would increase in FY13. These increases would include: extending the "Excel Beyond the Bell" after-school program to Forest Oak (Clarksburg) and Neelsville (Germantown) middle schools; funding after-school programs for Scotland Community Center while the Center is under renovation; expanding weekend and evening teen programs for middle and high schoolers; and implementing the Summer Student/Team Employment Program (STEP). In addition, the County would replace expiring federal funding to operate the UpCounty Youth Opportunity Center, along with its family intervention program, and replace the expiring federal grant funds for the Kennedy Cluster/Neighborhood Opportunity Center. The budget will enhance drug prevention and intervention at the Crossroads and UpCounty Opportunity Centers and boost the Street Outreach Network.

Assisting our seniors with options to age in place and retire with dignity and vitality are essential values. The FY13 Recommended Budget also increases resources for programs specifically dedicated to the County's growing senior population. Highlights include senior programming at the White Oak Community Center, restoring chore services, increasing home-delivered meals, reducing the price of the second Call 'N Ride coupon book, development of an Escorted Transportation Pilot Project, increasing contract staff for senior mental health services, and adding an Assistant State's Attorney position to protect seniors and vulnerable adults from financial harm and fraud. The budget also provides \$1.5 million to support the development of 140 units of affordable housing for low-income seniors, the first part of a two-year commitment that will total \$6 million.

Other highlights include, \$19 million for our Montgomery Housing Initiative to create and preserve more affordable housing. The budget recommends additional funds for health care for the uninsured through Montgomery Cares. Additional resources will support the establishment of a new medical clinic in Aspen Hill. Other critical services will be expanded for home energy assistance, outreach to veterans, and winter overflow shelters.

The budget includes a 10.4 percent increase in transit (to hire more bus drivers, match the Bikesharing grant, and inaugurate new RideOn service in South Germantown, Potomac, and Gaithersburg); a \$1 million increase to address cleaning of County facilities; and an increase in the County's Economic Development Fund.

This budget fully funds the MCPS tax-supported request at the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) level. We will continue to work with our Annapolis delegation in the General Assembly in its current session to modify the existing MOE law to provide flexibility to local governments throughout the State to respond to fiscal challenges and fund K-12 education in a manner that does not cripple other important local government services.

I fully appreciate the partnerships that the County has forged with community non-profits, County businesses, and the faith community over the past several years. These ties – through community volunteers and private funding – have been critical to maintaining a safety net for our neighbors in need and supporting activities that government cannot do alone. I have made continued support of these cost-effective, community-strengthening partnership efforts a budget priority.

Employee Compensation

Eighty percent of the County budget goes toward compensation – wages and benefits for County employees. Since taking office, I have reduced the size of the County workforce by over 10 percent, abolishing 1,254 positions. For three years County employees have not received cost-of-living increases and for the past two there have been no steps or increments as well. In FY11, all County Government employees were furloughed for between three and eight days, depending on income. Also, in FY12, the County changed the cost sharing arrangements for County Government employees for their group insurance and retirement plans, saving the County an estimated \$14.5 million.

For FY13, I am recommending – consistent with agreements reached with the Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #35; International Association of Fire Fighters, Local #1664; and the Municipal and County Government Employee Organization, Local #1994 – a lump-sum payment of \$2,000 for most employees. This lump-sum payment would be in lieu of any cost-of-living and service increments. Until the County is on clearly more stable fiscal footings, I strongly recommend that all County employees – including those within MCPS, Montgomery College, Park and Planning and WSSC – be provided with compensation increases that do not add to our base budget.

It is important that there be parity among all of the County agencies' 30,000 plus employees. Therefore, I am assuming that within the dollars that I am recommending for MCPS, Montgomery College, Park and Planning and WSSC, their employees receive one-time adjustments that do not add to our base budget – similar to those I have negotiated with County Government employees. The economic and fiscal picture for the County remains too uncertain to add significant dollars to our wage base.

Funding the Budget

Because of financial burdens on County households as a result of the economic downturn, my budget holds the line on property taxes for County homeowners. I have set the property tax rates to provide the same level of property tax revenue, resulting in only a \$4 average increase annually in property tax bills – essentially a flat amount. My recommendation is <u>below</u> the County charter limit¹ on property taxes. The property tax for each owner-occupied residence will include a credit of \$692 to limit the burden on homeowners and maintain a progressive property tax structure in the County.

I am recommending to the County Council that the energy tax rate approved by the Council in 2010 be extended, rather than be allowed to sunset. The energy tax is far more broad-based than either the property or income taxes since it includes taxes on energy usage of institutions and facilities (such as the federal government) that otherwise do not pay anything in taxes to the County. Because of its broader base, this tax lowers the overall tax burden on residents and businesses of Montgomery County.

I am recommending a WSSC budget that would result in an increase in water and sewer rates of 7.5 percent in FY13 in accordance with the budget recently proposed by the WSSC.

The Water Quality Protection Fund charge will increase from \$70.50 to \$92.60 per average household annually. Through these fees, we are continuing to expand our outreach, inspection, and remediation efforts to comply with the requirements of the State's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit

¹ Section 305 of the County Charter limits the growth in real property tax revenues in a fiscal year to the rate of inflation, excluding new construction, development districts, and other minor exceptions. The Council may override this limitation through the unanimous vote of nine Councilmembers.

requirements. The MS4 permit requires the County to upgrade existing stormwater management facilities and improve our efforts at controlling stormwater runoff especially through the use of Low Impact Design approaches. Details on fee increases are provided in the Revenues section of my Recommended FY13 Operating Budget.

Again this year, the budget will not include funding from an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) transport fee. The result of the 2010 election year referendum meant the loss of over \$14 million this year, \$17 million for the coming year, and over \$160 million over 10 years from insurance companies and the federal government. It is very unfortunate that the County is not able to avail itself of these additional, ongoing, non-tax supported resources to sustain and grow our Fire and Rescue Services in the coming years, at no cost to County taxpayers.

Focusing on Productivity and Performance

We should continue to make every effort to make our operations more efficient, productive, and effective. To accomplish these objectives, I have instituted several measures to make Montgomery County Government even better and more efficient in how we operate and provide services to the community.

My CountyStat initiative has made significant progress in tracking the County's performance in addressing challenges using real-time data and holding departments and agencies accountable for the results in a number of operational and policy areas. The CountyStat program has provided a forum for ongoing monitoring and measurement of the effectiveness and efficiency of County Government services. This program has been a major success in improving the responsiveness and efficiency of the County Government.

Our CountyStat meetings are open to the public and all CountyStat reports can be found at http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgtmpl.asp?url+/content/exec/stat/index.asp. The availability of information from this impartial source offers our residents and taxpayers an opportunity to fully examine some of the more critical resource issues in County Government.

The implementation of the centralized MC311 call center and MC311 web portal has enhanced community services by allowing our residents to use one number to call a centralized call center to respond to their information or service requests. In addition to allowing easier access to government information and services, MC311 has been implemented in a cost-effective manner by consolidating five current call centers housed in various departments, and centralizing the information and referral calls currently received by each of the Executive Branch departments and offices. Information obtained, combined with financial information from the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, provide important tools to make more informed decisions about how to best use our scarce resources.

Final Thoughts

Despite the extraordinary challenges we are currently facing, I remain very optimistic about the future of our County. The quality and effectiveness of services we offer our residents in the areas of education, affordable housing, public safety, and health and human services are among the very best in the nation. We have made significant advancements in working collaboratively at the local level among government agencies and with our employee representatives. We have long understood that Montgomery County is the economic engine for the State, and our efforts locally to update our land use plans, establish and maintain prudent financial management, take advantage of the emerging green energy market, and support the rapidly growing bio-tech market are positioning us well for the future. The silver lining of the economic downturn is that

it has refocused our attention on providing our residents with essential services, while also reestablishing prudent fiscal policies that will guide us into the future.

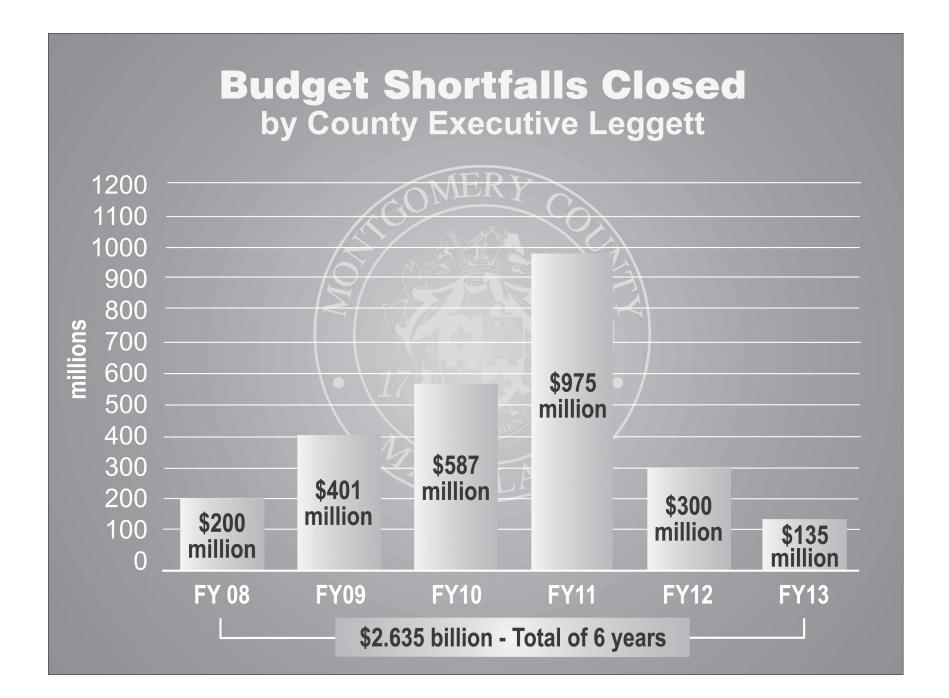
Montgomery County is one of the most dynamic, growing, and cosmopolitan areas in both the Washington region and the nation. I will continue to work with the Council and the other agencies to ensure that our policies support and encourage this growth and diversity.

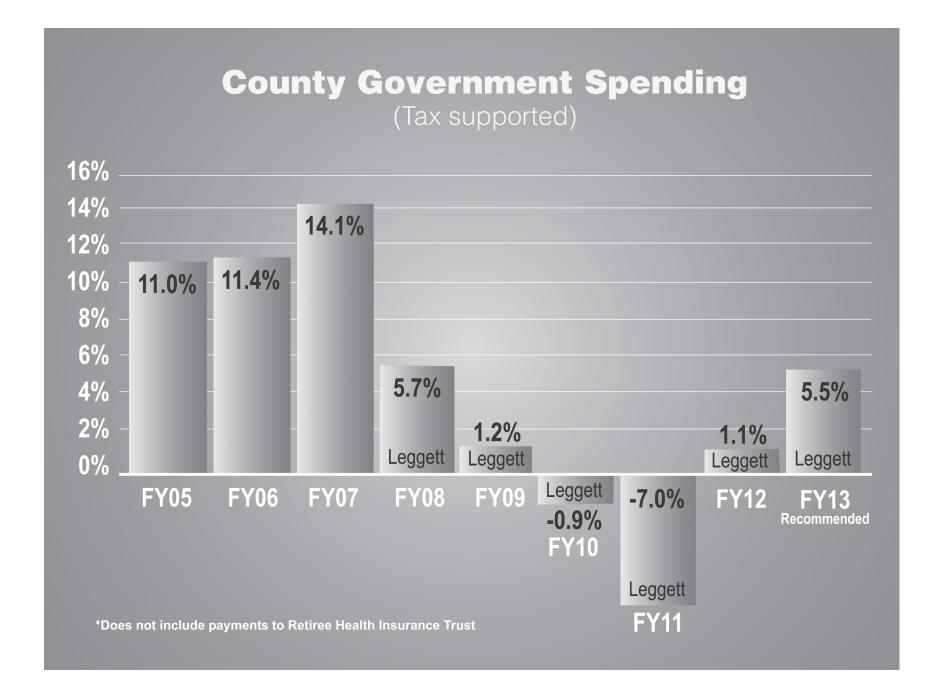
The wonderful people of this county are our greatest asset and continue to inspire my hope and confidence for our future. Nearly a million strong today, our residents have sacrificed to maintain services during these trying economic times by contributing more in taxes, community service, and by helping protect and serve the most vulnerable in our County. I am deeply grateful to them and humbled to serve as their County Executive.

Finally, I want to thank those who contributed to the development of this spending plan including the Board of Education and Superintendent at Montgomery County Public Schools; the Trustees and President of Montgomery College; the Chair of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Planning Board; the Commissioners and General Manager of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission; individual residents, as well as members of boards, commissions, and committees; community-based organizations; and directors, employees, and employee representatives of departments in all agencies.

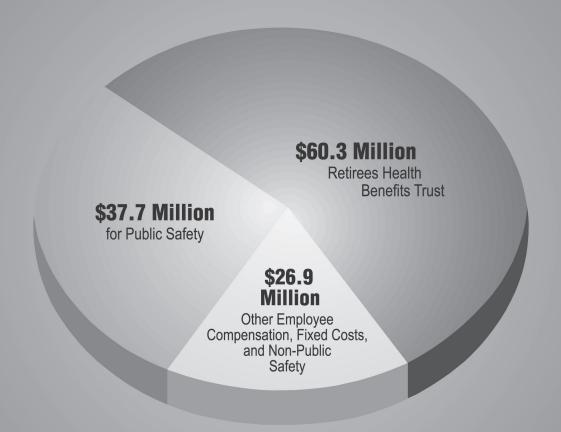
Highlights of my recommendations are set forth on the following pages and details can be found in the Departmental sections. The full budget can be viewed on the County's website at www. montgomerycountymd.gov/omb. Details of the budget requests for MCPS, the College, M-NCPPC, and WSSC can be seen in the separate budget documents produced by those agencies.

I look forward to working with the Council over the next two months on spending priorities and policy issues that arise and have asked Executive Branch staff to assist you in your deliberations.





County Government Increase FY13



\$124.9 Million Total Increase