

# Tom Perez

# District 5 Update

March 31, 2003

## Welcome!

These past four months have been very exciting and exhilarating. It has been one hectic week after another as we set up an office to serve District 5 residents. I am excited about our team and our accomplishments to date, but recognize that our work is just beginning. The “to do” list is getting longer, which is wonderful. I hope you will continue to give us input about how we can best serve you. During my first 100 days, I have been very impressed by the many examples of grassroots activism in our communities. It is my goal to facilitate the development of neighborhoods and communities that are informed, empowered, and working to resolve problems and build a better future for all of our residents.



Remember, your District 5 office serves you. We will all be doing our best and depend on you to keep us informed about your community. I have gathered a great team of people to help me serve you. We are not going to spend all of our time in Rockville, but will work very hard to be in the community so that we are in contact with residents and aware of what needs to be done to improve our quality of life. We will all be working on constituent service every day.

## The District 5 Team

### Dan Parr

Dan is the chief-of-staff. He is a long-time resident of District 5 and a successful small businessperson. He has been a school and community activist for over 25 years. Dan will focus on education, community development, land use, and environmental issues. He lives in the Long Branch area of Silver Spring/Takoma Park.

### Barbara Flack-Darko

Barbara works as a special assistant. She is a small business owner with a strong background in public affairs and communications. She is

also a long-time community activist and organizer with considerable national and international ties. Barbara will focus on community outreach, small business, economic development, arts and humanities, and health and human service issues.

### Rosa García

Rosa is a special assistant who has worked as a community organizer and administrator for programs aimed at helping our poorest and newest residents. She has a strong background in education and civil rights issues. She will focus on community outreach, early

childhood programs, adult education, and issues of new residents. Rosa lives in downtown Silver Spring.

### Minh-Phuong (May) Ngo

May will be a legislative assistant. She will graduate from the University of Maryland this spring. She lives in Wheaton and her family owns two businesses in Silver Spring. May will be holding down the fort in our Rockville office and trying to keep everyone as organized as possible. She will also work on community outreach and constituent services.

**What's Been Done** – We have hit the ground running, and have been involved in a host of critical issues.

**Outreach** - Community Outreach is at the top of our agenda. Tom and staff have had over 100 meetings with community groups and leaders over the past four months. We are planning a

series of dialogues with community members. These will be held at locations throughout District 5 so that attending is as convenient as possible. The first meeting is scheduled for March 31<sup>st</sup> at the Takoma Park campus of Montgomery College. The purpose of the meeting is to help identify community priorities for the FY04 budget and beyond. Tom's goal is to move beyond the typical public hearing format to one that allows for meaningful give-and-take on issues.

**Education** will always be a top priority. We have played an active role in the resolution of the Head Start debate started by Superintendent Weast's proposal that would affect wraparound services to children and families in the program. Our office participated in the debate and insisted that broader participation by the client community is essential. It appears that the Council will insist on maintaining the important services and serve more children. Ensuring full funding for Montgomery County Public Schools is one of Tom's top budget priorities.

Tom will lead a key working group on Adult Education. There is a study that will be released soon on adult ESOL and we will move the county toward a more coordinated and effective approach to adult education for language and other areas essential for full participation in our communities.

**Transportation** - The Inner Purple Line has been the top transportation priority. Tom helped form the Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line which included business, environmental, government, and community leaders. Tom has spent hours lobbying in Annapolis and on Capitol Hill. Our efforts, combined with a lot of other hard working people, overcame incredible odds and were successful in getting the Governor to put the Inner Purple Line on his list of top transit priorities for federal dollars. Representatives Al Wynn, Chris Van Hollen, and Steny Hoyer have requested that the Inner Purple Line be placed on the Department of Transportation's list of transit projects eligible for federal dollars.

**Access to Healthcare** - Healthcare is a growing problem in Montgomery County, the state, and the nation. Tom led the Council to a unanimous vote to oppose the privatization of CareFirst. He lobbied here and in Annapolis. The Insurance Commissioner has blocked the sale. This means that thousands of District 5 residents will have better, cheaper, and more equal access to healthcare.

**Affordable Housing** – The County Council recently passed a landmark resolution establishing a dedicated fund for affordable housing. While other municipalities across America have established similar funds, Montgomery County's is the largest in the nation. The passage of this resolution was a dramatic turnaround for the Council which, just last year, defeated an identical resolution by an 8-1 vote. Tom campaigned on a pledge to support the establishment of this fund, and is proud to have been part of the successful campaign.

**The Budget** - The budget is going to be the dominant task for the next two months. Tom has already gone to bat for District 5 when the County Executive was proposing cuts to save money in FY03. He helped prevent cuts at the Kensington and Takoma Park fire stations, and in a number of programs essential to our communities. We will have to be constantly vigilant and ready to fight over the next two months. We will need the community to help us set priorities, monitor the budget areas that interest them most, inform us of outstanding issues, and help work hard for our priorities.

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