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MONTGOMERY COUNTY DELEGATION ANNOUNCES 2007 SESSION WINS FOR THE COUNTY

Annapolis, MD (April 10, 2007) – The 32-member Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly today announced the 2007 legislative session wins for Montgomery County.

“The delegation secured a record \$52.3 million for public school construction, which was the single biggest win for the county this year and the highest allocation the county has ever received,” said Senator Patrick J. Hogan, chair of the Montgomery Senate Delegation. “Since every state dollar leverages one local dollar, more than \$105 million will be available to improve our public school infrastructure throughout the county this year.”

Among the many key capital projects that will receive state funds are the Birchmere Music Hall in downtown Silver Spring, completion of Glen Echo Park, the Germantown Incubator to foster new high tech businesses in the county, and the Woodstock Equestrian Center on 800 acres of donated land that will include innovative programs for disadvantaged and disabled children and adults. Overall, the Montgomery County Delegation members secured \$6.6 million for 21 local capital projects.

“We are very pleased to be able to bring back to Montgomery County more than \$65 million in state capital funds,” said Delegate Charles E. Barkley, chair of the Montgomery House Delegation. “We stayed focused and worked as a team in winning these important funds for the people of our county, and I could not be more pleased.”

The fiscal year 2008 state operating budget includes \$23 million to support stem cell research, which reflects more than a 50 percent increase over last year. Montgomery County is the home of the majority of bioscience companies in the state. These technology firms will be direct beneficiaries of this important investment. Ultimately, many people who suffer from debilitating diseases will hopefully be able to take advantage of their scientific discoveries.

This year’s operating budget also includes full funding of state aid to local governments, with the exception of the Geographic Cost of Education Index – an integral part of the Thornton K-12 education funding formula. Despite this omission, Montgomery County will receive \$527 million in direct state aid, representing a \$56.1 million or 12 percent increase over last year.

Numerous statewide bills of importance to Montgomery County were passed by the General Assembly this year, including the Clean Indoor Air Act that will ban public indoor smoking, the Clean Cars Act that will require motor vehicles sold in Maryland to meet much stricter emissions standards by 2011, and an in-state tuition freeze for students attending University of Maryland schools next year.

The Montgomery County Delegation also worked with their House and Senate colleagues and the O'Malley-Brown Administration to limit spending growth to just 2.1 percent this year – below the inflation rate and the Spending Affordability Guidelines set by the General Assembly.

At the same time the Montgomery County Senators and Delegates backed successful efforts to fully fund Program Open Space, dedicate the Transportation Trust Fund only for transportation purposes, and restore the Office of Smart Growth. The General Assembly also adopted legislation to require state contractors to pay a “living wage” to their employees – which reflects a local law already on the books in Montgomery County, and a Minority Business Enterprise Program will be reestablished at the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

The merging of Walter Reed Army Medical Center with the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda will benefit from the passage of legislation establishing a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Subcabinet to assist subdivisions impacted by the BRAC recommendations. While the Bethesda BRAC action may be less complex than the actions at Aberdeen and Fort Meade, the effects on Montgomery County are very significant. The Montgomery Delegation strongly supported establishing a single statewide coordinating entity to help affected communities work through implementation of the BRAC recommendations.

“In spite of some extraordinary state fiscal challenges, this was a productive year for Montgomery County in Annapolis,” said County Executive Isiah Leggett. “Our many talented veterans in the Montgomery Delegation who are in key leadership positions and our new crop of bright and energetic legislators proved to be a forceful team in the General Assembly this year,” Leggett added. “We are well-positioned to continue advancing the interests of our county next year even as our state will face the daunting challenge of closing the structural deficit that threatens the long-term health of our economy.”

Looking ahead, Montgomery Senate Delegation chair Hogan commented, “I look forward to working with my colleagues over the summer and fall as we begin discussing solutions to the state’s challenges, including the structural deficit, our congested transportation system, and expanding access to health care for more of our citizens.”

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ATTACHMENTS