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MONTGOMERY COUNTY DELEGATION ANNOUNCES 2008 SESSION WINS FOR THE COUNTY

ANNAPOLIS - The 32-member Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly today announced 2008 legislative session wins for Montgomery County.

Among its biggest wins for the county, the Montgomery Delegation was able to secure \$77 million to construct a new Rockville Science Center at Montgomery College and a new District Court in Rockville.

The Montgomery County legislators secured \$13.6 million in state funds for 31 other local capital projects, including the Capital Area Food Bank, CASA Multicultural Center, Live Nation / Fillmore music venue in Silver Spring, the Arc of Montgomery County Group Homes, the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington's group homes, the Gaithersburg and Silver Spring libraries, Maryland Youth Ballet, Imagination Stage, and various health, recreation, and senior centers throughout the county,

Capital funding was also secured in the FY09 budget for Adventist Healthcare, Suburban Hospital, and Montgomery General Hospital.

The Montgomery Delegation played a key role in securing a record \$333 million for K-12 public school construction projects across the state. Thus far, \$20.2 has been allocated to Montgomery County. The state's Interagency Committee on School Construction has recommended that Montgomery County receive an additional \$19 million, which would bring the county's school construction total to nearly \$40 million in FY09. The Board of Public Works is expected to finalize school construction allocations at its May 21 meeting.

Governor O'Malley's FY09 budget also included full funding for the next phase planning and engineering of the two major transit projects in Montgomery County - the Purple Line (from Bethesda to Silver Spring to New Carrollton) and Corridor Cities Transitway along the 1-270 corridor (from Shady Grove Metro to Clarksburg). Additionally, the FY09 budget includes funding to continue construction of the Inter-County Connector roadway and an additional \$5 million operating subsidy for Montgomery County's Ride-On bus system.

"I am pleased that we worked together to secure more than \$112 million in state capital funds for Montgomery County projects," said Delegate Brian Feldman, chairman of the Montgomery House Delegation. "On the operating aid side, we increased funding for K-12 education and froze tuition at our universities, all which especially benefit Montgomery County residents. In achieving these accomplishments, we did not shift the burden onto our counties as some had proposed we do."

Numerous statewide bills of importance to Montgomery County were passed by the General Assembly this year, including the in-state tuition freeze for students attending University of Maryland schools next year.

As Montgomery County continues to expand its biotech business sector, the state operating budget includes \$19 million for the support of stem cell research. The General

Assembly also approved bills that repealed the computer services sales tax, created the Coordinating Emerging Nanobiotechnology Research in Maryland program that will invest \$5 million annually in this new area for scientific innovation, and established a Maryland Clean Energy Center to expand the renewable energy technology sector and promote entrepreneurship in the creation of green-collar jobs in the clean energy industry.

"Our Delegation was instrumental in keeping our state moving forward despite the challenges they faced from a faltering national economy and the fallout from difficult decisions made during the Special Session," said Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett. "Montgomery County residents will benefit again this year from significant state capital investments in public school construction, our library system, and Montgomery College. A number of important policy initiatives are also among the long list of accomplishments sponsored by Delegation members that will help make our county and communities across the state healthier and safer. Clearly, we are well represented in Annapolis."

Montgomery County lawmakers took the lead on addressing the rising foreclosure crisis by passing legislation creating new standards for lending practices, strengthening mortgage fraud laws, and increasing mandatory education for homebuyers who take out high-risk loans.

Another new law will ensure that thousands more children in Maryland will receive health care coverage by passage of legislation that increases the state's commitment to enrolling kids in public health insurance programs and identifying affordable coverage for middle class families.

In addition, bills spearheaded by Montgomery legislators were approved to create a high-level Commission to Study the Impact of Immigrants in Maryland and a Maryland Commission to Study the Death Penalty.

In the area of crime control, Montgomery legislators led efforts to enact bills into law to protect domestic violence victims by strengthening Permanent Protective Order statutes, combat identity theft by increasing the penalties for felony offenses, and address the problem of bullying and cyber-bullying among school-aged children.

Bills sponsored by Montgomery legislators in memory of Delegate Jane Lawton (District 18), who passed away suddenly last November, were enacted into law. The Jane E. Lawton Loan Program will promote energy conservation and energy-related economic development for small businesses, municipalities and non-profits. The Jane Lawton Farm-to-school Program will encourage the use of Maryland-grown farm foods and agricultural products in Maryland public school kitchens and cafeterias and creates an annual "Maryland Homegrown School Lunch Week" to promote agricultural products in the schools.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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