

## **Haddaway Legislative Wrap Up 1-23-09**

January 23, 2009

### **The Legislative Session**

In accordance with Maryland's constitution, the Maryland General Assembly has convened for the 2009 legislative session. Between now and April 13, 2009, we will be reviewing nearly 2,500 proposed laws. During the course of the session, information on legislation can be obtained through the Maryland General Assembly web site ([www.mlis.state.md.us](http://www.mlis.state.md.us)) or by contacting our office. You can also join our email list by sending a request to [jeannie.haddaway@house.state.md.us](mailto:jeannie.haddaway@house.state.md.us).

### **Issues of Interest**

#### ***EZ Pass Changes***

Many constituents have contacted our office regarding the proposed changes to the EZ Pass program within the Maryland Department of Transportation. These changes include eliminating commuter tickets, charging additional administrative fees and increasing tolls for commercial vehicles. These changes were driven by a decrease in revenues due to lower vehicle miles traveled. Unfortunately, these changes negatively impact commuters and telecommuters as well as members of the agriculture, forestry and manufacturing industries that truck their products across the State.

In addition to speaking personally with the Secretary of the Department of Transportation, I have submitted written comment in opposition to these changes. I also offered recommendations on how to increase EZ Pass revenue by increasing participation rather than raising fees and tolls. These recommendations include better marketing and making EZ Pass transponders more accessible to rural residents by selling them in grocery stores and convenience stores. The general public can also submit written comment on this issue until January 27, 2009.

#### ***Salvia Divinorum***

*Salvia divinorum* is a psychoactive herb that is being used as a recreational drug because of its hallucinogenic properties. The herb can be smoked or ingested and is considered by many to be stronger than LSD. Although this drug has serious negative consequences, it is widely available on the Internet, in retail shops and (in our area) along the boardwalk in Ocean City. Web sites and You-Tube videos have increased its popularity among young people causing concern among public health officials and law enforcement officials.

Many countries have banned it including Australia, Spain, Italy and Sweden. States that have banned it include Delaware, Missouri, California and Louisiana.

This year, I will be asking the Maryland legislature to consider banning it. House Bill 8 would add *Salvia divinorum* to a list of Controlled Dangerous Substances along with marijuana and peyote. The legislation is crossfiled by Senator Richard Colburn and is cosponsored by Delegate Addie Eckardt. A hearing is scheduled for January 27, 2009.

For more information on this and other issues, please feel free to contact Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio's office by calling (410) 841-3429 or by emailing [jeannie.haddaway@house.state.md.us](mailto:jeannie.haddaway@house.state.md.us).