

April 3, 2009

Haddaway Elected to Women's Caucus Position



The Women Legislators of the Maryland General Assembly have announced their slate for 2009-1010 Officers and Executive Board Members. Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio was among the nominees for positions and was elected to serve as 2nd Vice President.

The Women Legislators of Maryland was founded in 1972 and was the first statewide organization of its kind in the country. It is informally referred to as the “Women’s Caucus” and serves as a forum for female senators and delegates in the Maryland General Assembly. Since that time, their mission has been to improve public policy that affects women’s lives and to increase the number of women elected and appointed to public office.

In 2003, Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio was appointed to the Maryland General Assembly, making Maryland third in the nation for the number of women in the legislature. Shortly thereafter, Maryland rose to number one in the nation. During her six years in office, Haddaway has served in numerous positions with the Women’s Caucus including Co-Chair of the Legislative Policy Committee, reviewing legislation and making policy recommendations on issues affecting women and children. She has also served as an At-Large Executive Board member and as Secretary.

“The Women’s Caucus has provided me with opportunities for professional development and networking that have proved invaluable,” Haddaway said. “We have also been instrumental in bringing issues and perspectives to the forefront that would have otherwise been ignored. It is really an honor to be a part of this prestigious group.”

For more information, contact Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio or visit www.womenlegislatorsmd.org.

REAL ID Act

Amnesty vs. Proof of Lawful Presence

As of May 11, 2008, Federal agencies may not accept driver’s licenses or identification cards for any official purpose if they are issued by a state that is not complying with the Federal REAL ID Act. “Official purpose” means boarding aircraft, entering nuclear power plants, entering federal facilities and any other purpose defined by the Department of Homeland Security through regulations. Because Maryland has not complied with the requirements yet, the State had to file for an extension to the deadline.

Although the extension was granted, many legislators feel that it is time to start moving toward compliance.

With that in mind Delegate Ron George and Delegate Jim Malone introduced bills, with more than 60 cosponsors, that would have created full compliance in Maryland. However, the House Judiciary Committee amended the bill and to create a two-tiered system for Maryland's driver's licenses that granted amnesty to illegal immigrants that already have Maryland licenses. Maryland is one of only four states that give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. The Motor Vehicles Administration estimates that there are over 300,000 of them in the State at this time.

Given the drastic change in the legislation, over forty democrats and republicans stood up on the House floor and removed their names as cosponsors of the bill, including Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio. The bill was later voted on and narrowly passed. At the same time, the Senate passed a very different bill that would strengthen Maryland's license system and would require lawful presence to obtain a driver's license. Governor O'Malley announced yesterday that he will sign either bill, despite the drastic policy differences between them. A conference committee will be appointed to try to find a compromise between the House and the Senate before the end of session.

Re-Regulation of Utilities

The Maryland General Assembly has been considering legislation that would re-regulate utilities in Maryland. With only two weeks left to go in the Session, the Senate has passed a re-regulation bill with over forty amendments and is now asking the House Economic Matters Committee for its consideration. Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio has voiced opposition to the measure citing cost, consumer choice and the negative effect it would have on renewable energies as her main points of contention.

Utility Costs

Testimony in the House Economic Matters Committee consistently pointed out that rates will not go down as a result of re-regulation. Additionally, the legislation includes a tax called a "bypassable wires charge". While the House version of the bill said that the charge *may* be imposed on all ratepayers in the State, the Senate bill says that the charge *shall* be imposed. Haddaway argues that added another charge, or tariff, to consumers bills will only exacerbate an already bad situation.

Consumer Choice

The legislation not only affects residential customers, but small commercial customers. In the hearing, Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio referenced one of her constituents who has a three year contract with a competitive supplier at 10 cents, which will save them nearly \$300 a year and 5% of their purchase is coming from wind power. Under that ratepayer's same scenario, they could be purchasing up to 50% wind power

and still pay cheaper rates. She offered a similar example of the Eastern Shore of Maryland's Education Consortium's Energy Trust, which purchases power for public schools on the Eastern Shore. To date, they have saved taxpayers over \$7 million in electricity costs, but under this legislation, they would no longer be able to do so. The Delmarva Poultry Industry also testified against the bill citing utility costs as one of the biggest challenges to the poultry industry right now.

Renewable Energies

Renewable energies benefit from a competitive market. Additionally they benefit when they have the flexibility to enter into long term contracts. According to Haddaway, companies such as Clean Currents are offering competitive rates right now, which in her opinion, is evidence that the market is heading in the right direction. In a recent newsletter, this company was quoted as saying “[Re-regulation] would not only take away green power options...it would put the solar and wind industry in Maryland in jeopardy.” In the hearing, Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio also points out that there is a greater likelihood that new generation will end up being coal fired power plants under a regulated regime.

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.