

Candidate History

Previous Elected Offices:

State Delegate, District 39
Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee, District 39

Which Years Did You Serve:

State Delegate - 2007-2010
Central Committee - 2006-2007

Have you ever received an endorsement from Progressive Maryland?

YES OR NO

If Yes, when:

Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals?

YES OR NO

Describe:

During my time as a State Delegate I have been a strong advocate on behalf of a number of progressive causes including the rights of workers, election reform, transparency in government, education, health care, and marriage equality, just to name a few.

Major Endorsements (Elected Officials/Organizations/Opinion Leaders):

Since I was not an candidate for election in 2006, I did not receive any endorsements. It is currently too early in the 2010 election cycle and not major endorsements have been announced. However, I have maintained excellent relations with with state elected officials and Democratic leaders, as well as a number of progressive organizations, throughout my political career and hope to realize their support when endorsements begin to be announced.

Issue Questions

1. The minimum wage no longer guarantees a full-time worker enough to support a family without public assistance. Currently at least seven states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages above \$8.00/hr. Do you support raising the state minimum wage to \$8.50, which would fall just short of the rate in Washington State, which is the highest in the country?

YES OR NO

Comments:

A minimum wage of \$8.50 comes to under \$18,000 per year assuming full time employment. To expect someone to maintain a home, put food on the table, clothes on children's backs, and pay for medical coverage at this salary is a difficult thing to ask. By providing a salary that allows someone to actually cover the costs of living, poverty will decrease, and we can expect to see a reduction in State costs to provide services to the chronically poor.

2. If the minimum wage had been indexed to inflation when it was last set in Maryland, it would be over \$9.00 an hour now, allowing working families across the state to keep up with the rising cost of living. Do you support indexing the state minimum wage to the rate of inflation?

YES OR NO

<p>Comments:</p> <p>In general, I support the concept of indexing, however, I believe we need to be careful. Adjusting the cost of living for inflation can also mean adjusting down when inflation is stagnant or decreasing, such as we have seen over the last 18 months. This can have the negative effect of lowering salaries and taking more money out of the local economy when we can least afford it.</p>	
<p>3. There is a serious concern that the state's economic development subsidies (i.e. direct grants, special tax districts, tax abatements, state revenue bonds, etc.) go to companies which ultimately take more in state aid than they return in the tax base by creating poverty wage jobs which require their employees to use public assistance. Do you support requiring companies which receive economic development subsidies to create good jobs that pay a prevailing wage with benefits as embodied by SB785/HB1317?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>The goal of economic development subsidies are to provide good jobs that in turn will help to stimulate the economy. If those subsidies go to creating jobs that simply maintain the working poor, then we are simply paying twice. The goals of these subsidies is to grow the economy, expand the State treasury, and allow residents to be securely employed with a good wage that they can use to support their families.</p>	
<p>4. Do you support extending collective bargaining rights to any company which receives economic development subsidies from the state of Maryland, allowing the workers their right to decide if they would like to join a union or not?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>I believe the right to join a union is an inherent right to associate. Any employee should have the right to decide whether collective bargaining through a union will benefit them. This is especially true for employees whose employers utilize taxpayer dollars through direct or indirect subsidies in order to grow their business and expand company profits.</p>	
<p>5. The skyrocketing cost of campaigns gives wealthy individuals and large corporations too much power in deciding who gets elected in Maryland. These same moneyed interests enjoy privileged access in Annapolis after the election on account of their campaign contributions. According to a recent Gonzales poll, 70% of Marylanders favor enacting a voluntary public campaign finance system. Do you support enacting a voluntary public campaign finance system for Maryland General Assembly races that is similar to systems enacted in Maine, Arizona and Connecticut and embodied in the SB681 legislation?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>In principle, I support public campaign finance and have co-sponsored the House Campaign Finance Reform legislation (HB 1251). However, I have a number of concerns about the details of the bill and its implementation that I want to make sure are addressed to make the system more fair and functional. I have made these concerns known to many of the advocates who are supporting campaign finance reform, and would need to have some resolutions to these issues before I can completely embrace the issue.</p>	
<p>6. Maryland current sales tax law was instituted decades ago when sales of goods were the overwhelming majority of the economy. Today, the majority of sales transactions are for services rather than goods, yet Maryland receives no sales tax from the purchase of services; disadvantaging retailers and manufacturers. Do you support modernizing Maryland's sales tax law to fit our current service economy?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO

<p>Comments:</p> <p>In principle, I support adjusting our sales tax laws to provide for a more fair and equitable balance between goods and services. However, the topic is so broad and encompasses so many issues and industries, it is difficult to make a sweeping generalization. Because sales tax is one of the most regressive of all taxing structures, we need to be cautious about implementation. The resulting bill could not work to remove disadvantages currently imposed on retail and manufactures, but we inadvertently impose burdens on lower income residents.</p>	
<p>7. Thanks to ever more loopholes created by corporate accountants, one third of the biggest corporations in the state no longer pay a single penny in state income tax, even though under current law profitable firms are supposed to pay an 8.25% state income tax. Combined reporting closes most of these loopholes and is law in 23 states. Do you support a bill that would require "Combined Reporting" of all related companies like HB584?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>I support implementing combined reporting. I am looking forward to seeing the results of the study that was implemented by the legislature in 2007 and due out later this year, in order to be able to gage the most effective way to enact combined reporting. My goals for combined reporting should be maximum benefit to the State, minimal impact on Maryland-based corporations who are currently meeting their corporate income tax obligations, a minimal amount of administrative burdens, and specified procedures to minimized the potential legal liability of the State.</p>	
<p>8. In contrast to tax loopholes invented by accountants, there are also intentional tax breaks for various special interests in the form of special exemptions to the income tax, sales tax, excise tax, franchise tax, etc. In 2004 the Progressive Maryland Education Fund identified dozens of such tax breaks that benefit polluters, monopolists, even country clubs and that drain \$162 million per year from General Revenue. Perhaps some of these intentional tax breaks served an economic development purpose at one time, but too many now are just General Revenue giveaways to special interests. Do you support abolishing as many of these tax giveaways as possible?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Abolishing the exemptions as a whole assumes that there is no merit to them at all, even though the question acknowledges that some do have a legitimate economic development purpose. In their conception, these exemptions are no different than economic development grants, subsidies or other public incentives to help grow the job base and expand the economy. If there are exemptions that are simply "giveaways" and are not providing any economic benefit to the State, then yes, I say let's get rid of them. But without examining each one specifically, I am not prepared to make such sweeping generalizations.</p>	
<p>9. This year the General Assembly allowed the surcharge on income above \$1 million dollars to sunset while cutting funding for many vital programs for working families. Do you support reinstating the surcharge on income above \$1 million dollars and making it permanent like in HB1177?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>I voted for the surcharge in 2008 without reservation. However, that vote was cast with the understanding that it was set to expire, and I have no intention of going back on my word with regard to that piece of legislation. Since the surcharge has not actually expired yet, the cuts to this year's budget were not reflective of the sunset. I am happy to re-examine the issue and if that examines determines that the surcharge should be reinstated or even made permanent, than I am happy to consider it.</p>	
<p>10. Currently, eligibility for public pre-kindergarten in Maryland is set at 185% of federal poverty guidelines (\$33,874 for a family of three). Data demonstrate that pre-K is tremendously effective in closing the education achievement gap. Within your first two years in office, will you support raising the pre-K eligibility limit to 250% of federal poverty guidelines (\$45,775 for a family of three)?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO

<p>Comments:</p> <p>I fully support providing as many children with access to education as early as possible. We have seen the benefits of having a strong education system in our State and in Montgomery County, and must do everything in our power, not only to maintain that strength but to expand it as much as possible.</p>	
<p>11. Currently many local school boards, municipalities, community colleges, local governments and other public entities do not provide for collective bargaining rights for their employees. Do you support a public employee collective bargaining law covering all public employees in the state of Maryland, such as in Oregon, allowing all public sector workers their right to decide if they want a union or not?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>As mentioned above, I have been an ardent supporter of expanding the rights of every employee, whether public or private, to have the right to chose whether or not they are members of a union who represent them in collective bargaining. I have supported a number of bills that extended collective bargaining to a variety of public employees, such as law enforcement, library employees, etc. and will continue to do so.</p>	
<p>12. Do you support recognition of a union for employees of any public entity provided the union submits independently-verified authorization cards signed by a majority of eligible members?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Unless an it can be demonstrated that the process was done fraudulently, there is no reason not to recognize the independently-verified authorization cards as an acceptable process for determining union recognition.</p>	
<p>13. When a recognized union negotiates a contract for better wages and benefits for its members, non-union members within that collective bargaining unit get to vote and enjoy all the benefits of the union's negotiation without contributing to the union. Lawmakers fixed this problem for state employees in 2009 when they enacted the Fair Share Act. Do you support extending this same requirement to all public entities covered in a collective bargaining unit?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>At the end of the day, an employee is an employee, and should be treated equally regardless of whether they work for a public or a private entity.</p>	
<p>14. Currently the state of Maryland covers 100% of the pension costs for teachers and educational support staff for all localities across Maryland. The state Senate supported shifting some of the cost to county and city governments which are already facing daunting budget deficits and cannot afford this new expenditure. Do you oppose shifting some or all of the pension costs of teacher and educational support staff to the localities?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Shifting the costs of teachers' pensions will not solve any economic or budgetary problems, all it does is pass the buck to counties who are going through the same economic burdens as the State. Imposing the burden of funding pensions on the counties will great hurt some while practically bankrupting others, putting the same burden on the State to assist the locality as before the shift of pensions took place.</p>	

<p>15. The existing Maintenance of Effort law dealing with a minimum level of local funding for public education is intended to reinforce the shared responsibility between the state and counties for adequate funding of our public schools, which has helped Maryland's public schools achieve the top ranking in the country. Do you oppose efforts to reduce or weaken the minimum funding requirement?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: The Maintenance of Effort law is just that, maintaining a minimum amount of funding for schools so that they can keep up with escalating costs and additional needs. Though I believe adjustments to the law are necessary to account for unexpected circumstances, the MoE must be maintained at a minimum.</p>	
<p>16. Any proposal that would drain public funds from public schools, for example, school vouchers or tuition tax credits would be deleterious to Maryland's top ranked public schools. The program known as <u>Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers (BOAST)</u> is a tuition tax credit program that the General Assembly has considered in recent years. Do you oppose enacting a tax credit program like BOAST?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: There is absolutely no reason to take money out of public coffers and transfer them to private schools. Since most private schools are registered as 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, donations made to them are already tax deductible at the federal and state level. To offer an additional tax credit to the donors over and above the deduction they already receive is bad public policy and takes needed revenue out of the State Treasury.</p>	
<p>17. WMATA has provided rail transportation in Maryland since the late 1970s. While the system has been stressed lately, it has generally provided well run service since its inception and its workers are paid decent wages with benefits. Some have suggested operating the proposed light rail "Purple Line" as a state or privately run line without integrating it into the WMATA system or ensuring its workers continue to enjoy decent wages and benefits. Do you support integrating the proposed light rail "Purple Line" into the WMATA system?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: Both the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) should be integrated into the WMATA system. Since the riders of these lines are more than likely using them as a transfer to the WMATA system anyway, it makes no sense to run it separately. In order to ensure seamless operation, timing and schedules, rates and fares equity, etc. it must be part of one system.</p>	
<p>18. In the 2010 General Assembly session, a bill would have extended basic collective bargaining rights to library employees in all counties who do not currently have these rights. Do you support a bill like <u>SB225/HB881</u> to extend collective bargaining rights to library employees in all counties, allowing the library employees their right to decide if they want a union or not?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: I was a co-sponsor of HB 881 and continue to be a supporter moving forward.</p>	
<p>19. Project Labor Agreements have been proven time and time again to bring in projects on time and on budget but they also have the added benefit of building community partnerships with the contractors and unions to hire locally and provide family healthcare and a career path for residents. Would you support executive or legislative action putting PLA's on all contracts over \$500,000?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO

<p>Comments:</p> <p>In principle, I would support PLAs. However, to be perfectly honest, I am not entirely familiar with the specific function, such as how standardized the PLAs would be across contractors, how it would affect existing collective bargaining agreements, etc. I would need to see the details of the plan, but I do not object in concept.</p>	
<p>20. Currently the low bid system of contracting is a race towards the bottom for the federal, state and local government. Would you support moving contracting towards best value contracting which will allow extra points for contractors who provide apprentice programs, hire locally, provide family healthcare and pensions making it more likely that the contractor that does more for his employee's and the community will get the contract?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>In general, I support best value contracting over low bid contracting, with a maximum ceiling if possible, as a means to obtain the best possible product or contract outcome. I see it working firsthand as a federal services contractor. Clearly, the definition of best value is subjective and I would require more details about the definition.</p>	
<p>21. Do you support requiring all contractors and subcontractors who bid for jobs on publicly-subsidized construction projects to participate in apprenticeship programs that provide employees with free training for life?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>For construction projects, I support maximizing the amount of apprenticeship and training received by employees. Continued training, making it easier for contractors to find trained and specialized employees and making it easier for employees to move from job to job after construction projects are complete, should be encouraged.</p>	
<p>22. Do you support the requirement that a prevailing wage be paid to construction workers on all projects initiated by a public entity, whether or not that public entity has given hiring authority to private developers?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>As mentioned previously, no one can support a family on minimum wage. If a public entity, using taxpayer money, is initiating or funding the project, then a prevailing wage should be paid.</p>	
<p>23. Electricity deregulation for residential ratepayers created de facto monopoly electricity providers gouging ratepayers in most parts of Maryland. Do you support re-regulating Maryland's residential electricity system with a carve-out for new merchant plants already slated for construction at Calvert Cliffs?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments:</p> <p>Re-regulation for re-regulation's sake will not necessarily bring down the cost of electricity to ratepayers and will simply supplant one form of energy monopoly for another. The goal should be to bring down the cost of electricity, continuing to maintain and improving energy infrastructure, and working to develop the generation and delivery of multiple alternative energy sources, either through a fully regulated market, de-regulated market, or some hybrid of the two.</p>	

<p>24. As you may know, electricity deregulation has been a disaster for Maryland ratepayers and financial deregulation facilitated the worse financial crisis in this country since the Great Depression. Earlier this year, the Maryland Public Service Commission approved a settlement offer from Verizon, deregulating basic telephone service in Maryland, even though Verizon readily admits deregulation will lead to higher prices for basic telephone service. Would you support legislation to strengthen the ability of the Public Service Commission to re-regulate the telecommunications industry?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: There is nothing to indicate that a re-regulated telecommunications industry would bring down rates either. We need to keep our goals in mind, is it to regulate the industry or is it to bring down costs to ratepayers? If we can demonstrate that a regulated industry will bring down costs, provide better service, and treat customers fairly, then we should provide the PSC the ability to re-regulate, but it is not a forgone conclusion.</p>	
<p>25. All across the country, Verizon has attempted to sell its rural basic telephone networks to undercapitalized companies, where perversely the more debt the buying company incurs, the larger the federal tax credit Verizon receives from the sale. In the four states where Verizon has been allowed to sell their rural lines, the buying company has gone bankrupt; leaving states and basic telephone customers scrambling to maintain service. Would you support legislation requiring the Public Service Commission to evaluate specific factors about the purchase when considering a telecommunications acquisition or merger like SB667/HB937?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: Utilities by their very nature provide a specialized service to Maryland's residents that are deemed critical to basic life function and requires tremendous infrastructure to operate. Any changes to a provider of one of these services needs to be thoroughly evaluated by the PSC prior to any acquisition or merger.</p>	
<p>26. In an effort to keep and grow jobs in Maryland, would you support legislation requiring telecommunications companies to disclose the location of call centers, allow state agencies to give preference to companies that use local call centers when awarding state contracts and allow consumers to request their customer service calls be handled by a local call center?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: We must maintain and grow the job base in Maryland, and allowing telecommunications companies (as well as others) to ship call centers to other parts of the country or even other countries, does a disservice to the people of Maryland, especially since so much of the infrastructure is maintain and supported with subsidies from public funds. In addition to providing jobs, it will also improve accountability and oversight.</p>	
<p>27. Would you support legislation providing consumer protections for cell phone users ensuring appropriate disclosure of fees and the ability to cancel a service contract or return a device within a certain time-frame like SB1008/HB1018?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: Almost every good and service comes with a return and refund policy, which accounts for defective products, poor service, or simply a change of taste on the part of the consumer. Though that specific product may get refunded, the customer's experience with that company or brand is positive. This should be encouraged, or in some cases, required.</p>	

<p>28. Retail is one of the fastest growing sectors of Maryland's economy, yet retail jobs are some of the lowest paying jobs which usually do not offer benefits, forcing many of their workers to rely on some form of public assistance. Would you support a bill that would require large employers who build new stores in Maryland over 75,000 square feet to pay a "living wage" with benefits as well as be required to adhere to local hiring provisions?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: Though I support the concept of this bill, it needs to be approached more carefully, or we will have a lot of retail stores with chronically part-time employees whose employers cut back hours, putting them further into poverty, or a lot of stores being built at 74,999 square feet. Though I support the effort, I'm not sure if a one size fits all approach fits.</p>	
<p>29. As you may know, Maryland's alcohol taxes have not been raised in over 40 years and are some of the lowest in the nation, though alcohol-related health concerns cost Marylanders millions of dollars every year. Would you support increasing the state alcohol taxes if the revenue is tied to expanding health coverage and access for Marylanders?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: I have no problem increasing the tax on alcohol and was a co-sponsor of HB832 for needed revenue, especially with regard to expanding health coverage and additional funding to programs that benefit those with development disabilities or dealing with addiction. However, unless a specific law is passed completely making those revenues separate and apart from the General Fund budget, any promise of tied funds is a fallacy. Any part of the General Fund budget can be used for any State expense as drafted by the Governor and passed by the General Assembly.</p>	
<p>30. Do you support increasing the gas tax to fund expansion of transportation projects, including mass transportation?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: For several years now, I have been the co-sponsor of legislation that would make the Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) a fund separate and apart from the General Fund. Too often, monies meant for transportation and mass transit projects has been diverted from the TTF for other purposes to fill budget gaps. If the public is to be believed that an increase in the gas tax is going to go for transportation and mass transit, then we must demonstrate that fact, otherwise, it is just another tax.</p>	
<p>31. Do you support extending collective bargaining rights to Adjunct Faculty and Graduate Student employees at all public institutions of higher education in Maryland, allowing these workers their right to decide to join a union or not?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: Employees who provide a needed service to the employer, in this case institutions of higher education, should be treated like every other employer, and given the same rights and benefits.</p>	
<p>32. As you may know, the Maryland Attorney General recently released an opinion stating that Maryland permits the recognition of valid out-of-state marriages of same sex couples. Do you support legislation to ensure all gay and lesbian couples have access to full civil marriage equality in Maryland?</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES OR <input type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Comments: I have co-sponsored the marriage equality bill every year that I have been in the legislature, as well as helped to pass domestic partner benefits to at least get us a small step of the way there. I am an ardent support of civil marriage equality and will continue to fight for its passage.</p>	

Assisting Progressive Maryland & Allies

33. For the measures above that you have agreed to support would you be willing to:

- Co-sponsor legislation? YES OR NO
- Work with our lobbyists to pass the bill? YES OR NO
- Testify at a hearing in support of legislation? YES OR NO
- Speak at public events in support of legislation? YES OR NO
- Write a letter in support of legislation? YES OR NO
- Write an op-ed in support of legislation? YES OR NO

34. In order to build progressive grassroots organizations, would you be willing to help by:

- Speaking at Progressive Maryland events? YES OR NO
- Urging employers to respect their employees' right to form a union by remaining neutral during a union campaign? YES OR NO
- Urge employers to recognize a union voluntarily when the majority of their employees choose to form a union? YES OR NO
- Write a letter to unorganized workers endorsing an organizing drive by a labor union? YES OR NO
- Walk a picket line with a labor union? YES OR NO
- Other (Please specify):