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Dear Friends:

I want to take this opportunity to brief you on the 2009 Legislative Session. This was one of the most hectic sessions I can remember, made all the more urgent by pressure from our ever-tightening fiscal situation. We passed a \$14 billion budget and were able to avoid deeper cuts through the use of the federal stimulus funding.

As a member of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, I played a major role in several successful legislative issues and had a hand in other key initiatives not in my Committee. Here is a brief survey of what we accomplished this year.

DRUNK DRIVING – In 2007, my bill created the *Task Force on Drunk and Drugged Driving*. This Session, I was the primary Senate sponsor for the slate of Task Force bills. These measures create stiffer penalties for repeat offenders and crack down on underage drinking.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE – A major win in this area is legislation to give judges the power to seize guns from perpetrators who have a protective order against them. Another bill I co-sponsored increases to 6 months the maximum time a judge can extend a temporary protective order. Also, my bill allowing the use of police to enforce child custody provisions of temporary and interim protective orders passed.

CIVIL RIGHTS – I was a proud co-sponsor of two bills which go to the very core of our most basic civil rights. THE FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY PROTECTION ACT OF 2009 responds to the reports a few years ago of State Police spying on citizens and prohibits undercover surveillance of activists not suspected of criminal activity.

Following the high profile raid of a town mayor's house and shooting of his dogs, we introduced legislation requiring police departments to report monthly to a civilian review board on all SWAT team activities.

LEGAL PRESENCE Although Real ID is an expensive, unfunded federal mandate to the States, it is a fact of life which we must address unless Congress chooses to act. A compromise driver's license bill worked out by the Legislature is imperfect; however, it addresses federal requirements to prove legal presence while offering some leeway for current license holders.

DEATH PENALTY After a long and contentious debate in Committee and the full Senate, there were not enough votes for a full repeal of the death penalty. Instead, a compromise created the country's most stringent criteria for evidence in pursuing this penalty, limiting it to DNA, a video-taped confession, or a video of the actual crime.

We also prohibited the pretrial release of **repeat offenders** who committed crimes using a gun and we passed the ONLINE CHILD SAFETY ACT requiring Internet providers to create and make available **parental controls** to protect children. I co-sponsored both bills.

TRANSPORTATION - I was one of the sponsors of several driving safety bills to be signed by the Governor including one prohibiting “texting” while driving. Another bill creates a 6 month suspended license penalty for minors using a fake ID to buy alcohol. A second teen safety bill raises the age for a provisional license to 16 years, 6 months and for a full license to 18 years.

ENVIRONMENT - THE CHESAPEAKE BAY PHOSPHOROUS REDUCTION ACT prohibits the use of fertilizer with more than 5% phosphorous on established lawns. We also passed a bill requiring a 25% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Behind the scenes, I fought for funding for Program Open Space because green spaces are critical in our urban areas.

SENIORS - Once signed into law, the SILVER ALERT bill will allow the rapid dissemination of information to locate people with dementia who are missing. Also, financial exploitation of an adult over 68 is now a specific crime with penalties up to 15 years and \$10,000. I was a sponsor on both bills.

ENERGY - Back in 1999 when we voted on the de-regulation of the electric industry (led by ENRON and others), I thought it was a bad idea and voted against the bill. This year as we looked at skyrocketing utility bills, I signed on to legislation re-regulating the industry and creating new in-state power generating facilities. Unfortunately, this died in the House.

FUNDING – Montgomery County will receive approximately \$558.4 million in direct State aid, a 3.1% increase over last year. This includes \$474.4 million in education funding, an almost 10% increase. However, to balance the state budget, local transportation was cut by more than half over last year.

Capital budget funds were significantly restricted this year. Yet, working with Delegates Barve, Gilchrist and Simmons, we succeeded in securing \$100,000 in matching State funds for the conversion of the **Historic Rockville Post Office** to a new City police station, \$250,000 for the **Gaithersburg Community Museum** (near the train station), and \$350,000 for the **Rockville Senior Center**. Finally, we were able to restore \$3 million of funding to the budget for the Maryland Arts Council.

If you would like more information on the Session, go to the Maryland General Assembly web site at <http://mlis.state.md.us> and follow the link for “Everything Else” or my web site at www.jennieforehand.com.

It is an honor to serve as your representative in Annapolis. I appreciated hearing from you and hope you will continue to share your thoughts with me as I get back to my interim legislative committee duties and the NIH Biosafety Committee.

Sincerely,

