



Leadership Day in Annapolis

By Alan Dessoiff

Current members and graduates of Leadership programs from around the state gained an inside perspective of this year's Maryland General Assembly session and how public policy is created at the third annual "Leadership Maryland Day in Annapolis."

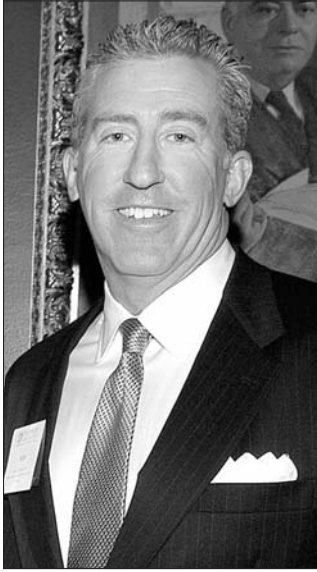
As the Legislature entered the final weeks of its 90-day meeting, about 100 state leaders gathered in the capital on March 14 to hear from journalists covering state government, the President of the state Senate, Speaker of the House, and other state and local lawmakers.

"What is so intriguing about Annapolis is that for 90 days every year, it is a little laboratory of human nature," said Leadership Maryland Board Chair Sean M. Looney '96, senior director of government affairs for Comcast, who moderated the discussion.

He asked a panel of journalists from major state media who cover the capital about changes they have noticed this year, the first under Democratic Governor Martin O'Malley who defeated Republican Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.

"There has been a marked change, partly because of leadership style," said John Wagner of *The Washington Post*. "The tone has changed, and most people—Democrats and Republicans—seem pretty happy about it," added Andy Green of *The Baltimore Sun*.

They and Dori Berman of *The*



Sean M. Looney '96, Leadership Maryland Board Chair, moderates the discussion

Daily Record and Alan Brody of *The Gazette of Politics & Business* noted the absence of partisan conflict that marked the last four years between Ehrlich and the Democratic-controlled Legislature. "It's been a relatively quiet session," said Brody.

The reporters agreed that the Legislature was largely waiting for O'Malley's initiatives on key issues. The Governor is "taking his time and being deliberative in trying to build coalitions he will need starting next year," Brody said. O'Malley is "trying to build goodwill" among legislators



Hon. Michael E. Busch, Speaker of the House

of both parties, declared Wagner.

Meanwhile, Brody noted, about one-quarter of the members of the House and Senate are new and "they have to learn all the nuances" of dealing with key issues, including a \$1.5 billion budget deficit that O'Malley and the lawmakers will have to tackle next year.

Brody characterized this year's session as a "respite" between the last four years and next year. Then, said Green, "everything is going to be on the table." He noted that the state Court of Appeals is due to rule this summer on gay marriages and that could be an issue in the Legislature next year. Brody added that the presidential election next year also could have an influence on the 2008 legislative session.



Hon. Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of Senate

Issues aside, the journalists talked about how the legislative process works and suggested to Leadership members in the audience what it takes to win approval of legislation that they seek. Brody cited the importance of "knowing the right people," building coalitions, and having bills sponsored by lawmakers who are respected by their peers.

Looney, who said he often observes legislative action from the galleries in the House and Senate, noted "the silent factor"—legislators who command silence when they stand up to speak and others listen. "Sometimes the people who speak the least are the ones who are listened to the most," he said.

"Persistence and perseverance" are needed because sometimes "it's more

than a one-year fight" to gain approval of a bill, added Wagner. Not all lobbyists understand that, he said.

Senate President Mike Miller and House Speaker Michael Busch discussed the challenges of leading the Legislature. "You have to be a cheerleader, and be determined and responsible, with vision and integrity," said Miller. "It's about how you teach, to make everyone understand that it's about the team and not its individual members," added Busch, a former football coach. "Building consensus" is a key to success, he said.

Miller agreed with the journalists that there is "a change in spirit" in the Legislature this year. But he also agreed that with the budget and related tax issues coming up next year, "the tough work is ahead."

Senate Minority Leader David Brinkley (R-District 4) said that although Democrats control the legislative and executive branches, there still are "differences of opinion and philosophy" and "my job is to make sure they are expressed."

The Leadership attendees also heard from Baltimore City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, who discussed the challenges in a city with a high concentration of poor and older residents. Baltimore's aging infrastructure is another problem to be dealt with, she said.

Other speakers were Delegates Pamela Beidle (D-District 32) and Anthony O'Donnell (R-District 29C).

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For more information on how you can become involved in Leadership Maryland, contact Nancy Wolff-Minieri, president, at 410-841-2101, or visit www.leadershipmd.org.

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