



# The Legislative Wrap-Up

Library and Information Services, Department of Legislative Services

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*(Click on Issue above for previous Wrap-Ups)*

## BILL SIGNING

The second bill signing of the 2009 session took place on Friday, February 26. Chapter 2, Acts of 2009 ([SB 307](#)) freezes the salaries of judges of the Maryland Court of Appeals, Court of Special Appeals, circuit court, and District Court for a year and requires the Judicial Compensation Commission (JCC) to meet this fall and every four years thereafter, allowing the JCC to recommend salary increases next year for the General Assembly's consideration.

Previously, on January 19, 2009, [SB 107](#) was signed and became Chapter 1 of the Acts of 2009. The legislation allowed an establishment in Anne Arundel County or the City of Annapolis that holds an alcoholic beverages license with an on-sale privilege to remain open on the night of January 20, 2009, Inauguration Day, for up to one hour past its normal closing time upon payment of a \$200 fee.

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## CRIMES, CORRECTIONS, AND PUBLIC SAFETY

### *Tasers and Stun Guns*

Public testimony was received this week on legislation in a House committee that restricts the possession, use, and sale of electronic control devices (ECDs), commonly known as tasers or stun guns. [HB 539](#) prohibits the use or possession of an ECD by a minor or a person with a felony conviction. Also, the bill requires that a person who has not received adequate training in the device's use and has failed to register it with the manufacturer is also prohibited from using the device.

Also, an ECD and attached cartridges must display a serial number and have a tracking system that allows law enforcement to find its owner, and a manufacturer must provide access to its records to an investigating law enforcement agency. A violation is a misdemeanor, or a felony if it occurs while the person is committing a separate felony. Additionally, the bill requires entrance-level and annual in-service training in the use of ECDs for police and correctional officers. The companion bill is [SB 850](#).

### *Sexual Offenders and Child Pornography*

A House committee took comments on:

- [HB 504](#), which allows a sexual offender registrant to add to the registry a personal statement that describes the facts of the crime, conviction, and punishment, after the statement is approved by the prosecuting attorney. The facts may include the number of victims and their age and sex, the relationship between the registrant and victims, the duration and completion of punishment, and attempts at rehabilitation; and
- [HB 534](#), which adds to the current child pornography prohibitions on promoting, distributing, or possessing pornographic images of minors any visual representations that purport to be of children engaged in sexual acts, even if the representations are actually of adults.

### *Silver Alert Program*

A statewide Silver Alert Program is aimed at rapid dissemination of information to assist in locating a "missing person" (Administration bills, [SB 303/HB 317](#), and similar bill, [HB 192](#)). A "missing person" is defined in the Administration bills as a person with a cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's disease or dementia, and in [HB 192](#) as a person with a mental impairment, a substantial disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation, or memory that renders them grossly impaired. The Governor's bills also provide for public alerts on the dynamic message sign system on the State's highways and student service credit for high school students who assist in a search.

### *Gun Offenders*

The House passed a measure that exerts tighter control over gun offenders by prohibiting a District Court commissioner from authorizing the pretrial release of a defendant charged with certain firearms offenses if the defendant has been previously convicted of one of those crimes ([HB 88](#)).

## ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS ISSUES

### *Alcoholic Beverage Licensing*

Committees were busy this week listening to constituent testimony on several bills in this category:

- [SB 338/HB 1262](#) allow shipping of wine directly to consumers by repealing the ability of the Comptroller's Office to issue a direct wine seller's permit and by requiring the office to issue a direct wine shipper's license. This allows a person licensed as a direct wine shipper to ship wine directly to a resident in the State. Under current law, Maryland follows a three-tier system for distribution of wine, which prohibits the direct delivery of wine to a resident of the State from wineries inside or outside of the State. Rather, wine shipped to a consumer must be shipped to a wholesaler licensed in the State and then delivered to a retail dealer where the consumer must take delivery of the shipment. Similar legislation did not pass in 2008; and
- [HB 1180](#) specifies that enhanced beer can only be sold by a holder of a beer, wine, or liquor license. The current definition of beer, as established by 2008 legislation, includes alcoholic beverages with a beer base but with other alcoholic ingredients included. Enhanced beer, also known as "alcopops," falls under this definition. The bill further specifies that for alcoholic beverage tax purposes, enhanced beer is taxed as beer. Its companion bill, [SB 786](#), will be heard on March 6.

### *Class W Winery Licenses*

Under legislation recently heard by committees in both chambers, the Board of License Commissioners for Carroll, Dorchester, Harford, Washington, Calvert, and Frederick counties are authorized to extend a Class W winery license to certain holders of a Class 4 manufacturer's license ([SB 580/HB 772](#), [SB 332/HB 436](#), [SB 397/HB 688](#), [HB 351](#), [HB 519](#), [HB 586](#)). Among other authorizations, the Class W license allows holders to sell wine and other products produced by the licensee, sell and serve food incidental to the sampling of wine, and maintain furnishings to enable patrons to consume wine and food. Other counties, St. Mary's, Talbot, Queen Anne's, and Baltimore, are authorized for a Class W winery license by similar bills that have been introduced ([SB 880](#), [SB 966](#), [HB 1351](#), [HB 1354](#)).

### *Unemployment Insurance*

After lengthy debate, [SB 270](#) passed the Senate on a preliminary floor vote. This legislation would extend unemployment benefits to individuals whose availability

to work is restricted to part-time work if the individual works predominantly throughout the year on a part-time basis for at least 15 hours per week.

### *Utility Regulation - Mountaintop Removal Mining*

Heard this week, [HB 743](#) prohibits electric companies that operate coal-fired generating stations in Maryland from using or purchasing coal extracted from mountaintop removal mining (MTR). The source from which electricity generators purchase coal are not currently restricted by law. Studies have determined that MTR and their resulting valley fill operations have widespread negative environmental impacts.

### *Residential Solar Energy Credits*

[HB 1060](#) requires an electricity supplier to meet a specific Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard for solar energy by accumulating a percentage of solar renewable energy credits each year from small solar generators. The Public Service Commission (PSC) may grant a waiver if an electricity supplier is unable to meet the requirement under specified circumstances.

### *Wind Power*

A number of bills were heard this week on regulation of wind-powered generating facilities:

- [SB 583/HB 605](#) prohibit the PSC from exempting a wind-powered generating station from the certificate of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) requirement unless the facility is built for on-site consumption;
- [SB 771/HB 750](#) require the PSC and the Department of the Environment to jointly develop general performance standards for wind-powered generating turbines in the State. Under current law, turbine performance standards that are reviewed under the CPCN application are not subject to local zoning restrictions, while those not required to go through the CPCN requirement are subject to local zoning restrictions;
- [HB 604](#), in an effort to ensure that turbines conform to local zoning regulations, authorizes the Garrett County Commissioners to enact ordinances regulating the height, size, location, and setback of a commercial wind turbine structure;
- [SB 585](#) repeals a requirement that a specified wind-powered electric generating station be land-based in order for the person constructing the generating station to be exempt from having to obtain a CPCN; and

- [SB 773/HB 749](#) establishes a Maryland Wind-Powered Electric Generating Facility Decommissioning and Restoration Fund. The PSC is required to establish a surcharge on wind-powered electric generating facilities for the fund for future use to decommission the sites and restore them to their former preoperating condition.

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## EDUCATION

### *Funding for Higher Education*

In December 2008, the Commission to Develop the Maryland Model for Funding for Higher Education released their final recommendations, which resulted in the Higher Education Funding Model for Maryland Act of 2009 ([SB 861/HB 789](#)). The Act is large in scope, providing provisions that address the three main thrusts of the Commission's objectives, which are to:

- create a statewide framework for the funding of higher education;
- ensure accessibility and affordability of education; and
- designate appropriate funding for Historically Black Institutions (HBI) so that they remain competitive.

### *Textbook Affordability*

The Senate passed an amended College Textbook Competition and Affordability Act of 2009 ([SB 183](#)). The new version of the bill requires public institutions of higher education to develop and implement specific practices and processes relating to textbook selection and adoption, and varies from the original in several ways, including:

- specifying that this Act applies only to bookstores that pay the Maryland State sales tax; and
- allowing campus bookstores to sell used, prior edition textbooks as alternative product selections, provided that they indicate the faculty's actual choice of the textbook.

The companion bill, [HB 85](#), was heard last week.

### *New Teachers – Classroom Management Training*

[HB 632](#) requires the State Board of Education to adopt criteria and standards for a classroom management training course for all new teachers in the State prior to service in a Maryland public school.

### *Restore Respect at School Act*

Student conduct, homework completion, and classroom attendance receive attention in the Restore Respect at

School Act ([HB 630](#)). According to the bill, a parent or guardian who is eligible to claim either the State tax credit or subtraction modification under the State income tax for household and dependent care expenses for any dependent might be denied these tax benefits should a student under their care:

- be unlawfully absent for more than 20% or more of their school term;
- not complete the minimum amount of homework required; or
- earn more than one expulsion or suspension for disrespect, insubordination, or classroom disruption.

The bill allows for parents to regain the tax credit should they attend a parent conference at the school prior to a dependent's readmission and provide evidence that the child has completed a community resource program. An individual with a federally adjusted gross income of \$41,001 or less will not be denied the tax credit.

### *High School Assessments*

Students who entered the ninth grade in 2005 must pass subject tests mandated by the Maryland State Department of Education to complete graduation requirements. There are four tests, one each in algebra, biology, government, and English. Together these tests are known as the Maryland High School Assessments tests (HSAs). The 2005 cohort is the first to be held to this requirement. [SB 139/HB 505](#) seek to prohibit of the State Board of Education from requiring students to pass the HSAs in order to graduate from high school.

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## ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND AGRICULTURE

Several environmental bills are moving through the process:

- [SB 212](#), expands the responsibilities of the Maryland Green Building Council to include providing recommendations on how to expand green building in the State. The crossfiled measure, [HB 154](#), remains in committee;
- [SB 278](#), requires the State to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% from 2006 levels by 2020, and requires the Department of the Environment (MDE) to develop a plan to do so by 2012, and has received preliminary approval. As amended, the bill requires MDE to ensure that greenhouse gas emission reduction measures implemented in accordance with the plan do not disproportionately impact rural communities, as well as the already included low-

income, low-to moderate-income, or minority communities. Testimony was heard this week on the crossfiled measure, [HB 315](#); and

- [HB 103](#), alters from December 1, 2008, to July 1, 2009, the date by which the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is required to apply to MDE and the United States Army Corps of Engineers for permits to dredge buried oyster shells. The crossfiled bill, [SB 175](#), remains in committee.

Two bills that received unfavorable committee reports are:

- [HB 221](#) (failed), which would have reversed the distribution of bay restoration fees collected from users of septic systems and sewage holding tanks so that 60% is distributed to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) for cover crop activities and 40% is deposited into the Septics Account of the Bay Restoration Fund within MDE; and
- [HB 327](#) (failed), which would have directed fees collected by DNR for the black bear hunting permit lottery to be used to satisfy claims for reimbursement for black bear damage. The crossfiled bill is [SB 293](#).

Energy-related bills heard in committee this week included:

- [SB 878/HB 1116](#), which change the State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy and the State's planning visions, establish performance measurement standards, require the local jurisdictions to adopt plans that will allow them to meet those performance standards by October 1, 2018, and set a priority for receiving State infrastructure funds. The bills exempt jurisdictions that issue less than 50 building permits in a calendar year and direct the Department of Planning (MDP), on request, to provide technical assistance. The bills are similar to the combined provisions of the Administration bills, [SB 273/HB 294](#) and [SB 276/HB 295](#);
- [SB 14/HB 314](#), which authorize the Maryland Environmental Service (MES) to engage in additional types of energy projects and services, such as the production, generation or distribution of energy from renewable or other sources, the undertaking of energy conservation measures, and engaging in research and development studies. The bills clarify MES authority to undertake recycling and other solid waste disposal projects;

- [HB 814](#), which establishes a Green Jobs Workforce Training Program, administered by the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA), to fund workforce training programs that prepare individuals for employment in the energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sectors. A Green Jobs Workforce Training Fund is created to implement the program. A hearing is scheduled for the crossfiled bill, [SB 856](#), on March 10;
- [HB 910](#), which requires MEA to consider the needs of low-income and moderate-income seniors when developing and implementing energy efficiency and conservation programs targeted to the low-income and moderate-income residential sectors under the Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Program;
- [HB 1236](#), which establishes a Clean Energy Loan Payment Program, administered by MEA, to assist residential and commercial property owners in financing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. The program is intended to provide financial assistance through loans, loan guarantees, loan subsidies, and other forms of financial assistance approved by MEA and to authorize property owners to repay a loan through a clean energy surcharge on the owner's property tax bill. A Clean Energy Loan Payment Fund is created to implement the program. MEA and the Comptroller must adopt regulations to implement and administer the program;
- [HB 1238](#), which requires MEA, on or before October 1, 2010, to adopt regulations concerning energy efficiency standards and labeling standards for televisions sold in the State, and to consider adopting similar standards to those considered or adopted by other states; and
- [HB 595](#), which requires the Office of Recycling in MDE to include in the State recycling program by July 1, 2010, a system to specifically recover aluminum, glass, paper, and plastic generated for disposal by State government; requiring the system to include placement of collection bins in state-owned or state-operated office buildings; and requiring State agencies and units of State government to implement the plan by January 1, 2012.

## FISCAL MATTERS

### *Tax Credits*

[SB 800/HB 493](#) change the biotechnology investment incentive tax credit to include an individual in the definition of “investor” and specify that the tax credit be claimed for the taxable year in which an investment is made. [HB 493](#) has a hearing scheduled for March 5. [HB 1125](#) provides an income tax credit for investors in Maryland nanobiotechnology companies and creates the Maryland Nanobiotechnology Investment Tax Credit Reserve Fund. The bill has a hearing scheduled for March 5.

### *Payment of Teachers’ Pensions*

[SB 648/HB 525](#) and [SB 710/HB 1046](#) require the counties and Baltimore City to pay a portion of the employer pension contribution for the teachers and other employees who are members of the Teachers’ Retirement System or the Teachers’ Pension System. Beginning July 1, 2010, [SB 648/HB 525](#) require each county government and Baltimore City to annually pay the portion of the employer contributions for their employees to these systems that exceed the total employer contribution calculated for fiscal 2010, until the local share reaches 50% of the total employer contribution. Thereafter, the State and local shares remain evenly divided. [SB 710/HB 1046](#) do not have the 50% limitation. Currently the State pays the employers’ portion of the contribution for public education teachers and related employees.

### *Property Assessments*

[SB 302/HB 188](#) (both failed) received unfavorable committee votes in their respective chambers. The legislation would have changed the State’s system of triennial assessments with values phased in over that period to a system of annual assessments with an assessment freeze.

### *Communication Services*

This week constituents packed a committee room for the hearing on a proposal to change the way communication services are taxed and regulated in the State. [HB 1182](#) repeals the public service company franchise tax as to persons engaged in a telephone business and imposes the State sales and use tax on the sale of communications services including cable services.

## GAMING, RACING, AND SPORTS

### *Instant Bingo*

During the 2008 session, legislation was adopted to prohibit certain gaming machines licensed by local jurisdictions, primarily electronic bingo and tip jar machines, from operating after July 1, 2009. Additionally, the law altered the definition of “slot machine” to include a machine that reads a game of chance and a machine that delivers a game of chance. Hearings were held this week on two bills that reconsider last year’s legislation. These bills are:

- [HB 193](#), which aims to extend the termination of operation of these machines defined as illegal from July 1, 2009 to July 1, 2011. This would only allow existing qualified organizations and licensed commercial entities to continue to operate machines that would otherwise be illegal under the law until July 1, 2011. The bill also repeals the 2008 legislation that stipulated that in order for an organization to remain in operation until July 1, 2009, the electronic instant bingo machines must have been in operation for a one-year period ending December 31, 2007; and
- [HB 1276](#), which removes the illegality and termination date for machines. The bill allows for licensed commercial entities and qualified organizations to continue to operate these machines, and for the State to collect admission and amusement taxes on their operation.

### *Fantasy Sports*

Exempting “fantasy competitions” from prohibitions against betting, wagering, and gambling is the subject of [HB 21](#), which received a hearing earlier this week. The bill defines a fantasy contest as one in which participants manage imaginary teams, and the contest’s outcome reflects the relative skill of the participant. Statistics generated to determine the winner of the contest must be based on the performance of actual individuals, such as professional sports players and teams. Prizes may be awarded to the winner. However, the value of prizes must be established and made known to all participants in advance of the competition, and the award may not be determined by the number of participants or the amount of any fees paid by those participants.

## HEALTH CARE AND HEALTH INSURANCE

### *Hospital Care*

Recently, a Senate committee examined [SB 776](#), requiring each hospital in the State to develop a financial assistance policy for providing care to certain patients, based on the federal poverty level. Free medically necessary care is provided to patients with family income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level. Reduced-cost medically necessary care is provided to low-income patients with family income above 150% of the federal poverty level, in accordance with the mission and service area of the hospital. In addition, the State's Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) must monitor hospital activities through various measures, including reporting and recommendations. Similar legislation, [HB 1069](#), has been introduced in the House.

### *Genetic Testing*

Proposals related to genetic testing and insurance-related claims have been withdrawn by their sponsors in favor of further study during the legislative interim ([SB 1/HB 2](#) and [SB 2/HB 1](#)).

### *Physician Payment and Insurance Reform*

According to the Maryland Health Care Commission, Maryland physician reimbursements fall below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally. A number of bills this session address both physician payment and insurance reform:

- [SB 380](#), as amended and passed by the Senate, alters the rates that a health maintenance organization (HMO) must pay for a covered service rendered to a HMO enrollee by certain noncontracting (out-of-network) health care providers. Under current law, noncontracting providers must accept the amount defined in statute. The bill also contains reporting and compliance mechanisms. The original companion, [HB 255](#), has been heard by a committee;
- [SB 439/HB 440](#) deal with prompt pay by requiring an insurer, nonprofit health service plan, or HMO (carrier), when "reprocessing" a claim, to comply with specified requirements. If a carrier fails to pay a clean claim or otherwise violates clean claims requirements, the carrier must pay interest. Specifically, errors may occur during the electronic processing of claims (*i.e.*, failure to reconcile the claim with a prior authorization number) that result in the initial denial of a clean claim and the claim must then be resubmitted by the provider. This bill, reflecting the Maryland Insurance Administration's interpretation of current law, clarifies that clean

claims requirements continue to apply when claims are resubmitted;

- [SB 627/HB 714](#) concern loan assistance repayment and practice assistance for physicians. The bills alter the existing Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program by removing primary care physicians and establishing a new loan program with expanded eligibility and repayment requirements for physicians;
- [SB 79](#) alters loss ratio requirements for specified health benefit plans, further regulates out-of-state contract carriers, and expands the applicability of specified limitations on the imposition of preexisting condition provisions by specified carriers to a policy or certificate issued to an individual;
- [HB 272](#), The Maryland Coverage Affordability and Revenue Efficiency Standards Act, alters specified loss ratio requirements for specified health benefit plans and Medicare supplement policies and establishes a specified loss ratio requirement for large group health benefit plans; and
- [HB 1147](#) requires health insurance carriers to reimburse physicians for specified administrative services provided to enrollees.

### *Compensation Reports*

A Senate bill, receiving committee scrutiny this week, requires specified health care facilities to submit to the HSCRC annual reports of the salaries, bonuses, and perquisites of each officer, director, and executive of the facility and any parent company or subsidiary of the facility, as well as any regulated lobbyist engaged by a facility or a parent company or subsidiary of the facility ([SB 231](#)). The crossfiled measure, [HB 487](#), is scheduled for a March 5 hearing.

### *Rosa's Law - Intellectual Disability*

By a unanimous vote, the House passed Rosa's Law ([HB 20](#)), which replaces the term "mental retardation" with the term "intellectual disability" throughout the State code. All related references are also replaced. Additionally, this bill affects the naming of State facilities and residential centers that include the terms "mentally retarded" or "mental retardation."

### *Color Additives in Food*

Two measures aimed at certain prohibitions of color additives in food have been reported unfavorably by a Senate committee:

- [SB 101](#) (failed) would have required that, from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2011, a warning label be placed on foods that contain color additives and also would have prohibited, after January 1, 2012, the sale, purchase, use, or selling of food products containing specified color additives; and
- [SJ 3](#) (failed) would have urged the United States Congress to enact legislation that bans the use of specified color additives in food sold, served, or distributed in the United States.

A related measure, [SB 100](#), prohibiting public schools and child care centers from purchasing, selling, using, or serving food products containing man-made artificial color additives after July 1, 2010 has not yet been reported out of committee.

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## REAL PROPERTY, ESTATES, AND TRUSTS

The House passed [HB 149](#), allowing the creation and enforcement of a trust to provide for the care of an animal alive during the lifetime of the person creating the trust. The common-law rule against perpetuities recognized in the State (and modified by statute) does not apply to a trust created for that purpose.

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## TRANSPORTATION

### *REAL ID and Proof of Legal Presence*

This week a House committee heard a number of bills related to the controversy surrounding the adoption of proof of legal presence in the United States as a requirement to attain a Maryland driver's license. On the Senate side of the aisle, public comments have not been taken for [SB 27](#), [SB 208](#), [SB 244](#) and [SB 369](#) on the same subject. Most of these proposals are on a hearing agenda for March 18. The bills meet compliance standards for driver's licenses and identification cards required by the federal REAL ID Act:

- [HB 387](#) prohibits the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) from issuing an identification card, driver's license, or moped operator's permit to individuals who cannot provide documents proving lawful presence, as well as limiting lawfully-present aliens' license and permit effective terms to the length that they are authorized to remain in the United States under federal law.
- [HB 195](#) also prohibit the MVA from issuing an identification card, driver's license, or moped operator's permit to those who cannot provide documents proving lawful presence, and limits the

duration of aliens' licenses and permits. In addition, the bill includes provisions that an applicant for a driver's license who is not eligible for a Social Security number must provide documentation to certify this claim.

- [HB 659](#) requires the MVA to issue an identification card that complies with the federal REAL ID Act to any eligible individual who applies for one, regardless of whether a driver's license or State-issued identification card is already in their possession. The applicant must be a resident of the State and either a U.S. citizen or lawfully present in the country in order to qualify for the new identification card.
- [HB 742](#) provides measures for the MVA to issue a "lawful presence" card to any eligible applicant, regardless of whether they already possess a driver's license. Eligible card applicants must be a resident of the State, and must present documentation certifying that the applicant is a U.S. citizen or lawfully present, as well as either a birth certificate or other acceptable proof of age or identity. Under this legislation an individual may hold both a driver's license and "lawful presence" card.
- [HB 1226](#) requires the MVA to issue separate identification cards, driver's licenses, and moped operator's permits to applicants depending upon whether they provide documentation of U.S. citizenship or lawful presence. An identification card, driver's license, or moped operator's permit issued to an applicant who does not provide documentation of citizenship or lawful presence must have a unique design or color indicator and state clearly that it is not acceptable by federal agencies for official purposes. For lawfully present aliens, the ID, license, or permit is effective only for as long as the individual is authorized to remain in the United States.

### *Young Drivers - License Suspension*

A Senate committee heard testimony on [SB 219](#) that expands the offenses committed by drivers younger than age 18 for which the MVA must either initiate an action for or impose a mandatory suspension of the driver's license. The legislation requires a court to order the MVA to initiate an action to suspend the driving privilege of a child for specified periods of time upon finding that the child has committed specified violations relating to alcoholic beverages, leaving the scene of an accident, or fleeing or eluding a police officer. The bill also limits the authority of MVA to issue restrictive

licenses, requires certain suspensions to be separate from and consecutive to other suspensions or revocations, and extends the time period to which the prohibition against driving with passengers younger than 18 applies. The companion bill is [HB 1167](#).

#### *Drunk and Drugged Driving*

Two bills addressing drunk and drugged driving were killed in committee:

- [HB 853](#) (failed) would have required the MVA to issue special license plates to individuals who have been convicted three or more times of alcohol and/or drug related driving offenses; and
- [HB 875](#) (failed) would have levied a prohibition on a person who is detained for a suspected drunk and/or drugged driving offense from knowingly refusing to take a blood or breath test, if they had previously refused a blood or breath test during detainment for a prior offense.

#### *Transporting Pets*

[HB 546](#) (failed) was withdrawn this week. The bill would have prohibited a person from transporting a pet in or on a truck or trailer while traveling on a highway, unless the pet was restrained in a specified manner. Its companion bill, [SB 110](#) (failed) was defeated on the Senate floor earlier this session.

#### *Bay Bridge Safety and Traffic*

Three bills were heard in the Senate concerning safety measures for the Chesapeake Bay Bridge:

- [SB 483](#) is an emergency bill that requires the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) to retain the services of an independent entity to inspect both spans of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge using state-of-the-art technology;
- [SB 475](#), another emergency measure, requires the MDTA to hire an outside entity to inspect both spans of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge before imposing increases in tolls, fees, or penalties; and
- [SB 476](#) provides that the MDTA, in collaboration with other State and federal agencies, must begin an environmental impact study addressing construction of a third span of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge.