

Gerald W. Winegrad (Former Senator)
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Re: SUPPORT for HB 716 with Amendments

Dear Chairman and Vice Chairman,

Please accept this letter of endorsement for House Bill 716 which designates the Patuxent Riverkeeper as a voting member of the Patuxent River Commission with amendments I propose below. This bill would correct the egregious move by the Governor and his Secretary of Planning in kicking-off the Patuxent Riverkeeper Fred Tutman and also Barbara Sollner-Webb, Professor Emerita of biological chemistry at the Johns Hopkins University. This was clearly done in retribution because of their strong advocacy for protection of the River especially in standing up against real estate developments that would harm the Patuxent River.

The Secretary of Planning tried to block any decisions by the Commission regarding developments until overruled by the advice of an Assistant Attorney General. Then, after the expiration of the terms of Mr. Tutman and Professor Sollner-Webb, the Governor with the support of the Secretary decided to end their terms by not reappointing these most active members who had served for more than 40 years combined.

You have a letter from dozens of environmental groups protesting this blatant move to silence Patuxent River advocates while the Governor reaps millions of dollars from his land development company, Hogan Companies.

However, HB 716 only corrects the Patuxent Riverkeeper dismissal and needs to be amended to assure advocates can continue to serve on the Commission again. The attached draft would add an additional four members, two of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Senate and two of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House. The two appointees of the President of the Senate and the two appointees of the Speaker of the House shall be made based on their passion and concerns for the conservation and restoration of the Patuxent River as epitomized by the late Senator Bernie Fowler and at least one of the four shall be a resident of Calvert County.

Further, the Commission shall appoint the Chairman from among its members appointed by the President of the Senate or Speaker of the House based on their passion and concerns for the conservation and restoration of the Patuxent River as epitomized by the late Senator Bernie Fowler.

The Commission's powers would be expanded to include review and comment on any project related to land use that may result in the deterioration of the water quality of the Patuxent River and working to achieve the reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment to restore the water quality of the Patuxent River and assure the Total Maximum Daily Discharge (TMDL) limits established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are met as required.

The act shall be titled and known as the Senator Bernie Fowler Patuxent River Conservation Law.

These amendments are crucial for the proper emphasis on restoring the Patuxent and honoring its champion—the recently deceased Senator Bernie Fowler with whom I served with for 12 years in the Senate and who loved the Patuxent and died saddened by its polluted state. I worked very closely with Bernie and I can guarantee he would have sponsored this bill had he still been in the Senate.

I urge you to honor Senator Fowler and his legacy by amending this bill as noted and in the attachment and help foster the needed conservation measures to restore the Patuxent.

Respectfully,

Gerald W. Winegrad, Former Senator (1983-1995),
House of Delegates Member (1978-1983)