

GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY

Maryland Municipal League

June 30, 2009



Thank you very, very much. Mayor Katz, congratulations on a terrific year and for your leadership of this superb organization. You all represent the finest in what public service is all about.

Sydney, the theme that you chose, Going Green Together, was really right on-point and really needed.

I want to also thank Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown for his presence here at this conference and also for his leadership in our Administration. So instrumental in the domestic violence legislation and moving forward with so many of you on those issues of BRAC, for the new jobs that are coming to Maryland. So, Anthony, thank you very much. (Applause.)

It is both a privilege and a pleasure to be here with all of you again. And I just have a few brief remarks, I promise.

We're joined tonight by Judge Katie O'Malley. I shared with some of you that last night we took our sons to Trimper's Rides, down at the end of the boardwalk. You know, the Currans are blessed with great hair. Joe Curran had great hair, all his

daughters, his sons,... Katie has that great Curran hair. But you've never seen anything like that hair on the Loop-the-Loop ride, with a look of terror in her face. (Laughter.)

Katie and William went home a little early to meet my daughter Grace, who was on her way down. I stayed with the six year old, who went through a traumatic experience in that he was not 48 inches tall on many of the rides -- he missed it by *that much*.

But he coaxed me onto one of these rides. It's a horrible thing. How ignorant we were when we were young. This was just -- it was a circular disc and everybody sat in it. And I wanted him to go alone, but the people at the ride said, "No, you really should ride with him, he's a little kid."

So I sucked it up and I got in there and -- it goes really, really fast in a circle until you feel really, really nauseous. And then the circle tilts. And it goes around even faster, until your head starts to throb and pound and you get this horrible headache to match your stomach.

And it's very much like doing mid-year budget cuts. (Laughter and applause.)

PUTTING FAMILIES FIRST IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Let me just share with you some brief remarks. These are tough times and all of you know that. And the people that we serve all are depending upon us to protect the priorities of the people of our State.

And that's what we're going to do. And everyone in our Administration, we try to remind each other – especially when we're facing the difficult, very difficult decisions – that this, too, is a blessing. And that we're fortunate to be serving the people of our State, especially in these times.

I want to share with you some of the good news and the bad news. Why don't I start with the bad news so we can end on a little bit of an “up” here.

The likelihood is that most of our revenue projections are going to be under what we thought they would be when we put together the State budget. That's why we're going to have to do another round of mid-year cuts. And we will try to do those again mindful of the mission that all of us share.

What is that mission? To strengthen and grow the ranks of the upwardly mobile middle class in our State and in all our cities and towns, including our family-owned businesses and our family farms. To improve public safety and public education in every part of our State. And to expand opportunity; the opportunity to learn, to earn, to enjoy the health of the people we love, and the environment that we love, and to expand those opportunities to more people rather than fewer.

That's our mission statement. And we're going to make this latest round of cuts with all of those things in mind.

But let me give you some hopeful news, and it is this. Consumer confidence, in the first quarter of this year was at 29 percent. Second quarter was 48 percent. So that's a good trend and it's heading in the right direction.

Let me give you another one. While unemployment is up in Maryland, as it is throughout the country, nationally the unemployment rate is 9.4 percent, in Maryland it's 7.2 percent, because of the good things happening with BRAC and some of the other things that many of you work on.

Let me give you one more and that is this, that the Dow Jones Industrial Average finished with its best quarter since 2003. So hopefully -- and none of us can predict when -- we will come out of these doldrums, get some wind in the sail of our ship, and we'll all start moving forward again.

But until that time, hardworking families are counting on us to do the right thing. And the blessings that we enjoy as a State are not the products of chance. They are the products of choice, very oftentimes tough choices.

OUR PROGRESS: PRODUCTS OF CHOICE, NOT CHANCE

But look what we have been able to do. We have been able to create, to build, to invest in creating, the #1 public school system in the United States of America, according to Education Week Magazine. (Applause.)

Not because of chance, but because of choice we have now gone four years in a row with zero percent increase in college tuition at the University of Maryland system schools. (Applause.)

On a year-to-date basis (knock on wood) we are actually down 13 percent on homicides state-wide. Last year was our second biggest year of reductions, 11

percent. This year it's 13 percent. Many of you and your police chiefs have a big role in those accomplishments.

Not by chance, but by choice we are seeing some of the things that we have been doing on the Chesapeake Bay actually bearing results. The Bush River, the Gunpowder River, which are actually getting healthier every year, and we need to continue to work until the majority of those rivers are becoming healthier.

And not by chance, but by choice, while other states are laying off teachers, we're making record investments in education.

Not by chance, but by choice, while other states are shoving hardworking families off of health care rolls, we've actually expanded health care to another 50,000 people in these tough times.

Not by chance, but by choice we have passed and continue to fight every single day this tide of foreclosures that's threatening to pull the rug right out from underneath whatever progress we hoped to make in strengthening and growing the ranks of our middle-class.

A STRONGER FUTURE FOR MARYLAND

You know, there is a great poem, that I'm sure many of you have seen, especially those of you that are lucky enough to have parents like I was fortunate enough to have. I think my mom had this on the refrigerator, where all of the most important words in the family go.

And you've seen, I'm sure, the prayer for police officers, I know there's a prayer for firefighters and other people. I think if there were ever a prayer for Mayors, it has to be the serenity prayer.

And I'd like you to look into the waters here as you listen to this:

*God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.¹*

¹ By Reinhold Niebuhr

The question we have to ask ourselves tonight is: *where will our State be in five years?* Because of the choices that we make today, we can't sit back and rest on our accomplishments – the best school system in the country should now become the best school system in the world.

Our country is losing our edge in science, technology, engineering and math. We need to get it back.

We need to move to that point where the Chesapeake Bay becomes not a poster child for decline and pollution, but actually a model for what can be done when a free and diverse people choose to seize their own future and make a better way.

We need to continue to move forward, I think, in regaining our leadership and the skills of our people and the security of our people and in this fight for sustainability, for growing really together. We can do it.

There's not another state in the union that's better suited, that's closer to that proximity where land and air and water all come together.

And there's not another state that has a further reach in terms of its central role in our country's history, especially in times of adversity, than we have.

And it's up to all of us. In your cities and in your towns, you are so close to the people we serve. You have the ability to do the things that matter, to show that we can actually employ these new technologies and protect the Bay from storm water run-off, to reduce electricity, to tap new, renewable sources of energy.

And we have national leadership now that wants to help us do this. Not only the grants from public safety and security, but also energy grants. And I encourage you, please go after them. Nobody else is going to do this except us, folks.

CONCLUSION

Nobody else is going to do this except us. This is our time. This is our moment. And these are tough times, but, you know what? Sometimes those are the best days in life.

I was talking to one of our honorees, Gene Johnson, who has served 25 years. And I said, well Gene, that's a beautiful legacy of service. He says, I don't know how beautiful it was, but it sure was service. It sure was service. (Laughter.)

The grace to accept the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things that should be, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

That's our service and that's our calling and that's our great blessing. And let's remind one another how lucky we are, especially in these tough times, to serve such a good, caring and intelligent people as the people of Maryland. (Applause.)