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# *Remarks by Governor Martin O'Malley to the 2009 Maryland Horse Forum*

UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND

August 6, 2009

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to say hello. Buddy Hance, thank you for the terrific job you're doing as our Secretary of Agriculture.

Buddy has been such an important part of all of our efforts to do our very best to preserve horse farms that contribute so much to our character and strength as a State. He and the good people of our Department of Agriculture always have an open door, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with Buddy or any of the folks in the Department of Agriculture.

And I want to recognize Executive Director Rob Burk and the entire Maryland Horse Industry Board, along with Steuart Pittman and the Maryland Horse Council. Rob and Steuart are accomplished horsemen themselves, and we're very fortunate to have their expertise working for the people of our State.

I'm looking forward to our annual Defender's Day Celebration at Fort McHenry this September, because that is the one day of the year when I can be sure to actually ride. It's my faithful mount, Butch, who is a member of the storied Baltimore Police Mounted Unit. And I hope that working with Mayor Dixon and others we can find a way to keep that story going.

You know, I grew up in Montgomery County – I did not grow up in Baltimore City. I moved there for law school and met a beautiful woman there and that's where her family is from, so I stayed.

But growing up my father's idea of a wholesome, good time with his boys was to load us all up in the wood-panel station wagon – Mom never did get around to unpacking it – and

he'd take us to Rosecroft Raceway. Those were some of the quality hours we spent with my Dad. We had \$10 and we'd keep it rolling. You know, if we were out, we were out. And that was one of the important lessons of life my Dad taught us.

I also want to thank all the owners and the trainers, the riders, the farm managers and the barn managers, the pony clubbers, the 4-H'ers, the vets, the advocates and the industry leaders who are here. It's an honor and a pleasure to be among some of the biggest names in the horse industry as we seek to strengthen and grow this important tradition.

We have our work cut out for us, don't we? We have our work cut out for us. But because Maryland has some of the most talented, dedicated people working towards the same goal, I think that we're up to the task in front of us.

It is an understatement to say that horses are an important part of Maryland. If you look at our State seal, on it, of course, is a plowman and a fisherman, but on the other side of the State seal is a horse.

So this is an important part of our heritage, it's an important part of our spirit, our economy, our jobs – all of those things are enriched by the presence of the horse industry throughout our centuries-old history. And this significance has by no means been diminished in modern times...

- There are more than 20,000 stables in Maryland with over 87,000 horses, worth a total of over \$680 million.
- Horsemen and women own \$3.9 billion in Maryland land, fencing and facilities. And the entire value of all horse-related assets is \$5.2 billion.
- This industry supports nearly 29,000 full time jobs in Maryland and it produces goods and services valued at \$614 million.
- And all in all, our State's horse industry makes an annual economic impact of \$1.6 billion. That's a very, very important part of our economy.

We know also that horses have more than just an economic impact in Maryland, they're also helping us to preserve our farm land and our open space and are, therefore, very important to the environment that all of us share, regardless of what our daily profession might be.

I say all these things because I want to underscore to every individual here today just how important I believe your work is to our State.

Our mission statement in the O'Malley Brown Administration is that everything we do – when it comes to improving public education, public safety, expanding opportunity – is for one big goal that all of us share. And that is to strengthen and grow the ranks of an increasingly upwardly mobile and increasingly diverse middle class, including our family-owned businesses and our family farms. And I know that those of you that are in this industry are engaged in both.

Throughout our Revolutionary history, Maryland's horsemen and women have always proven that tough times don't last, but tough people do. And I fully believe that one of the reasons we are in a better position than other states to climb out of this national recession, among other things, is because of the strength and determination of all of you who work so hard in Maryland's horse industry. That's why preserving our horse industry is so very, very important.

## **MAKING PROGRESS**

At the 2004 Maryland Horse Forum, you all came together and as people who understand your business and its challenges better than anyone. You are the experts. And you came together and made a number of recommendations. Sadly, many of those recommendations weren't heeded for some years after you made them. It did not mean that your recommendations weren't on point. It did not mean that they were irrelevant. But sometimes it just takes the public will a little bit to catch up with what you already know is the reality.

Now, my training, I confess to you, is that of a lawyer, and my discipline has been that of a generalist. But my experience is the experience of a public servant. So that's why, upon taking office on your behalf to work for you in 2007, Anthony Brown and I pledged that we were going to make progress for our State once again – and we looked to you.

So I wanted to outline a few of the things that we have been able to do because of your partnership...

1. We are fighting hard on behalf of Maryland's racing industry. Thanks to the work of many of the people in this room, we finally broke that political gridlock that kept us from resolving the slots issue in our State. We passed the legislation, albeit, we had to send it to referendum, which was not my first choice. But nonetheless, we did break that gridlock. We sent it to referendum and I think as a testament – and I hope you feel some affirmation from the rest of your neighbors – that in every single county that referendum passed. Every single county. All 24 jurisdictions in Maryland.

We still face some challenges as we try to slug ahead. It seemed like as soon as we actually got to the point of having the licenses out there for people to bid upon, then we hit this huge credit crunch. We broke the gridlock on slots, but then the engine froze up on us in terms of the credit market, which has led to other sorts of drama. But we are still pushing ahead with that. We're asking for your continued partnership, patience and dialogue in this effort, but also your persuasion.

Anne Arundel County needs to make a decision so we can move forward. Now, the legislature complains that the counties have their zoning decisions to make. And they need to make those decisions so we can move forward. That's their job, that's their responsibility.

The legislature made its decision. The voters made their decision. Anne Arundel County Council now needs to decide where it is appropriate. Let us know. That's your decision. If you think that it's appropriate in one area of your county and not in another, well, by golly, say so, so the rest of us can move on. But make a decision.

2. We passed legislation this year to ensure that the Preakness Stakes remains where it belongs – right here in the State of Maryland where it's been run since 1873. Now, we already had legislation since 1987, probably because of your advocacy, that allowed us to match any offer for the Preakness Stakes. But this legislation broadened our eminent domain authority over Pimlico, Laurel Park and Bowie Race Course training center and all the necessary trademarks and copyrights associated with the Preakness Stakes and the Woodlawn Vase.

We now have that eminent domain authority and we're prepared to use this option if necessary to keep the Preakness Stakes in Maryland. Our centuries-old heritage of horse racing and breeding are woven deep into our culture and character as a part of who we are as a people. And we are determined to do everything in our power to keep the Preakness in Maryland.

3. In our State's recent history, both Democratic and Republican administrations have sometimes raided Maryland's Agricultural Land Preservation funds, the MALPF program, to plug budget holes. But we have not touched those dollars. We're using those for the purpose for which they are intended.

And there are some well-intended people who have said, "well, but these are tougher times than we've ever had in Maryland, tougher times with the budget, than any Governor has ever had because of the economy. And we should use those dollars to plug these holes."

The way I look at it, they're not really our dollars. They belong to future generations. That's why we passed the legislation to begin with. Those dollars belong to my kids and yours and to their kids. So during these tough times we've nonetheless remained committed to fully funding agricultural land preservation – providing a total of \$141 million in two and a half years and protecting nearly 25,000 acres of valuable farmland in Maryland, which we'll be able to pass on to future generations.

And we've also worked through the MALPF program to make sure that Maryland's equestrian activities are still allowed on land that we preserve together.

4. We've protected nearly 24,000 acres of land in two and a half years through Program Open Space. And in that same period we've provided nearly \$35 million in Rural Legacy Grants to preserve our farms and keep suburban sprawl at bay. You can't have a farm economy if you don't have contiguous tracts of land.

For the very first time in our State's history and in accordance with that drive, we have Maryland AgPrint, where we've looked at every parcel and acre of land in our State, so that all of us can see on one map where that essential agricultural land is in our State that we need to protect, whether through the MALPF program or whether through sensible and reasonable zoning measures or the like.

5. Thanks to the leadership of Delegate Virginia Claggett, this year we signed into law a bill that recognizes equestrian activities as agricultural in nature... Which is very important for the cause of protecting horse farms from zoning issues and from preventing further loss of green space, while also enabling more farms to stay in business.
6. And finally, through our Horse Industry Board, we're providing just over \$20,000 this year in equine health and education, therapeutic riding, and promotional grants – recognizing the important role that horses can play in improving our quality of life.

## **CONCLUSION**

So as we open this up to more of a dialogue and some questions and answers, I just want to thank you for the important strides that we have been able to make together. I know these are times of unprecedented challenges.

The great historian, Arnold Toynbee, was known for his theory that mankind progresses in response to adversity. Well by God, if that's true, we're in for a lot of progress in the years ahead, because we certainly have had our share of adversity.

But the march, the journey, the progress, of great people is never done. And we're going to continue to move forward, we're going to continue to look ahead and we're going to continue to work with one another for that better future that all of us prefer.

Your work today to shape the direction of the horse industry is invaluable. Secretary Hance and I look forward to hearing results of your discussions and your recommendations this year. And we are going to continue to fight at the State level to do everything we can to protect this important industry, even during this time of global and national economic down-turn, so that the horse industry remains profitable – and hopefully, more profitable and more prosperous in the years ahead in Maryland.

I want to thank all of you, especially those families who go out there every single day and make this world a better place for their children and for their children's children. Thank you for the things that you do every day in our State which matter so deeply to our economy, matter so much to our people, to our environment... things that so powerfully define our character and our breadth as a people.

One Maryland, moving forward together.

Thank you all very, very much.

