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14th Legislative District
Montgomery County



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CONTACT: Delegate Herman Taylor: 301-252-0836
Tom Waldron: 410-350-6637

Living Wage Bill Signed by Governor O'Malley Delegate Taylor Successful After Three-Year Battle

Annapolis, MD (May 8, 2007) – Taking a major step to bolster working families, Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley today signed a Living Wage bill, the first such statewide bill in the nation.

The bill will require companies with state service contracts to pay workers a "living wage," at least \$11.30 an hour in the Baltimore-Washington corridor and \$8.50 an hour in rural areas.

The legislation marks the successful conclusion of a three-year effort for the bill's chief sponsor, Delegate Herman Taylor (D-Montgomery), who first introduced similar Living Wage legislation in 2004. That year, both the House of Delegates and the Senate passed the bill, but it was vetoed by then-Governor Robert L. Ehrlich.

This year, Delegate Taylor resubmitted the bill, with several amendments, and worked to win the support of Governor O'Malley after his election last fall.

"This important legislation has been a long time coming," said Taylor. "As a businessman, I understand the importance of making a profit, but I also recognize that companies who do business with the state should meet certain obligations. We should expect Maryland employers that are awarded state contracts will pay their workers a fair wage – one that will enable them to adequately provide for their families."

More than 100 local jurisdictions across the country, including Montgomery and Prince George's counties and Baltimore City, have passed Living Wage statutes, but

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Maryland is the first to pass a statewide bill. The Senate passed the measure 31 to 16, and the House ratified the Senate version, 91-49.

The bill exempts small employers with fewer than 10 employees, as long as the contract does not exceed \$500,000. Nonprofit organizations also are exempt.

“This legislation is a major step forward for Maryland’s working families,” said Taylor. “Those who work hard should be compensated fairly. That’s a value we can all get behind. Maryland is making an important statement today in how it treats working people.”

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