

From: Trent Kittleman
Re: Response to Carroll County Questionnaire
Date: May 14, 2014

1. It appears that the House Delegation and the Senate Delegation have become fractured in recent years, not being able to communicate or come to terms on various issues. What can be done to change this situation?

Since I have not been a part of either delegation, yet, I don't believe that the opinion of candidates who have not been a part of either group will be all that useful. The ability of groups to work together is highly dependent upon the people in those groups. It might be that there needs to be a more formal structure to the decision-making, but only if such a structure is lacking. There are many ways to enhance communication skills -- if that is the issue. Speaking generally, the only discord I've seen arises from the different perspectives of the of the philosophically- issue-based conservatives and the constituent-issue-focused moderates. Carroll is fortunate to elect smart, independent and strong-minded individuals to the General Assembly. Strong personalities tend to be passionate and better decisions can often come out of open -- if heated -- debate.

2. Many Carroll County parents are concerned about education funding. Because of declining enrollment and the wealth of county residents, the school system is slated to lose \$3.1 million in state funding in Fiscal Year 2015. Pension costs have also shifted from the state to the county in recent years, much to the ire of county officials. What is your view of this situation and do you have a plan to increase state aid for Carroll County Public Schools? If so, could you explain?

While I do not discount the importance of having a well-funded, school system, I take issue with the idea that getting more money out of the State should be our primary focus. Since the Thornton bill was enacted, the State has given counties more and more funds. What has happened, however, is that as the State funding increased, so has State control. Decision-making control of the school system should be at the level closest to the people. That dynamic has gradually been changing over the years, with the federal government now attempting to enforce a one-size-fits-all program. I am hopeful that Carroll County can find a way to become less reliant on state aid -- and to regain control of how our children are taught.

3. Carroll County Government, the county's eight municipalities, farmers and businesses have faced -- or are expected to face -- numerous environmental mandates from the state. Many of the requirements are meant to protect the Chesapeake Bay. What is you view of these mandates? Do you agree with them? If not, what is your plan in relation to them?

One of the things I have always admired about Carroll County government is its willingness to stand up for its residents, even in the face of State mandates. For instance, Carroll County Commissioners responded to the State-mandated "Rain Tax" by declining to implement a new fee, feeling, as Phil Hager, director of Carroll's Department of Land Use, planning and Development said, "We did not need this law to motivate us to do storm water's management. We have one of the best programs in the state and we are pursuing, and are on track, to achieve all ... requirements." Ultimately, the State accepted a modified proposal from Carroll which would create

the required "fund" with a portion of its general tax revenue, rather than levying additional fees or tax rate increases for residents.

In answer to the questions asked above, I believe that Carroll's approach of negotiating with the State works best.

4) A bill to legalize marijuana gained traction this year as State Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. stated he supported the measure, along with gubernatorial candidate Heather Mizeur. Other governor hopefuls haven't taken the measure off the table for future debates. How would you vote on the bill, and why?

The proposal to legalize marijuana raises both social as well as legal issues. This year, Maryland reclassified the possession of less than 10 grams of marijuana to be subject to a civil fine rather than criminal sanctions. However, It is not at all clear that Maryland can unilaterally legalize marijuana. Under Federal law, marijuana is treated like every other controlled substance, such as cocaine and heroin, The federal law makes no distinction between medical marijuana and recreational marijuana and views marijuana as highly addictive and having no medical value. Other states have legalized marijuana, and the first case likely to be tested in the judicial system will be heard in Washington state, later this year. At minimum, the federal law should recognize the medical value of marijuana and allow doctors to make the decision to prescribe marijuana to ease the pain of critically patients.

5) Though all Maryland counties were founded under a commissioner form of government, many jurisdictions have opted for more control over local issues through a charter government. Carroll is a conservative county situated in a liberal state, and Carroll lawmakers' goals oftentimes conflict with other state lawmakers. In light of this, would you support switching to a charter form of government? Why or why not? If so, would you propose a bill in the state legislature that would allow the county to do so?

There are certainly advantages in having Charter Government such as the autonomy to pass laws locally. The residents of Carroll County, however, have voted against Charter government; they believe it will cost more; I would listen to them. Proponents of Charter Government argue that additional personnel will be only a minimal expense. Nonetheless, it is the nature of governments to grow, and it is far easier for a government led by one executive (like a governor or a president) to expand government than the existing structure that requires a group (of Commissioners) to propose and agree on any expansion of government, particularly when it increases costs. One other disadvantage of a Charter system is that the power and responsibility of the County Executive position makes the officeholders logical contenders to run for higher positions such as governor, and often attracts "politicians" rather than public servants.

6) How will you balance Carroll's needs with those of your other jurisdictions? Representing more than one jurisdiction poses a unique challenge to legislators.

Certainly, our first responsibility is to accurately and conscientiously represent the interests of both counties in Annapolis. Fortunately, the residents of western Howard County and southern Carroll County (Sykesville) have very similar attitudes and opinions on state government. I see representing these two counties as a valuable asset for both counties in Annapolis, and a pleasure for me.

Good legislators do more than legislate, however. Good legislators stay on top of the issues that affect constituents in both counties. As my campaign literature says, I will be "Your voice, from your door, to Annapolis." In order to do so, I must be both available and proactive, participating in the political and to some extent, the community life of both counties. Staying in touch with the Central Committees in both counties is critical, as is our attendance at major party events such as the Lincoln Day Dinners.

7) What's one issue supported by legislators from the other side of the aisle you agree with?

Although it hasn't been an issue recently, there is one issue on which very liberal Democrats and libertarian Republicans have often agreed: promoting Charter and/or private schools for K-12 students, giving parents of low-income families the same choices that are open to wealthy parents.. Many parents whose children attend the public schools in the City of Baltimore are strongly in favor of being given a choice as to where their kids go to school. Liberals often support Charter schools and a system of vouchers because it gives poorer families an opportunity to get their child into a better school. Conservatives generally support Charter Schools and Vouchers for very similar reasons: it give public schools some competition which almost always enhances the performance of each.

8. Some Carroll nonprofits, such as the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association, have advocated for card game and casino night fundraisers. A bill permitting them to host such events has failed the Maryland General Assembly several times. Do you support this measure? Why or why not? If in support, how would you ensure both Carroll delegations passed the bill in a timely manner?

First, I would like to get the sense of the community just to be sure that there isn't serious opposition to the gaming aspect of the events. Personally, I would support the measures as a great way to raise funds for organizations such as the Volunteer Emergency Services Association. People have fun, and it helps to keep the lid on taxes. With respect to getting timely support from both Carroll delegations, the key is to communicate with the members of each delegation well in advance of the deadline for submission. If there are any disagreements, resolve them. Agree to submit the bill from both delegations, and involve the Association members and their supporters to put an appropriate amount of pressure on the delegations. [123]

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