

Dear Candidate:

Please save the date to join the members of the Howard County Chamber of Commerce for a reception to meet you, the candidates for county & state offices. This will be a casual networking event to allow the business community to learn more about your background and positions on business issues. The reception will be held on Wednesday, July 30 from 5:30 pm-7:30 pm at Alexandra's Restaurant at Turf Valley.

In advance of the event, to maximize your exposure, we invite you to answer the following three questions. Your answers will be posted on the Chamber's website for the benefit of our membership.

1. Howard County businesses are concerned about the rising costs of doing business in Maryland. What are some initiatives you would propose to alleviate those concerns?

Certainly, the fact that Maryland is one of the most highly taxed states in the Country is discouraging, and there are certain taxes that should be eliminated (the Rain Tax) and other taxes and fees that should be reduced. Notwithstanding the hefty taxes, an equally expensive obstacle for business is the cost of complying with an ever-expanding number of government regulations from *all* levels of government.

Every year, the Maryland General Assembly passes some 800 to 1,000 laws, most of which impact business by (1) increasing the cost of compliance, and/or (2) making changes in the regulatory scheme such that even short-term business planning becomes problematic.

Regardless how "insignificant" any individual regulation may be, collectively, they are drowning businesses in paperwork. The impact that even "insignificant" laws create can be difficult to understand, even for legislators if they have never experienced the frustration of attempting comply with the ever-changing regulations that govern their business.

One of the first actions I will take as a legislator is to assemble a group of business people, from big and small companies, and from different industries, to get specific examples of laws and/or regulations that are (1) duplicative (e.g. where each level of government regulates the same issue), (2) unusually onerous, and/or (3) just plain silly -- and to offer suggestions of how such legislation might be modified or eliminated to satisfy the objectives of the law without unduly handicapping business. The

next step will be to talk with other legislators on both sides of the aisle, to see where we can agree, and to work diligently to improve business conditions in Maryland and Howard County.

Or. . . we could require government to repeal a law for every law it passes. . 😊

2. How would you propose to bridge the growing divide between government and the business community?

Elect a Republican governor-- and I am serious. The growing divide between government and business today is not just partisan politics; it is *substantive*. Most Democrats in Maryland believe, for example, that it is government's role to create jobs. Most businesses understand that jobs are created by the private sector, particularly jobs that add to the economic base of the State.

We currently have a one-party government in Maryland. This allows the governor and the legislators to ignore any opposition to their agenda from the "other party." Moreover, businesses are often unwilling to offer opposition to legislation that is bad for business." This is because business must rely on the State and local governments for permits and other requisites of doing business. They are reluctant to oppose the incumbent party because they fear retribution.

But somebody's got to speak up and be heard -- not necessarily in a public forum, but in conversations with other legislators, most of whom *want* to do what's best for the State, but aren't always sure how.

One critical skill that I bring to the legislative process is a proven ability to communicate successfully with members of the opposite party. This was a requirement of my job as Deputy Secretary of Transportation, and particularly when I was in charge of the Maryland Transportation Authority. You can achieve some amazing results when you can create trust.

3. What do you see as the best opportunities for public-private partnerships in Howard County?

One of the primary opportunities for public private partnerships is in transportation. During the Ehrlich administration we looked at a number of potential opportunities, particularly with respect to tolled roads. Another example is the program of Charter Schools. It's an interesting opportunity for cooperation, as long as government secures the rights of the people when they negotiate the deal.