

## State legislators bearish on quick economic recovery

By **Andrew Cannarsa**  
*Examiner Staff Writer*

The mood was anything but uplifting inside the Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel ballroom Monday, as a collection of state legislators warned Baltimore's business community the worst of the economic recession might be yet to come.

"This is not a good time for anyone," Del. Talmadge Branch said at the Greater Baltimore Committee's 2009 Legislative Forum. "These are very tough times."

A recurring theme of the meeting was the legislature's ongoing attempt to solve a nearly \$2 billion

state budget deficit. Branch said the state was looking at as many as 700 state employee layoffs, saying the cuts were "very possible."

"We're hoping and praying for a [\$350 million federal] stimulus package to keep us afloat," Branch said. "If we don't get this stimulus package, then it's going to get real blight. It is going to get bad."

State Sen. Edward Kasemeyer said even the recent passage of slots legislation wouldn't solve the deficit problem because revenue projections aren't nearly high enough.

He also cautioned business people in the room not to expect an economic turnaround in 2009

like some experts are predicting.

"I tend to think this is a lot more serious than a lot of the pundits on TV," Kasemeyer said. "I sense this is going to be a longer-term, three-to-five-year problem."

Del. Anthony O'Donnell worried the legislature was pulling money from too many reserve funds to mask the problem rather than altering spending habits.

"I'm worried that we haven't done the tough work that we need to do," O'Donnell said. "We're still funding things that we can't afford right now. It's going to come back to bite us; I'm completely convinced of that."

[acannarsa@baltimoreexaminer.com](mailto:acannarsa@baltimoreexaminer.com)

