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Friday, Jan. 16, 2009

## Delegate: Maryland shouldn't fund ICC

New session to also consider alcohol, hotel bills

by Kevin James Shay | Staff Writer

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The proposed Intercounty Connector toll highway linking Montgomery and Prince George's counties has been under construction for more than a year, but opponents continue to try to thwart the progress of the \$2.4 billion, 18.8-mile project.

A bill to prohibit the state Department of Transportation from financing the ICC was among the business-related bills filed this week in the first few days of the 2009 session of the Maryland Legislature. The bill was filed by Del. Barbara A. Frush (D-Dist. 21) of Beltsville, a longtime opponent of the ICC.

The ICC, which has strong support from many business executives and leaders as a way to ease traffic congestion, is expected to be completed in five phases by late 2011.

The project has made "enormous progress" in the past year, said Fran Counihan, a spokeswoman for the ICC. The first phase is already one-third completed and others are in various stages, she said.

"We are on target to be completed on schedule," Counihan said.

Frush's bill had not attracted any co-sponsors or been scheduled for a hearing as of Thursday afternoon, according to the state's Internet site.

Other business-related bills filed this week included proposals to increase alcoholic beverages license fees in Anne Arundel County and provide a greater share of revenue from hotel taxes to the Annapolis and Anne Arundel County Conference and Visitors Bureau.

The Maryland Chamber of Commerce, Tech Council of Maryland and numerous other business groups are advocating for issues such as reining in spending, while maintaining a high level of support for higher education and transportation infrastructure. The state faces a tough environment, with a budget shortfall next fiscal year that could reach \$2 billion, and more employee layoffs are expected.



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"At the top of our list is making sure that Maryland stays competitive," Kathleen T. Snyder, president and CEO of the Maryland chamber, said this week in a video message on the group's blog. "This means no additional funding mandates. This means no additional new spending on programs and certainly to keep Maryland's tax structure competitive with other states."

The Maryland chamber has its annual meeting linking legislators and business executives on Thursday in Annapolis. Other groups have similar programs slated later this month, while the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce held a legislative forum this week.

The Tech Council is calling on state lawmakers to double funding for the biotechnology investment tax credit to \$12 million a year.

"It's a highly successful program," said Richard A. Zakour, executive director of MdBio, a division of the Tech Council. "A number of companies exist because of it."

Another bill expected to be debated by legislators will be one that imposes harsher penalties on businesses that improperly classify employees as contractors. Some business leaders say such a new law is redundant and unnecessary.

### Upcoming meetings

#### Business group meetings related to 2009 legislative session:



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-Maryland Chamber of Commerce Business Day, 8 a.m. Thursday, Miller Senate Office Building, 11 Bladen St., Annapolis. Invited speakers include Gov. Martin O'Malley, Sen. President Thomas V. Mike Miller, House Speaker Michael E. Busch. Followed by legislator visits at 10 a.m. 410-269-0642, [ksolis@mdchamber.org](mailto:ksolis@mdchamber.org).

-Greater Baltimore Committee 2009 Legislative Forum, 8 a.m., Jan. 26, Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel, 101 W. Fayette St. 410-727-2820, ext. 36, [www.gbc.org](http://www.gbc.org).

-Tech Council of Maryland Leadership Dinner, 5:30 p.m., Jan. 27, Annapolis Marriott Waterfront, 80 Compromise St. Annapolis. Speakers include House Speaker Busch. 240-243-4026, [wdudrow@techcouncilmd.com](mailto:wdudrow@techcouncilmd.com).

-Prince George's County Chamber 2009 Legislative Reception, 5:30 p.m., Jan. 28, Miller Senate Building, Presidential Conference Room East, 11 Bladen St., Annapolis, 301-731-5000, [www.pgcoc.org](http://www.pgcoc.org).

-Maryland Business for Responsive Government Honors Reception for outstanding legislators, 5 p.m., Jan. 29, Paca House, 186 Prince George St. Annapolis. 410-296-5621, [info@mbrg.org](mailto:info@mbrg.org).

#### **Business meetings related to federal issues:**

-Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce seminar, "New Administration Equals New Opportunities," 8 a.m. Thursday, Montgomery County Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, North Bethesda. Speakers include Linda Gooden, executive vice president, Lockheed Martin Information and Global Systems. 301-738-0015, ext. 241, [lekizian@montgomerycountychamber.com](mailto:lekizian@montgomerycountychamber.com).

#### **Resources**

-Chamber Action Network, an alliance of Maryland chambers of commerce following state bills and their impact on businesses, 410-269-0642, [www.chamberactionnetwork.com](http://www.chamberactionnetwork.com).

-Maryland Chamber of Commerce blog, [mdchamber.com/blog](http://mdchamber.com/blog).

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