

## TO THE EDITOR

### Transportation, energy reform require 'real long-range strategic planning'

Editor:

Gov. Martin O'Malley and legislative leaders deserve credit for doing the right thing during the recent General Assembly session on two big business-climate issues.

They repealed the sales tax on computer services and, by ratifying the settlement with Constellation Energy Group, they managed to defuse an acrimonious dispute over deregulation between state government and a Fortune 500 company that is Maryland's leading energy provider.

The Constellation settlement, coupled with administration legislation increasing renewable energy requirements and establishing new initiatives for electricity conservation, will help "secure Maryland's energy future," proclaims a news release from the governor's office.

Granted, had either the computer services tax or the dispute with Constellation been allowed to continue, Maryland's business climate would have sustained serious damage.

Nevertheless, and at the risk of dampening the spirit of accomplishment in Annapolis, I feel compelled to remind our state's elected leaders and lawmakers that they have yet to seriously address two major infrastructure challenges — transportation funding and energy supply — that will shape our state's capacity for economic progress in the next several decades.

In repealing the computer tax, lawmakers raided transportation funding at a time when the state is nowhere near being able to adequately address its more than \$40 billion backlog of unfunded highway, transit, port and airport projects.

Meanwhile, the newly legislated conservation and renewable energy laws will help. But they won't come close to overcoming the fact that Maryland utilities are currently capable of meeting only 75 percent of our state's annual demand for electricity — a demand that could increase by 20 percent in the next eight years, according to Public Service Commission projections.

Challenges of this magnitude require tough decisions and can only be resolved by strategies, not tactics. For the sake of our state's business climate and quality of life, our elected leaders must find a way to get beyond the low-hanging fruit and incorporate real long-range strategic planning into the development and enactment of major public policy.

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