

ENERGY

Coalition hopes to raise awareness of seriousness of potential crunch

BY BRIAN WITTE
Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS — Maryland business advocates worried that not enough people understand the seriousness of a potential energy crunch announced Thursday they are forming a coalition to raise awareness about the problem.

The coalition, **Marylanders for Reliable Power**, includes the **Maryland Chamber of Commerce**, the **Greater Baltimore Committee**, power companies and the **Utility Workers Union of America**.

"Our goal is very simple: We intend to raise public awareness about the need for reliable power to a level that leads to public policy, which enables that need to be met," said Russell Frisby, a former chairman of the **Maryland Public Service Commission** who is acting as a coalition spokesman.

Maryland's electricity is supplied by **PJM Interconnection**, a regional transmission organization that supplies power in 13 states and the District of Columbia, where popula-

tion growth and rising consumption have stressed the power grid.

The PSC released a report late last year that concluded Maryland could face shortages resulting in rolling brownouts or blackouts by 2011, if nothing is done.

Electricity transmission capacity is congested, and aging infrastructure is a concern.

"This congestion is one of the major causes of this state's higher energy prices and also threatens the reliability of Maryland's electric grid," Frisby said.

The Maryland General Assembly approved several measures proposed by Gov. Martin O'Malley in the last session aimed at conserving more energy, investing in energy efficiency and bolstering Maryland's renewable energy portfolio standards.

While the state's energy concerns were a big topic during the last legislative session, members of the new coalition say they're worried the message hasn't gotten through adequately to the general public and local business communities about how big the problem could be.

