

## EDITORIAL

# Only 'silver buckshot' can slay electric beast

One thing this panel of experts agreed on Monday morning: There is no "silver bullet" solution to Maryland's inexorable electric power supply problem. We need "silver buckshot."

Surging demand around the world and throughout the country — some estimates place increases at 40 percent nationally by 2030 — means we will have to compete for electricity at high cost, especially as we keep buying more gadgets for our homes and businesses. For example, that wide-screen HDTV uses four to six times more electricity than a traditional TV. More people living in bigger houses mean heating and cooling costs rise faster than the population rises.

Higher costs lead to slower economic growth and fewer jobs, so containing them needs to be a top priority for everyone in the state.

Malcolm Woolf, Maryland Energy Administration director, told the **Greater Baltimore Committee's** Business Outlook Conference breakfast

we need multiple solutions — silver buckshot. The experts agree. So do we.

Any plan must include expanding access to electricity by conserving, building more transmission lines, increasing capacity and integrating renewable sources. That means those who oppose supposedly unsightly wind farms and/or transmission lines must drop their aesthetic arguments in favor of keeping up with demand.

Another way to manage costs is to reduce electricity use at home. Turning off lights is a start, but they are only about 5 percent of your electricity bill. A better way to manage costs is to make sure your home is well insulated and to cut electricity use at peak times.

BGE won approval from the Public Service Commission in April to start a pilot program to install "smart meters" in homes. They would allow residents to analyze their electricity use in real time and provide informa-

tion about how to shift heavy use to off-peak times. That would not only help consumers to save money, but leave more energy for essential services during peak times and more effectively distribute electricity to everyone.

How to properly manage our energy infrastructure may not be an exciting topic, but it's key to Maryland's growth, just like ensuring the state will have enough water for new development. State price cap is an utter failure (economically and environmentally) if the 50 percent rate hike in June can serve as an example. We need a competitive tax structure to attract businesses and policies that support solutions like "smart meters" giving residents the power to take control of energy use. Hiking taxes is a sure way to deter the best minds with the most innovative ideas from coming to Maryland. It also would stifle investment in a wide array of ventures that could help energize our fizzling power system.