



HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT Office of the County Executive

State of the County Address

County Executive David R. Craig

February 21, 2012

Harrisburg, PA

Requesting Bankruptcy

Jefferson County, AL

Bankrupt

The State of Maryland

A “negative outlook” on its bond rating

A \$1.2 billion budget deficit

The United States of America

A drop from a Triple A rating to Double A

An unbalanced budget

A new trillion dollar deficit

I can only imagine what it was like for the Mayor, the County Executive, the Governor and the President, how they truly felt as they did what I am doing tonight – Give the State of the Government Address.

Could Harford County have been in the same situation?

Without collaboration and cooperation between and among government agencies, the Administration and the County Council, the simple answer is “Yes”.

Without a good leadership team of department heads, all of whom are here tonight and outside agencies who are represented, the difficult answer would have been “Yes”.

Fortunately, I am pleased to report that the state of Harford County is strong ---- and this is despite the fact that we were beleaguered in 2011 by the challenges which confronted all governments.

Leadership, Tenacity, Perseverance and Strength have taken us in a better direction.

Non-partisanship, lack of self righteousness, vision and integrity will continue to keep us going in the right direction.

2011 started with a unique challenge which all of you may remember.

Structural problems with this building required us to safely relocate county employees and the County Council (including Councilman Guthrie) with minimal disruption of service to our citizens.

That was followed by snow and ice storms and then, in the course of three weeks we were confronted with an earthquake, a hurricane, and a tropical storm. Due to our dedicated workforce most people have forgotten all of this.

In spite of these natural roadblocks --- the Administration and the County Council have continued to work as a team.

For the first time in history we adopted a tax rate below the constant yield.

We saw the command flags associated with Aberdeen Proving Ground and BRAC make their move on time.

Because we have an effective Office of Economic Development, we saw 80 new defense contractors relocate to Harford County.

We saw our retail base expand exponentially with:

Wegman's

Kohl's Distribution

DSW

Home Goods

to mention a few, as well as eight existing companies expand their operations.

In one year 2300 new jobs were created here in Harford County. That is what proudly gives us one of the best unemployment rates better than any other place in the Baltimore Region, better than the State of Maryland, and better than the National Government.

Because we have a very competent Treasurer and Budget Officer, we maintained our Triple A bond rating due to proper fiscal management. We were one of the few counties to have a fund surplus that permitted us to give to our valued employees at all levels, in equal distribution a one-time bonus --- money which the State government is eyeing to balance their budget.

Through cooperative work with Harford County Public Schools our forward funding of construction virtually ended overcrowding in our public schools and was finally acknowledged this year.

Through cooperation with the Sheriff we are ready to open a new Southern Precinct and an expanded Detention Center, but more importantly we have our lowest crime rate since 1975.

In collaboration with the Sheriff and our Drug Control Officer, we ran the second most successful “prescription drug take back” in the nation. Over 3750 pounds, almost 2 tons, of unused or expired prescription medications were collected. This is particularly important because prescription drugs are one of the leading causes of drug abuse and drug deaths in Harford County.

I could continue to say a lot more about the past:

- The success of the Housing Department on foreclosures and relocation of senior citizens
- Of the success of the Planning and Zoning Department on the Master Plan and Land Use Element Plan
- Of DILP with our tremendous fast racking system
- Of Procurement with the adoption of new procedures
- Of Parks & Recreation for pulling in the Baltimore Boughs Soccer Team and the Region 1 Soccer Tournament with Cedar Lane this year and next with the potential of \$20 million economic dollars for that area.
- Of DPW for our water agreements with APG and the City of Aberdeen.

But, as Sallust once said, “Do as much as possible, talk as little as possible”, the clock is ticking, and not just the clock in this room and not just on the length of tonight’s event, but on what is going to happen in Harford County.

Now, strangely enough I can say that I have an advantage over each of you to my right – not typically a thing a politician might say. My advantage has to do with term limits and because the County Executive’s time in office is limited -- my life could be very easy over the next three years.

There are a lot of issues which I could leave on my desk with a note saying “save it for the next person”, but the reality is that is not why I ran for office and that is not why you ran for office. We have numerous things that need to get done if we are going to maintain the quality of life here in our home.

The present administration and legislators here are going to experience something the administration and legislators in Annapolis are doing differently. They want to shift the burden of teacher pensions to us – there are eight people in this room who have **no authority** over that...and that is us. We have no authority over affecting the costs of a \$9.8 million shift so they can balance their budget and that is \$9.8 million today and \$15 million by the year 2017. In other areas, they want to implement a Watershed Improvement Plan that is estimated to cost us \$25 K an acre for improvement.

They want to shift more prisoners to our detention facility. They have cut funding to our school board for 2013 by \$4 million. They want to take over our authority on planning and growth. They must be stopped.

But, we still have issues that we have direct control over, capital projects that must be considered.

As I predicted three years ago, there will be another round of BRAC that will take place by 2015 or 2016. This time we have instituted and will institute when the budget comes over with cooperation from the council president, a very unique program in the state of Maryland to fund a capital review program to inspect all the essential projects that we will need to do and to come to a resolution as to what these projects will be.

- A central precinct for the Sheriff's Office
- A new Health Department facility
- A new Emergency Operations Center
- A functional administrative facility
- Several new replacement schools in Havre de Grace, Youth's Benefit, William Paca and Homestead/Wakefield
- A new nursing facility/education facility at HCC
- Completion of broadband and wireless program
- A new waste transfer station to remove the waste-to-energy facility
- A new Humane Society

Now I know with the new Waste Transfer Facility there will be controversy but I also know that each of you have something in your district that you don't want. I am sure that Captain Jim would love to see the Detention Center somewhere else. I am sure Councilman Shrodes would love to see the Landfill somewhere else. I am sure that Councilman Slutsky would love to see the Sod Run Sewerage Treatment Plant somewhere else.....but the reality is that we need to provide these services and we need to provide these capital projects.

It is not just about capital projects, it is also about programs that we have time to institute over the next three years.

- A Water and Sewer Authority to reduce redundancy in water filtration and distribution and sewage collection and treatment.
- A stronger drug prevention and education program to help reduce deaths in our community.
- An aggressive anti-recidivism program at the detention center to train prisoners in a solid way to live a better life after release and especially wounded warriors who have mental issues returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.
- An examination of our impact fee to be able to use it effectively on these construction projects.
- A department to handle issues with fire, emergency and rescue services which are vital to the lives of citizens but also to the lives of the providers.
- A better "green initiative" to help build energy efficient buildings.

Harford is a beautiful, vibrant and historic community in which to live, work, raise a family and retire.

We accomplished much in 2011 but we have many more opportunities for success in the future. Working together as we have in the past we will accomplish more in the future.

President Boniface, Councilman Guthrie, Wood, McMahan, Shrodes, Slutzky and Councilwoman Lisanti, I look forward to working with you as we continue to...

Preserve Harford's Past and Promote Harford's future.

Thank you.