



Maryland Student Legislature

*Compendium for the
2005 – 2006 Legislative Year*



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January 2007

Dear Constitutional Officers and Members of the Maryland General Assembly:

We happily bring greetings from the student participants of the Maryland Student Legislature (MSL). MSL is the official collegiate legislative body of the State of Maryland and is entering its eighteenth year serving as a forum for Maryland college students to exchange ideas and debate policy issues of local, national, and global significance.

MSL is fundamentally a model of the Maryland General Assembly, where students of all political persuasions research and draft legislation and follow the legislative process. MSL provides a tremendous opportunity for students to hone their debating, oratorical, and leadership skills. The MSL experience has always had a dramatic effect on its members and will continue to improve the lives of college students in this state for many years to come.

MSL hosts four events a year: Fall Leadership Training Institute, Fall Interim Assembly, Spring Leadership Training Institute/Interim Assembly, and Annual Session. Annual Session is held in the State House where students are privileged to utilize the Senate and House of Delegates chambers and committee rooms. MSL also hosts an annual legislative reception during the legislative session to which we invite the entire Maryland General Assembly.

MSL strives to act as the voice of college students across Maryland and present issues of importance to you, our elected officials. Our members are some of the best informed, most politically involved college students in the state. Working with similar organizations in Maryland, and across the nation, we are truthfully fulfilling our mission of developing “tomorrow’s leaders today.” Another integral piece of our mission, however, is to involve elected officials like you with our organization. Whether it is by attending one of our legislative sessions as a speaker or spectator, stopping by our annual legislative reception, or simply taking time to read through this document, your continued support is essential for the progress of our organization!

This compendium includes legislation passed by MSL during our seventeenth legislative year, 2005-2006. You may be familiar with some of the legislation topics as they concern issues you have debated; others are rather original ideas that spring from the diverse nature of our membership. Each piece of legislation however, has something in common, the hard work of their respective sponsors who took the time to write them, introduce them as well as gain support for them, and the dedication of our members to question, debate and pass the legislation at one of our legislative sessions. With that in mind, it is our sincere hope that you will take a few minutes to look through this document and consider the issues that college students of Maryland gave thought to in the last year. We thank you for your time, dedication and service to our Great State

of Maryland and we look forward to working with you throughout the remainder of this legislative year and in the future.

Respectfully,



Brian S. Bailey
2006 – 07 Governor
Maryland Student Legislature



Amy K. Anderson
2006 – 07 Attorney General
Maryland Student Legislature



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR THE GENETIC INFORMATION NONDISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2005

- WHEREAS:** The Human Genome Project was successfully completed in 2003, and the results of this project allow researchers to link individual genetic mutations to different forms of cancer and disease; and,
- WHEREAS:** Individuals can now have their genetic material tested to see if they have the mutation for certain diseases; and,
- WHEREAS:** In some cases, like breast cancer, a positive test result means an increased chance of developing the disease while in other instances if the individual tests positive for a mutation they will definitely develop the disease; and,
- WHEREAS:** There are instances where individuals were discriminated against by employers or insurers because of their genetic predisposition to an illness; and,
- WHEREAS:** Research by the Genetics and Public Policy Center reports that 92% of Americans do not think employers have a right to know the results of genetic tests and 80% opposed health insurers having access to genetic information; and,
- WHEREAS:** According to Dr. Collins, the Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (a part of the National Institute of Health), 33% of women involved in a study for breast and ovarian cancer chose not to participate because of their concern about genetic discrimination; and,
- WHEREAS:** According to Dr. Collins' testimony before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, individuals in a colon cancer study were more concerned about losing insurance (39%) than the effect the results would have on family members (28%) or handling the information emotionally (10%); and,
- WHEREAS:** Other studies and reports confirm the point of Dr. Collins' testimony that Americans are choosing not to have genetic tests because of fears of discrimination by employers and/or insurers; and,
- WHEREAS:** According to Dr. Collins, "genetic testing will become increasingly important for assessing individual risk of disease and prompting programs of prevention;" and,
- WHEREAS:** Action should be taken so that Americans can have genetic tests and use their results to provide the best medical treatment possible without fear of losing their job or their insurance; and,
- WHEREAS:** Genetic nondiscrimination legislation has been introduced in the House of Representatives by Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (D-NY) since 1995 and in the Senate by Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) since 1996; and,
- WHEREAS:** There have been numerous hearings on the topic of genetic discrimination and the House bills have over 200 bipartisan co-sponsors; and,
- WHEREAS:** In 2004 compromise legislation was worked out in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee that had the support of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN),

HELP Committee Chair Judd Gregg (R-NH), then Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), and ranking HELP minority member Edward Kennedy (MA); and,

WHEREAS: In 2005, compromise legislation was again worked out by the principle parties in the Senate; and,

WHEREAS: S. 306 the Genetic Nondiscrimination Act of 2005 prohibits a health insurer from (1) using or disclosing genetic information for purposes of underwriting, determining enrollment eligibility, rating premiums, or adjusting premiums; or (2) requesting, requiring, or purchasing genetic information for such purposes; or (3) requesting or requiring an individual to undergo a genetic test; and,

WHEREAS: S. 306 prohibits, as an unlawful employment practice, an employer from discriminating against an employee on the basis of genetic information by (1) failing to hire the employee; or (2) firing the employee; or (3) discriminating against the employee with regards to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment; and,

WHEREAS: According to Senator Enzi (R-WY), the chair of the HELP Committee, S. 306 “will allay the concerns about the potential for discrimination, and it will encourage individuals to participate in genetic research and to take advantage of genetic testing, new technologies, and new therapies;” and,

WHEREAS: S. 306 establishes a clear standard of conduct for employers and insurers that will not lead to frivolous litigation, resolves inconsistencies in federal and state law, and ensures legally uniform protection; and,

WHEREAS: In 2004 S. 1053 the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2003 passed in the Senate 95-0 and in 2005 S. 306 passed in the Senate 98-0; and,

WHEREAS: President Bush supports genetic nondiscrimination legislation saying, “Genetic information is unfair to workers and their families. It is unjustified. To deny employment or insurance to a healthy person based only on a predisposition violates our country’s beliefs in equal treatment and individual merit;” and,

WHEREAS: Genetic Nondiscrimination legislation has support from the National Human Genome Research Institute, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Department of Justice, the Secretary’s Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing, and former President Bill Clinton; and,

WHEREAS: The House of Representatives failed to act on the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2003 when it was passed by the Senate and it has failed to act in the 109th Congress when the Senate passed the Genetic Information nondiscrimination Act of 2005.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature commends the United States Senate for reaching a bipartisan compromise agreement and unanimously passing genetic nondiscrimination legislation; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the House of Representatives to act upon and pass S. 306 the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2005; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges President George W. Bush to take appropriate action to encourage the House of Representatives to pass the Genetic Information nondiscrimination Act of 2005 and to sign the aforementioned legislation.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF THE QUESTION OF RACE ON COLLEGE ADMISSIONS APPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MARYLAND

WHEREAS: When the question of race is asked on college admissions applications, it is likely that it will become a deciding factor for whether or not an individual is accepted into the university; and,

WHEREAS: Using race as a factor is a racist and discriminatory policy; and,

WHEREAS: Decisions should be rendered based on merits, not the pigmentation of one's skin; and,

WHEREAS: Race is not the reason poorer children from the city need more assistance, class is; and,

WHEREAS: A white or Asian child from the inner city is just as disadvantaged as a black or Latino, but do not receive extra consideration; and,

WHEREAS: The implication is that being poor is not a disadvantage, but being black or Latino is; and,

WHEREAS: Most schools have adopted a affirmative action policy because of the many complaints that minorities have brought forth; and,

WHEREAS: Unfortunately, such a policy does not end racism in this country; and,

WHEREAS: The basis of affirmative action is to judge people based on their color, which is, of course, the definition of racism; and,

WHEREAS: Affirmative action, government recognition and selection based on race, has instilled in minorities a stigmatization that equates their own race with academic failure; and,

WHEREAS: The only way to be fair to everyone is to abandon affirmative action and all quotas, and most importantly, erase the race classification on applications.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the Maryland General Assembly to create legislation to eliminate the racist policies that public universities in Maryland use as a factor in admitting applicants to their school; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the proposal to eliminate the question of race on college admission applications for public universities in Maryland be listed as a referendum on ballots.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING LIMITING STATE FUNDING FOR STADIUMS IN MARYLAND

- WHEREAS:** For the most part, cities, counties and states use a combination of broad-based taxes (i.e. sales and property taxes) or special taxes (i.e. taxes on alcohol and tobacco consumption, hotel rooms ad car rentals) to help build and operate sports stadiums; and,
- WHEREAS:** Since the market size is not as important, teams do not frequently have problems leaving a market in search of a more lucrative stadium (i.e. the former Los Angeles Rams moved to the Trans World Dome in St. Louis and began earning more from luxury box leases and variety of corporate sponsorship deals); and,
- WHEREAS:** A team's indifference to the market as long as the venues are state-of-the-art makes them more willing to leave if the other from another place is superior; and,
- WHEREAS:** Owners of franchises have become experts at manipulation, using a threat of moving to another city to persuade state and local politicians to provide them with lavish new stadiums and arenas at little or no cost (i.e. Cleveland lost its football team to a city that offered a \$200 million stadium for free, with Art Modell, the franchise owner, keeping all the revenue and the people of Maryland never seeing a return for their money); and,
- WHEREAS:** The appropriation of funds can be dangerous, as one city building a new stadium for their professional team makes the other teams jealous and greedy; and,
- WHEREAS:** If one team gets a new stadium with increased revenues, their ability to put together a superior team unjustly increases; and,
- WHEREAS:** This leads to the claim that the owners of a professional team in one city must be given open-ended access to the public treasury in order to complete with other teams, because the other teams have been given open-ended access to their city's r state's treasury; and,
- WHEREAS:** As a result, there is no limit to the amount of money that can be demanded using this logic, with each team owner conjuring up his or her demands; and,
- WHEREAS:** In this case, the teams are only entities that profit from such arrangements, with major financial consequences faced by the city; and,
- WHEREAS:** Wrongfully argued benefits of a stadium to a city include: generate economic growth through high levels of new spending in a region; create a large number of jobs; revitalize declining central business districts; change land-use patterns; and,
- WHEREAS:** Although these tactics are often artfully crafted, skillfully presented and believed b enough people in a city or a region to proceed with funding, scholars concur that stadiums do not deliver the benefits they promise; and,
- WHEREAS:** According to Roger G. Noll and Andrew Zimbalist, those arguments contain bad economic reasoning that leads to overstatement of benefits of stadiums; economic growth takes place where a community's resources become more productive; building a stadium is good for local economy only if a stadium is the most productive way to make capital investments and use its workers; and,

- WHEREAS:** Stadium jobs, both during and after construction, are not ones that are the most productive; construction crews are often from national firms and not locally based; most stadium jobs during games and other events are low-wage service jobs; and,
- WHEREAS:** Stadiums are alleged to create new jobs as part of their economic benefits package, however, sports teams actually make up a miniscule portion of a city's income (i.e. in Chicago, the five pro-teams generate less than 1% of the personal income of the city; the 1998 NBA lockout may have been a misfortune for Bulls fans, but it has had roughly zero effect on the Chicago economy; those who would have gone to the game are taking their dates to dinner or to a club instead; there is a transfer rather than a net loss of activity); and,
- WHEREAS:** The arrival of a professional sports team in a city provides households with a new entertainment option; a stadium would most likely decrease the business and other entertainment venues experience, potentially putting those establishments in jeopardy; and,
- WHEREAS:** Although teams can instill civic pride in the community, professional sports by no means have a monopoly on civic pride; public arts plans, beautiful parks systems or vital downtowns and neighborhoods are examples that instill similar feelings of pride in cities and regions; and,
- WHEREAS:** Assuming that civic pride will be strong enough to be willing to cover the costs of a stadium or arena is unwise; and,
- WHEREAS:** Several cities, including Milwaukee, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle and Pittsburgh have listed referenda on their ballots to raise taxes for stadiums, only to see them fail; and,
- WHEREAS:** Studies have shown that citizens are unwilling to take on stadium costs; a research team headed by Bruce K. Johnson used community surveys to place a dollar value on the civic pride and employment generated by the Pittsburgh Penguins; the economics team asked residents how much they would pay to keep the franchise in town; they found that keeping the Penguins was worth about \$66 million to the residents of Pittsburgh, far less than the \$200 million or more needed for a new arena; and,
- WHEREAS:** The money that states or cities use to build stadiums means that much less can be spent on other uses; and,
- WHEREAS:** Stadium spending diverts funding from more important public services, such as crime prevention, road building and schools; and,
- WHEREAS:** The cost of a proposed stadium/convention facility for the NFL Chicago bears, for example, is nearly half the entire budget of the Chicago Public School; Oakland, CA cannot afford to heat its schools and is deciding whether to cut back a number of police and firefighters due to a deal its city council made to bring back the Raiders; and,
- WHEREAS:** Voters in Minneapolis and Pittsburgh told sports teams owners that they were sick of being on the donating end of the "vast corporate welfare machine that is professional sports;" and,
- WHEREAS:** Corporate sponsors may help to pay for the stadium, but only a fraction of the actual amount it costs to fund the stadium; taxpayers spend millions more, yet full credit for the stadium is given to that sponsor (i.e. fans objected to 3Com Corp. receiving rights for only paying \$500,000 to put its name on San Francisco's Candlestick Park); and,
- WHEREAS:** The 1986 Federal Tax Reform Act (which denies federal subsidies for sport facilities if more than 10% of the debt service is covered by revenues from the stadium), did little to stop stadium construction; local subsidies tended to increase to keep rents below 10% of debt service; the pattern of limiting federal funding only leads to increased state and local funding for construction.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the Maryland general Assembly create legislation to limit state funding for stadiums in Maryland; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the proposal to limit state funding be listed as a referendum on ballots to acquire the opinion of the people of the state of Maryland.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING A BAN OF DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER PRESCRIPTION DRUG ADVERTISEMENTS

WHEREAS: In 1985, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) lifted a ban on Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Prescription Drug Advertising opening the gate for pharmaceutical marketers to do DTC prescription drug advertising on television and the radio; and,

WHEREAS: The issues surrounding DTC prescription drug advertising involve questions of public health, corporate responsibility, advertising ethics, the consumers' ability to understand complicated medical information, and the nature of consumer responses to those advertisements; and,

WHEREAS: DTC advertising unnecessarily increases the demand for advertised drugs, is inappropriate because patients are not in a position to diagnose conditions or judge the relative safety, effectiveness and appropriateness of alternative treatments, and in particular healthcare professionals have raised concerns that DTC prescription drug advertising will undermine the physician-patient relationship if patients pressure physicians into prescribing advertised drug brands; and,

WHEREAS: DTC advertising can lead to prescription drug misuse and abuse; and,

WHEREAS: In 2001 ad 2003 the American Medical Association sought to ban prescription drug ads from television, newspapers and magazines, a proposal many doctors say is needed to keep patients from being misinformed; and,

WHEREAS: DTC advertising can undermine doctors' credibility, especially if a physician thinks an advertised drug is not the best choice for a patient who demands it; and,

WHEREAS: DTC by its very nature is biased and compressed, and drives more by drug companies' financial concerns than by concern for the patients' best interest; and,

WHEREAS: Under a total ban, the FDA will need minimal financial and human resources for monitoring broadcast media advertising thus much needed resources could be redirected to other areas, such as drug research and development.

THEREFOE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges Congress to pass legislation banning all forms of Direct-to-Consumer advertising for prescription drugs; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges President Bush to signal support for an outright and total ban of all DTC advertising for prescription drugs and to garner the necessary support to get its passage through Congress; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: Once legislation has passed Congress, banning DTC advertising for prescription drugs, the Maryland Student Legislature urges President Bush to sign the legislation.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE REPEAL OF THE MARYLAND ESTATE TAX

- WHEREAS:** The Maryland estate tax punishes hard work and savings; and,
- WHEREAS:** It taxes assets that have already been taxed once; and,
- WHEREAS:** The Office of Governor Ehrlich stated “Historically, taxes levied by most states were linked, or ‘coupled’, to their corresponding federal taxes. Recent actions by the Maryland General Assembly have severed some of 80 these links, adversely affecting taxpayers. This ‘decoupling’ led to a rise in Maryland state taxes and caused an increase in the complexity of an already complex tax system;” and,
- WHEREAS:** Many small family owned-businesses are forced to sell their shops in order to pay for the estate tax, which results in lost jobs and future tax revenue for the state of Maryland; and,
- WHEREAS:** Many retirees relocate to neighboring states in order to avoid Maryland estate taxes; and,
- WHEREAS:** The estate exemption for Maryland is one million dollars less than the federal estate exemption of two million dollars; and the estate exemption for Maryland is no exemption at all if an estate exceeds the estate limit by one dollar. For example, an estate valued at \$999,999.00 is not subject to any Maryland estate tax, while an estate valued at \$1,000,001.00 is subject to Maryland estate taxes on the entire amount of the estate, not just the excess of the one million dollars; and,
- WHEREAS:** The Maryland estate tax is grossly unfair based on the fact that estates are valued using the gross sales price of homes and property versus net proceeds; and bank accounts, investments and other property that have already been taxed are subject to double taxation by the imposition of the Maryland estate tax; and,
- WHEREAS:** The Maryland estate tax is imposed upon the death of the first spouse of a married couple instead of when the surviving spouse dies; and,
- WHEREAS:** The estate tax encourages people to spend money now and leave no investment in future generations; and,
- WHEREAS:** The American Family Business Institute acknowledges that “It diverts resources from investment to paying for complex trusts and insurance policies to avoid the tax;” and,
- WHEREAS:** John McLaughlin & Associates have found that “89% of Americans believe it is unfair for the government to tax a person’s earnings while it is being earned and then tax it again after a person dies.”
- THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation that would repeal the Maryland estate tax.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING POKER TOURNAMENTS SPONSORED BY CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

WHEREAS: Charitable organizations are always looking for more fundraising opportunities in order to further their objectives; and,

WHEREAS: Poker is an increasingly popular social phenomenon as shown by hit shows such as Celebrity Poker Showdown and ESPN's coverage of the World Series of Poker; and,

WHEREAS: Gambling opportunities are already easily accessible through the Maryland Lottery, slot machines in the neighboring states of West Virginia and Delaware, and casinos in Atlantic City, less than three hours away from Baltimore by car; and,

WHEREAS: Playing poker for money is illegal in Maryland, even when the poker game is sponsored by a charitable organization; and,

WHEREAS: Other states such as Delaware, Maine, and Oregon have recently passed laws allowing charity poker events and more states are currently considering similar laws; and,

WHEREAS: Due to its popularity, poker tournaments can help charitable organizations connect with the community and raise funds; and,

WHEREAS: The state can collect revenues by charging for licenses that would permit a charitable organization to hold a poker tournament for money.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature recommends that the Maryland General Assembly pass, and the Governor sign, legislation allowing charitable organizations to sponsor poker tournaments through the purchase of a license; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That such legislation should contain restrictions limiting the maximum buy-in a participant can make to \$500 as well as limiting the maximum prize a single person can win to \$5000; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That such legislation should also limit the number of poker tournaments an organization may sponsor to three per year.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING ZERO TOLERANCE RULES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- WHEREAS:** Many public schools have strict rules regarding the presence of drugs and weapons on school grounds; and,
- WHEREAS:** These rules, often called zero tolerance rules, result in harsh punishments, including expulsion, even for first time offenders; and,
- WHEREAS:** While these rules are in place in order to send the message that drugs and weapons in school are not tolerated, such rules can result in good students receiving very severe punishments for making a single mistake; and,
- WHEREAS:** In 2005, a 12-year-old student in Texas accidentally left a pocketknife in his coat that he brought to school and was turned in to school authorities after consulting a friend; and,
- WHEREAS:** This student, a Boy Scout and youth leader at church, was suspended from school for 45 days and enrolled in an alternative school for juvenile offenders; and,
- WHEREAS:** In 1999, a 13-year-old Arizona student was suspended under zero tolerance rules for bringing a model rocket to school because it was considered a weapon; and,
- WHEREAS:** Students have also been suspended from schools for bringing in items such as Tylenol, Midol, cough drops, and mouthwash; and,
- WHEREAS:** These policies can impact a student by placing a mark on his or her record that may prevent the student from getting into the college of his or her choice; and,
- WHEREAS:** These policies can also harm the self-worth of good students by putting them in the same category as true juvenile criminals; and,
- WHEREAS:** Students impacted by zero tolerance policies may also fall behind due to missing classes for an extended period of time.
- THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the state's school districts to examine their disciplinary policies and appropriately modify and zero tolerance policies, especially those that severely punish students for accidentally bringing minor weapons to school or using common over the counter medicines; and,
- BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the Maryland General Assembly to pass any appropriate legislation protecting the state's students from excessively harsh punishments stemming from zero tolerance policies.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE ENERGY SUPPLY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- WHEREAS:** The United States of America depends on oil for much of its energy needs; and,
- WHEREAS:** Much of the energy we consume originates from other countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Venezuela; and,
- WHEREAS:** Importation from OPEC nations and Russia poses a serious national security threat to our nation; and,
- WHEREAS:** Iranian leaders use the profits from petroleum to finance terrorism and Saudi Arabian leaders use their profits to finance the continual abuse of human rights throughout their country; and,
- WHEREAS:** Depending on other nations for energy deprives our country of the important ability to stand alone in the face of an international crisis; and,
- WHEREAS:** OPEC, because of its unique monopolization of energy prices, can set the price of a barrel of oil as high as they may please; and,
- WHEREAS:** Dependence on the Middle East for energy negatively affects foreign policy and disallows our nation from defending our Democratic interests throughout the world; and,
- WHEREAS:** One alternative to petroleum that has already allowed Brazil to become energy independent is that of ethanol; and,
- WHEREAS:** Engines can be adopted and produced to allow for the use of ethanol based gasoline; and,
- WHEREAS:** The mass production of ethanol from corn would allow our country to become energy independent, would be a boom to the farmers of this great nation, and would allow our nation to protect our interests both domestic and abroad without having to worry about energy disruptions as a result of other nations.
- THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the United States Congress and the President to work together to formulate legislation which would mandate the sale of ethanol-based gasoline throughout the United States of America.



A RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE MINIMUM WAGE

WHEREAS: There is an enormous amount of evidence that shows that the federal minimum wage is long overdue to be increased, is beneficial in improving the lives of low-income workers, is helpful in strengthening the economy, and also enjoys broad public support; and,

WHEREAS: In the fall of 2005, 562 economists signed a letter to Congress agreeing that “the minimum wage has been an important part of our nation’s economy for 65 years.” Further, the agreed, “federal increase in minimum wage can significantly improve the lives of low-income workers and their families, without the adverse effects that critics have claimed.” The signers included four Nobel Laureates, three of whom have served as presidents of the American Economic Association, the mainstream economists’ professional association; and,

WHEREAS: Since 1997, the current federal minimum wage of \$5.15 has not been increased. Since that time, inflation has eroded its value by more than 15 percent. Consequently, to have the purchasing power it had in 1968, the minimum wage would have to be \$9.05 per hour today, a increase of \$3.90; and,

WHEREAS: Congress mandated two \$0.90 increases in the federal minimum wage in the 1990’s, the first of which was implemented in 1990/91, the second in 1996/97. By 1996, inflation had eroded much of the value of the first increase, but the second increase, which raised the real value of the minimum wage 9 percent per year over the 1996-98 period, clearly helped to lift wages at the lower end of the wage scale; and,

WHEREAS: Because the federal minimum wage is not required by federal law to be adjusted for inflation every year, its reduced buying power has put a strain on many working families. In the more that eight ears since Congress passed the last wage increase, the buying power of the minimum wage has eroded by 17 percent and is currently at its second-lowest value since 1955; and,

WHEREAS: The value of the minimum wage has not kept up with inflation. Because the minimum wage is not indexed to inflation, the value of the minimum wage erodes over time, making it difficult for low-wage workers to make ends meet. Thus, raising the minimum wage would help lift working families out of poverty; and,

WHEREAS: Minimum wage employees working full time year round, earn only \$10,700 a year, \$5000 below the official poverty line for a family of three as outlines in the US Census reports. In contrast, in the eight years since Congress last raised the minimum wage, they have raised their own salaries seven times; and,

WHEREAS: According to the Economic Policy Institute, in the last four years, the cost of housing has increased 44 percent, college tuition has increased 35 percent and the cost of health insurance has increased 59 percent. The federal minimum wage, however, has remained at the same level; and,

WHEREAS: In 2004, the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) compared total employment in states with a minimum wage set above the \$5.15 federal level to all other states; FPI found that the aggregate employment in states with only the federal minimum wage increased by only 4.1 percent; and,

WHEREAS: Many polls have consistently showed there is broad public support for an increase in the minimum wage. A January 2005 poll by Lake Snell Perry and Associates found that 77 percent of likely

voters surveyed favored an increase in the minimum wage to \$8.00 per hour and a January 2002 poll by Peter D. Hart Research found that 83 percent of respondents favored increasing the minimum wage by \$1.00 (to \$6.15). The Lake Snell Perry and Associates survey also found that 79 percent of voters supported regular increases in the minimum wage to keep up with inflation; and,

WHEREAS: There is broad bi-partisan support for an increase in the minimum wage from President Bush to Senator Edward Kennedy to Senator Rick Santorum. According to Fox News Channel, President Bush has supported a federal minimum wage and “would consider any reasonable, gradual increase;” and,

WHEREAS: In the third and final presidential debate against Senator John Kerry, on October 13, President Bush said he supported Senator Mitch McConnell’s minimum wage proposal; and,

WHEREAS: U.S. Senate bill 1062, “The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005” amends the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to increase the federal minimum wage to: (1) \$5.85 an hour beginning on the 60th day after enactment of the Act; (2) \$6.55 an hour, beginning 12 months after that 60th day; and (3) \$7.25 an hour, beginning 24 months after that 60th day. Similarly, U.S. House bill H.R. 249 has also been introduced in the House of Representatives to increase the federal minimum wage.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges the United States Congress to pass the Fair Minimum Wage Act and Also pass small business tax cuts for small businesses affected by the increase; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Maryland Student Legislature urges President Bush to sign the Act into law.