

Howard lawmakers see progress on cameras, mobile homes, bonds

Legislation put aside seen returning in 2010

Larry Carson
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With Maryland's budget problems garnering most of the attention, Howard County's local legislative efforts seemed small by comparison, but important things were still happening.

Sen. James N. Robey's local speed camera bill gave way to the statewide measure he helped preserve near the session's end. **And his bill to help residents of mobile home parks with moving costs was not approved but made substantial progress.**

A compromise with some mobile home park owners could lead to a successful bill next year, Robey said, though a technical wording glitch late in the session undermined the bill this year.

Under the compromise, residents forced to move when a park closes would get up to 10 months of lot rental as moving expenses. That could mean about \$5,000 for many Howard park residents who own their homes but rent the lots on which they sit. A new bill will be coming in 2010, Robey said.

The former county executive and police chief said he won't try to strengthen the speed camera bill next year. The Democrat wants the measure used as the law states - in school zones and work areas where children walk - and not on major boulevards like Broken Land or Little Patuxent parkways that happen to be close to a school.

A last-minute emergency bill sponsored by Sen. [Edward J. Kasemeyer](#) to ease strict rules on the validity of referendum petition signatures died in committee, but that issue may also resurface next year, legislators predicted. The bill's death means a local challenge to a County Council bill authorizing a larger grocery store at Turf Valley is also dead, unless the courts rule otherwise.

"I thought it was the right thing to do," said Kasemeyer, a Democrat who is the Senate majority leader.

House delegation chairman Guy Guzzone said he thinks the issue will return next year.

"After a thorough hearing process, it will pass," he predicted. "It needs to be cleared up."

The Maryland Court of Appeals ruled in December that Maryland law requires signatures on a referendum petition to exactly match the printed name on the same page, and also match the voter's exact name on voting rolls, or be a voter's full name, including middle initials.

Howard's legislators fended off a state attempt to take back \$800,000 in state bond funds approved in past years for Blandair Park, and got \$150,000 more for each of four local projects: the Robinson Nature Center, the [Ellicott City](#) post office conversion into a tourism center, the start of the Troy Regional Park in Elkridge and expansion at the Linwood Center, a private nonprofit for autistic children in Ellicott City.

Guzzone, a Democrat, and Republican Del. Gail H. Bates both said the county delegation worked well together. Guzzone said he enjoyed working on new issues like the legislation to keep the Preakness in Maryland and to preserve state operation of the state police medevac service.

Several local delegation measures that were approved include requiring applicants for a Zoning Regulation Amendment to disclose political contributions; requiring liquor license applicants to disclose citizenship or legal residency; and banning roadside solicitation of donations on state highways in the county. The practice is already illegal on county roads.