

*July 10, 2012*

***TO: THE PEOPLE OF LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 8***

***THE JULY 9 SPECIAL SESSION THAT NEVER WAS***

Leading the charge for a July 9 special session to approve a sixth casino at National Harbor in Prince George's County and allow table games at all six casinos, Governor O'Malley appointed an 11-member task force to craft legislation that the panel would support and the General Assembly would approve. Five of the panel's members were administration officials, appointed by the Governor and three members each were appointed by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate from their respective chambers.

The problem was the 11 members could not reach an agreement. The point on which they disagreed was lowering the 67% state tax on casino owners. The three House members refused to go along with lowering the state tax on millionaire casino owners, after the May special session of the General Assembly raised the state income tax on Maryland middle income earners. I applaud the three delegates who refused to lower the tax on casino owners. **I refused to vote for the income tax increase in May and if the gambling expansion plan ever comes to the House, I will vote against lowering the state tax on casino owners.**

The rush to get a gambling expansion referendum on the November ballot has not been one of the General Assembly's finer moments. In 2008, Marylanders approved a referendum to establish five slot casinos. We were assured that table games would never come to Maryland. Now, we might be asked to approve a sixth casino and allow table games at all six casinos. And we might be asked in a November referendum to approve this before all five casinos are even up and running and we can assess accurately the effect of the sixth casino on the five casinos. Maryland Live, which opened in early June in Arundel Center, is the state's largest casino. A casino in Perryville and one near Ocean City are operating. A fourth casino has been licensed for Rocky Gap and a large casino in Baltimore is about to be approved.

Having conceded that there will be no July 9 special session, the Governor has not given up the fight to get House approval on a November referendum on expanding gambling. The deadline for getting a referendum approved in time to get it on the November ballot is August 20. The prospect for getting the necessary 71 votes in the House is not good. The odds are slim that there will be a special session to expand gambling in August. I strongly oppose a major policy change being pushed to approval in a hastily called special session.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on this or any other legislation of concern to you. I continue to encourage and welcome your input.