

STUART M. SCHMIDT, JR.
Legislative District 33B
Anne Arundel County

Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 157
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3110
800-492-7122 Ext. 3110
Stuart.Schmidt@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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During the 2026 Legislative Session, Delegate Schmidt and House Republicans offered numerous bills as part of our **Affordability and Accountability Agenda** to address issues that affect everyday Marylanders. Delegate Schmidt specifically offered ten house floor amendments, mostly public safety, energy and real estate related.

To reduce your utility bills, the Caucus offered several pieces of legislation to alleviate energy cost pressure on Marylanders, make energy more affordable, and protect our farmland from solar farms. **The majority party rejected most of these bills.**

House Bill 967 would require that if energy bills increase faster than inflation, EmPower surcharges (an environmental/green energy fee) are paused. The bill would also remove the state from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which is another green energy mandate that increases fees on utility bills. Currently, ratepayers can see anywhere from \$20-\$100 every month in these types of unnecessary surcharges alone on their bill. While HB 967 did not pass, House Democrats, after years of Republicans sounding the alarm on the cost to citizens for green energy mandates, acknowledged that there are significant issues with the EmPower program and amended their own energy legislation to reduce the EmPower fee, saving Marylanders a little money, albeit not as much as would have been saved under our legislation.

We also introduced legislation aimed at eliminating costly solar and building electrification requirements that are stifling our Maryland businesses and agricultural communities.

House Bill 460 would have reduced the amount of Priority Preservation Area acreage that could be used for solar development from 5% to 2% and would require the state to create a study on the disposal of solar panels at the end of their use. **House Bill 988** would eliminate Building Energy Performance Standards, another green energy mandate that increases taxes and fees on owners of certain buildings, including agricultural and multi-residential. **Delegate Schmidt offered amendments on the floor to reduce the program or minimize the impacts of current legislation, the majority party rejected**

them. Lastly, another bill in our energy package to help reduce costs to Marylanders is **HB 970** which would make the development of nuclear energy more feasible and include it in a clean energy portfolio.

Republicans offered several pieces of legislation related to education to ensure that school funding is going where students are and making the most of every opportunity to make education affordable.

House Bill 976 - Education Funding Accuracy Act would require schools to count students twice a year to determine accurate full-time enrollment. Currently the state only uses a one-day count in calculating the number of students enrolled, which determines how much education aid the school receives. This bill would ensure that the state is not spending money on students who are not enrolled. It would also require the Maryland Department of Education to report on students who are labeled “whereabouts unknown.” Previous counts of these students have shown that we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the last two years that schools still received for students who were not there.

House Bill 455 - Opting in on Opportunity Act, would opt Maryland into the federal Education Tax Credit, which allows individuals to donate a maximum of \$1,700 to a state-approved Scholarship Granting Organization and receive a dollar-for-dollar federal tax credit. The scholarship funds could be used for tuition costs, educational supplies, tutors, and services for students with disabilities. While Marylanders can donate to out-of-state scholarship-granting organizations and get the benefit of the federal tax credit, for Maryland families to take advantage of the tax credit, the state must opt into the program. Del. Schmidt also offered a house floor amendment to require the Governor to opt in to this program which 39 other states have already done, this was rejected.

Republicans introduced legislation to hold accountable those state agencies tasked with the custody of children, to do everything possible to keep them safe, and streamline the burdensome regulations that stunt business growth.

Called by foster care advocates the most important bill put forward by the General Assembly in more than 40 years, as introduced, ***House Bill 980 - Kaniayah's Law*** would prohibit the placement of foster children in hotels, office and homeless shelters, require training and criminal background checks for one-on-one care providers and have the Department of Human Services conduct ongoing monitoring, and lastly, establish an independent Child Welfare Ombudsman within the AG's office. HB 980 garnered bipartisan support and passed unanimously in both chambers. As amended, the Ombudsmen will be housed in DHS, and the portion of the bill banning the unlicensed settings was moved to another piece of legislation in the bipartisan foster care reform package. The bill now heads to the Governor's desk for his signature.

House Bill 1079 is a measure to streamline Maryland's regulatory and permitting approval process. The bill would establish the Office of Regulatory Management, reduce regulatory excess, save taxpayers money, and provide transparency to our citizens. The legislation was modeled on Virginia's legislation, which saved the state \$1.2 Billion and reduced the cost of building homes by \$24,000.

The Republican Caucus introduced legislation focused on the best way to hold the government accountable: free, fair, and fraudless elections. This was sadly rejected!

House Bill 482 - Fair Districts for Maryland Act, would establish a 10-member bipartisan Redistricting Commission that may only meet the year following the census, eliminating the possibility of mid-cycle redistricting – a push we have seen undertaken by Governor Moore and other state Democrats at the behest of national Democrats.

We offered two other pieces of election legislation to ensure fair and secure elections.

House Bill 462 (VOTER ID/SAVE ACT) would require an individual to present a valid, government-issued photo ID to vote, and provide additional methods to confirm identity for those who do not possess such identification. Those without any identification can cast a provisional ballot. Maryland currently does not require voters to present identification while voting. With recent cases of non-citizens both registering to vote in Maryland and casting ballots, this is an effort to ensure that only citizens of Maryland are voting. **House Bill 454**, the Save Our Elections Act, would require the State Board of Elections to verify the citizenship of voters at the time of registration and during voter list maintenance using the SAVE program, an online service that verifies citizenship to receive a benefit, such as the right to vote. **Currently, more than 20 states use the SAVE program for voter registration and/or voter list maintenance.**

While the Democrats focused on federal immigration law enforcement this session, Republicans introduced legislation aimed at pushing back against soft-on-crime policies that endanger our communities. All Republican legislation was not passed on this subject matter including Del. Schmidt's HB963 - Gun Theft Felony Act of 2026.

The Democrats' passage of certain legislation over the last few years has contributed to juvenile crime being out of control. **House Bill 449, Sponsored by Delegate Schmidt**, would allow parental consent for the questioning of a juvenile as a substitute for the required consultation with an attorney. This would expand law enforcement tools and reduce procedural barriers in juvenile cases. This bill was also rejected, see a theme here?

House Bill 475 would prohibit convicted felons from working in the Department of Juvenile Services. The bill aims to tighten oversight and safety within the juvenile justice system, which has had troubling issues as of late.

House Bill 463 would prohibit the earning of diminution credits (reductions in sentence due to good behavior, work, and educational progress) to an incarcerated individual who is serving a sentence for murder in the first degree. This legislation would ensure full-term incarceration for the most serious offenders.

ENERGY HB 1532 - RELIEF ACT – sadly marketed as a grand solution to Marylanders’ surging electricity bills, this legislation falls quite short of its promises. While the bill did include policy changes that Republicans have advocated for over several years, such as a reduction in the EmPower Maryland fees, the legislation continued to double down on the Democratic majority’s green energy obsession that created these massive electricity bills. For all the savings that were promised in this bill, in the end, it was estimated to generate savings of approximately \$150 per year, or about \$12.50 per month. With monthly energy bills soaring by hundreds of dollars per month, this type of “RELIEF” just is not enough.

REDISTRICTING & ELECTIONS Several months before the start of the legislative session, Governor Moore began a quest to further gerrymander Maryland’s congressional districts and disenfranchise millions of Marylanders. He created a redistricting commission in early November 2025. By mid-December, in a closed-door vote, the commission – shockingly – recommended a congressional map to the Governor and General Assembly. The highly-partisan, grossly gerrymandered map that wiped out the one Republican-held congressional seat in MD was introduced in January as HB488.

HB 488 - Election Districts – General Assembly and Representatives in Congress not only created a horrible congressional redistricting map, but also included a constitutional amendment that said that the district standards in Maryland’s Constitution (composed of adjoining territory, compact in form, of substantially equal population, with due regard given to natural boundaries and the boundaries of political subdivisions) applied *only* to legislative districts. The bill passed the House, but was not taken up in the Senate.

SB 255 – Voting Rights Act of 2026 - Counties and Municipal Corporations this Democrat emergency bill would allow counties and municipalities to be sued by an individual or the Maryland Attorney General if their system of voting for county or municipal offices makes it difficult for minorities or other protected groups to get elected to those offices. This bill has the potential to be incredibly expensive for taxpayers who would ultimately be on the hook for any monetary awards under this bill...and how does the Government sue itself?

SB 949 – Election Law – Absentee Ballots – State and Federal Requirements – in anticipation of a Supreme Court decision the Maryland Democratic majority may not like, the bill sets up a separate standard for counting absentee ballots in federal elections versus state elections.

PUBLIC SAFETY *SB 334 – Criminal Law – Firearm Crimes – Machine Gun*

Convertible Pistols, more widely known as the “Glock Ban”, prohibits a person from manufacturing, selling, offering for sale, purchasing, receiving, or transferring a “machine gun convertible pistol” beginning January 1, 2027. Individuals who currently own such pistols are grandfathered in, and the ban does not apply to law enforcement, military members, or federal officials using the firearms for official duties. The ban concerns individuals' ability to convert such pistols from semi-automatic to full-automatic devices – an action that is already illegal. The bill is likely unconstitutional and will be challenged.

Juvenile Crime *SB 323 - Youth Charging Reform Act* raises the age when a youth could be tried as an adult for most crimes from 14 to 16, but it would still send 14- and 15-year-olds directly to adult court for first-degree murder or rape charges. The bill also specifies that 16-year-olds charged with offenses such as first-degree assault and firearms offenses, including the use of a firearm in a drug crime or the use of a firearm with a felony drug conviction, would start in juvenile court. **This bill further weakens Maryland's juvenile justice system, which already struggles to be effective under its current caseloads and the state's overall soft-on-crime policies.**

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) *HB 444 – Public Safety -*

Immigration Enforcement Agreements – Prohibition – bars local law enforcement agencies from entering into formal agreements with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. While national headlines drove much of the public debate, it is important to understand that in Maryland, no local law enforcement officers are involved in apprehending or investigating immigration violations. Six counties in use an unofficial model where they cooperate with ICE to enforce actual warrants for undocumented immigrants held in their local jails, and those programs can continue legally. Three jurisdictions use ‘jail models’ with enhanced formal cooperation to identify convicted or suspected criminals in their custody who are here illegally, alert ICE to their status, and help facilitate transferring them to federal custody before they are released. Otherwise, this could require armed ICE agents in communities to search for and apprehend the individual.

SB 791 – Community Trust Act, a bill that appeared to be dead until it began moving in the last few days of the legislative session, this legislation significantly reduced the ability of law enforcement to cooperate with ICE, going much farther than the ban on 287(g). The bill not only risks the safety of our communities, but it also threatens joint federal, state, and local task forces just like the one involved in the major drug bust on the Eastern Shore. It is very likely that Maryland, because of this bill's passage, will be designated as a Sanctuary Jurisdiction by the federal government, jeopardizing a variety of federal funding.

Delegate Schmidt's 2026 Introduced Bills

- HB356 - Protection of the Free Exercise of Religion from a Government Authority
- HB449 - Juvenile Justice (allows parent's to consent to law enforcement interrogation)
- HB863 - Gun Theft Felony Act of 2026 (makes the theft of any gun a felony)
- HB908 - Restriction of Distribution of Sexual Material Harmful to Minors
- HB909 - Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Farmers of Cut Flowers
- HB1053 - Second Degree Assault Prohibition on Sports Officials/Umpires/Referees

Delegate Schmidt's 2026 PASSED Co-Sponsored Bills

- HB108 - Division of Correction - Volunteer Services Program
- HB320 - Anne Arundel County - Property Tax Credit - Rural Legacy Program
- HB338 - Dept. of General Services - Maryland Capitol Police - Statewide Jurisdiction
- HB393 - Health Insurance - Scalp Cooling Systems - Required Insurance Coverage
- HB396 - Residential Child Care Program Education of the Children & Training
- HB439 - Office of the Deaf Hard of Hearing Renaming HB501 - Sexual Offense by a Person in Authority
- HB606 - Anne Arundel County - Residential Property Tax Payment Deferrals
- HB623 - Purple Star Schools Program and Purple Star Colleges Program
- HB677 - Reduction Facilities and Veterans Service Organizations · HB1400 - Suspension of Permit Card
- HB720 - J.J. Peters Veterans of Afghanistan/Iraq Scholarship · HB721 - Uniformed Services Spouse Act
- HB727 - Anne Arundel County Alcoholic Beverages Class C (Veterans' Organizations)
- HB752 - Criminal Law - Theft and Fraud Crimes - Valuation & Forgery of Gift Cards
- HB842 - Property Tax Credit - Surviving Spouse of Military Service Member
- HB972 - Charles J. Otto Agricultural Education Promise Act · HB1395 - Agricultural Equipment Warranty
- HB980 - Guardianship Assistance & State Foster Youth (Kanaiyah's Law)

Delegate Schmidt's 2026 PASSED District 33b Legislative Bond Initiatives

- Arlington Echo Educational Research March Walk \$350,000 · Maryland Therapeutic Riding \$115,000

Sincerely,



Delegate Stuart M. Schmidt, Jr. (District 33B)