

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COUNTY EXECUTIVE CANDIDATES

Responses of Isiah Leggett, Democratic Candidate

Budget & Tax

1. Do you support raising revenues through more progressive tax and fee structures to preserve County services and programs instead of focusing solely on making cuts? How specifically would you do this without unduly adding to the burden of moderate and modest income County residents?

Yes. In order to place the County on a more sustainable financial path I did both over the last three years. I made substantial cuts in many services, but I worked to minimize the reductions to education, public safety and our safety net services. I also increased revenue – the energy fuel tax, cellular telephone tax, and the ambulance reimbursement charge to insurance companies and the Federal Government. In addition, in my first year in office, I increased the property tax.

2. Do you support, at the state level, imposition of a 'millionaire's tax,' requiring upper income residents to pay higher taxes?

Yes, however, I supported the millionaire's tax at a lower level than was passed by the General Assembly. Ultimately, the loss in revenue that I predicted would result from the millionaire's tax has unfortunately occurred. In Montgomery County some of the revenue lost may have resulted from some in our highest income tax brackets moving out of Maryland. The lost revenue has been substantial and has contributed to the need to cut back on programs and services.

3. If you believe that some cutbacks are necessary, please explain how you would prioritize cuts to the County budget, including cuts to "safety net" programs, education cuts, and other human services. What specific programs and services would you cut?

My priorities are education, public safety and helping the most vulnerable. I made reductions in all areas of the county budget. However, as I noted above, I made significantly lower reductions in my three priority areas. I made reductions in technology, housing programs, maintenance, elimination of some transit routes, recreation, and libraries. Our County employees also sacrificed by giving up their COLA's and step increases. Additionally, all County employees will be furloughed, ranging from three to eight days, depending on salary.

Affordable Housing

1. What programs and policies do you support to preserve the existing stock of affordable rental housing in the County and stop its further decline? Do you have a plan for increasing the number of affordable housing units in the County? If yes, please explain.

I significantly increased the Housing Initiative Fund enabling the County to

preserve, construct or expand 6000 units of affordable housing. I established an Affordable Housing Task Force which met for a year and made many recommendations to enhance affordable housing. I implemented a number of the recommendations and I am committed to implementing others over the next four years. I remain committed to working with private partners to leverage as many additional resources as possible.

Do you support mandatory reporting of rents and other increases by landlords with 4 or more units? Do you support making the County's voluntary rent guidelines mandatory based on the cost-of-living, or some other method of rent stabilization with reasonable exceptions?

Yes, I do support mandatory reporting of rents and other increases by landlords with 4 or more units. However, I do not support rent control. I appointed a Tenant's Work Group in 2008 comprised mostly of tenants to seek advice on ways to enhance the quality of life for renters in our county. I am committed to implementing the Work Group's recommendations which came to me last spring.

2. Have you read the March 2010 Tenants Work Group Report? (http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Content/EXEC/TWG/pdf/twg_report_3-2010.pdf) Which, if any, of the recommendations contained in the Report do you support?

Yes, I established the Tenants Work Group and my staff worked with the Group throughout their deliberations. I met on a number of occasions with members of the Work Group and I generally support all of the recommendations except for rent control.

3. Do you support State enabling legislation which would allow Montgomery County to pass county-level "just cause eviction" legislation to allow evictions only for specified reasons such as non-payment of rent or on-site criminal activity? If the legislation is passed at the state level, would you support just cause eviction legislation in Montgomery County?

No I do not support the State enabling Montgomery County to pass local "just cause eviction" legislation. However, if the legislation passed at the State level I would support it at the local level.

Transportation & Infrastructure

1. Do you support the expansion of public transit, including building the Purple Line, CCT, and Bus Rapid Transit?

Yes. In addition, despite our fiscal challenges, I recommended \$500,000 in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget for the evaluation and planning of a Bus Rapid Transit system in Montgomery County.

2. What other ways would you expand the building and usage of public transportation in the County?

By focusing heavily on Transit Oriented Development and providing incentives for bicycling and connecting our trail network, funding for the bus rapid transit system and providing for disincentives for driving such as increasing parking fees. I will also work to increase funding for our Ride-On system and have consistently supported an increase in the Statewide gasoline tax.

3. Do you support tax or other incentives to promote telework, vanpools, and carpools?

Yes.

Education

1. What measures do you support to maintain the high quality of education in Montgomery County Public Schools, given the current budget situation?

Funding for education remains one of my top priorities. While all programs and services were reduced during these difficult economic times, I worked to minimize the reductions imposed on both the public schools and Montgomery College. I will continue to keep education as a top priority. My focus is to seek additional funds so that the Board of Education will have the resources necessary to maintain the excellence of our school system.

New Development

1. Do you support the recent increases in school and transportation impact fees?

Yes.

2. Do you support assessments of infrastructure, service, health, environmental, human, and small business impacts prior to approval of new developments?

Yes.

3. What changes in the County Master Plan do you support to promote smart, sensible, environmentally sound, and managed growth?

I made the promotion of smart and sustainable growth one of my administration's top priorities. One of my first initiatives, the Smart Growth Initiative, was to free up large swaths of publicly held land near one of our most vital transit centers – Shady Grove. By doing so we are more appropriately locating government functions and allowing for transit oriented development. I also recommended and worked for approval of the White Flint and the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan, which provide for staged and managed transit oriented development.

4. How do you propose to prevent displacement in communities along the route of the Purple Line, such as Long Branch and Langley Park, if the Purple Line is built?

I have worked with State transit officials to help ensure that the Purple Line is built within the acceptable right of way without encroaching on the trail or intruding unnecessarily into adjacent properties. In order to accomplish this goal, I believe that the Purple Line should remain as a single track wherever feasible throughout the corridor and that certain portions of the line should be built underground. We must also work to ensure that there is a significant buffer of trees in order to better protect the residents along the right of way.

Elections

1. If State-enabling legislation were passed, would you support campaign finance reform in Montgomery County, including publicly funded campaigns for County races?

Yes, I have consistently supported this reform for years.

2. Do you support such State enabling legislation? **Yes.**
3. Do you support legislation making monthly reporting of campaign contributions mandatory for candidates for County office? Whether such legislation is passed or not, will you pledge to make such monthly reports in this and future campaigns?

Yes and Yes.

4. Do you support issuing a publicly financed voter guide, prepared by an independent body, with candidate statements and information that would go to all registered voters?

Yes.

Immigration

1. Do you support equal access to education and other County services for all County residents regardless of immigration status? **Yes.**
2. Do you support the policy of not asking or checking immigration status unless there is a felony charge arrest? **Yes.**
3. Do you support free, readily available English language classes and other education programs to help immigrants become full participants in the civic life of our County? **Yes.**
4. Do you support legislation making Montgomery County a “sanctuary county?” (In a sanctuary county, no agent, officer or employee of the county may assist the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the investigation or arrest of any persons for violation of the U.S. immigration and nationality laws.)

No. I believe the County’s current policies properly balance the rights of our residents with public safety.

Agricultural Reserve

1. Do you support the protection of the County Agricultural Reserve including additional

protections against development for the Reserve or do you think current restrictions are sufficient?

Yes. I also believe we need additional protection to better protect the long-term viability of the Agricultural Reserve.

Other

1. Why should an organization such as ours, which supports progressive policies and representatives, endorse you in this race?

I believe that my overall public service record and my positions on the important progressive issues impacting our community are clearly deserving of your support. I assumed leadership during the most difficult economically challenging times this County has faced since at least the Great Depression. Despite these challenges, when warranted I sought revenue enhancements, not only to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability for our County, but also in order to continue providing our County residents with many progressive programs that affect the quality of life for many in our community. In addition, I have resisted the pressure to eliminate or decimate many of the programs that are your organization's priorities. I have provided consistent and strong leadership for a considerable period of time on a variety of land use, transportation and environmental measures advocated by the progressive community. I also worked with many members of the progressive community on such important issues as appropriate funding for our public schools and protecting our vast array of health and human service programs that serve many of the most vulnerable among us. I believe we made considerable progress in enhancing affordable housing, moving the County's green economy forward, land use that ensures smart growth, tenant rights, stormwater management and other environmental programs. I also worked aggressively and I believe effectively, in Annapolis to protect funding for education, social services, housing and transportation programs that have been advanced by our progressive community.