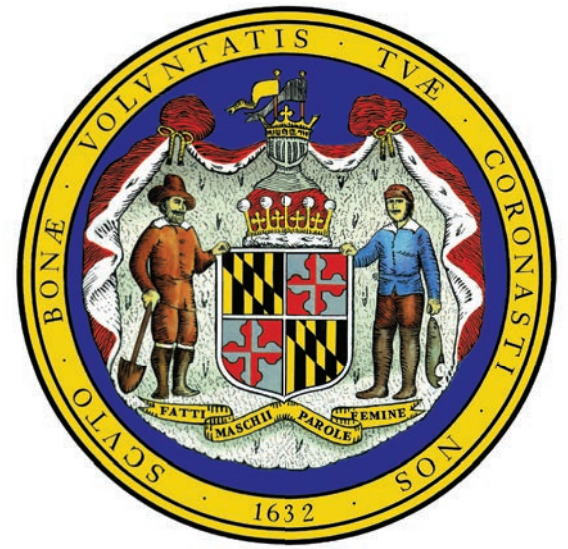




Governor O'Malley with Maryland school children

Progress is a Choice

An Interview with
The Honorable Martin O'Malley,
Governor, State of Maryland



EDITORS' NOTE First elected in 2006, Governor Martin O'Malley was reelected in 2010 with 56 percent of the vote. In 2009, *Governing* magazine named O'Malley "Public Official of the Year". Prior to assuming his current post, O'Malley served as Mayor of the City of Baltimore. First elected in 1999, he was reelected in 2004, receiving 88 percent of the vote. O'Malley received his bachelor's degree from Catholic University and his law degree from the University of Maryland. In 1986, while in law school, he was named by then-Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski as State Field Director for her successful primary and general election campaigns for the U.S. Senate. From 1987 to 1988, he served as a legislative fellow for Senator Mikulski. In 1988, O'Malley was appointed Assistant State's Attorney for the City of Baltimore. He served on the Baltimore City Council from 1991 to 1999, during which time he was Chairman of the Legislative Investigations and Taxation and Finance Committees. O'Malley currently serves as Chair of the Democratic Governors Association and Co-Lead on Homeland Security for the National Governors Association Public Safety Task Force. He was appointed to the nation's first-ever Council of Governors by President Obama in January of 2010.

How have you approached job creation for the state of Maryland?

In order for a modern economy to create jobs, we need to invest. That is not a Democratic or Republican idea – it's an American idea. Investments in the education of our next generation and rebuilding our infrastructure can only be made if we choose to make them together.

So in my budget, there are a number of things we'll be instituting that will support about 52,000 jobs doing important public projects.

Is the correct dialogue taking place about what needs to be done to improve education?

Part of the challenge when doing things that work to improve outcomes in education is that we have structured public education in our country in such a way as to shield it from political influence. That's a benefit when it comes to avoiding having extremists encroaching on the freedom of intellectual pursuits, but it's an impediment when it comes to putting in place some common sense reforms and quickly enhancing literacy among our kids.

Because of that structure, we sometimes content ourselves with creating successful experiments with charter schools because it's more gratifying to us over a shorter period of time than the longer and more impactful work of reforming public education.

We know what works. But none of it can happen unless we're committed to paying for it and funding it. Over these past recessionary years, we have still managed to make record investments in our children's education. In the depths of this recession, Maryland has been named as having the best public schools in America four years in a row by *Education Week* magazine. More of our kids are taking and passing AP exams than in any other state and we're graduating more students in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) disciplines.

We're one of eleven states and the District of Columbia that competed in and won President Obama's Race to the Top grant, which will accelerate some of these reforms, including the use of technology to track every student's learning experience from kindergarten through college.

We've seen the improvement. Too often, we say that educational reform is too hard; the best you can do as a political leader is put more dollars into school construction – something you can cut ribbons on – but the longer lasting impact comes from the commitment to the tougher changes that might not come to fruition in your own term of office.

Has true health care reform been achieved and what is your vision for Maryland in that area?

We have barely begun to reform health care. This is going to be a long haul, but it's one where the President has courageously taken the most important steps forward, which is to have us join every other industrialized economy on the planet and have universal coverage. That, combined with technology, gives us the ability to move from a system that treats disease to a system that promotes wellness in a more personalized way for individuals.

We look forward to being an early implementer of the Affordable Care Act, which will not only be an advantage for us in terms of a healthier workforce, but a competitive advantage for us economically as our small businesses and entrepreneurs are able to reduce the amount of overhead that goes to health care costs so they can invest those dollars into expanding their businesses.

What do you expect the Maryland Innovation Initiative will accomplish?

With all the challenges we face in terms of the erosion of our competitive advantage in a global economy, we are called upon to be more innovative.

In our state, while we have cut many things, we have increased our biotechnology tax credit and we have extended our state research and development tax credit. Last year, we passed an initiative called InvestMaryland, which is a \$75 million investment of public dollars to leverage even greater amounts of venture capital so that we can move the great ideas from our laboratories into the mainstream of our economy, where they can create companies and, therefore, jobs.

This year, we'll be launching the Maryland Innovation Initiative to change the culture in our colleges and universities, as well as in some of our federal institutions, so we can dial up the entrepreneurial side of innovation and discovery. We're number one when it comes to research in America on a per capita basis, yet we rank 37th in terms of commercializing those ideas. We want to cross that delta of opportunity and put partnerships in place that create a continuum in the evolution of ideas from the lab to the marketplace.

At a time where there is so much political gridlock, you've been able to push many initiatives through. What is the secret?

The very character of the people of Maryland who understand that progress is a choice. The other important piece is that this administration is committed to setting goals, measuring performance, and making sure our state government is open, responsive, and accountable to the people we serve. That allows us to tackle issues head on.

I have cut more from our state government than any other Governor in Maryland's history. Yet, we were able to put in place, for the first time, a progressive income tax. We were able to ask people who smoke to pay more and were able to expand the number of people we cover with health insurance by about 400,000, half of those being kids.

Regardless of party, all of us in our state believe our government should deliver results. The most important value we share is the desire to give our kids a better quality of life. It's not what's best for the next election but what's best for the next generation. ●