



BARRY GLASSMAN

HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Harford County Executive Barry Glassman 2019 State of the County Address: “Building on Our Success”

BEL AIR, Md., (Feb. 5, 2019) - County Executive Barry Glassman today delivered his State of the County Address, citing Harford County’s fiscal turnaround as the foundation for future investments to strengthen families and communities.

Entitled, “Building on Our Success,” the county executive’s fifth annual speech to the County Council announced a first-time homebuyers’ assistance program for public servants including Harford County teachers, first responders and law enforcement. In response to demand, the second county-owned ambulance will be deployed this spring and the build-out will continue for the county’s 24-hour crisis center for addiction and behavioral health, the first of its kind in the state. As president of the Maryland Association of Counties, County Executive Glassman warned of unsustainable increases in healthcare and prescription drug costs, and the potential for state education mandates to force tax increases on counties across Maryland. He also called upon counties nationwide to follow Harford’s lead in supporting a Wall of Remembrance for Korean War Veterans and the “Choose Civility” campaign promoting respect, empathy and tolerance everywhere.

“I am pleased to report that the state of Harford County is strong and our amazing turnaround story continues and bodes well for our next term,” County Executive Glassman said as he reported on the county’s improving fiscal condition and investments in education and public safety during his first four-year term.

As proof, he cited the county's Triple-A bond rating from all three of the major bond rating agencies and annual salary increases restored for teachers, deputies, correctional officers and county employees, without raising tax rates. Construction also continues on the new Havre de Grace Middle/High School, at the same time the county has restored its fund balance, he said. The fund balance helped the county to begin repairs to roads and bridges quickly following last year's devastating storms.

Property values are growing at a modest but steady 2%, he said. The growth in income tax revenue is moderate to strong, reflecting rising wages and low unemployment. The county's debt burden, which he said had tripled under the prior administration, is on a more responsible path. The county has paid off more on old debt than it was taking on only twice in the last 20 years; both times were during the Glassman administration.

New jobs and economic growth are on the horizon from private developments ranging from large industrial projects to small commercial and residential developments, he said. Despite some perceptions, he said that the number of residential permits issued has been modest since the great recession. New commercialization and tech transfer opportunities are also growing from Aberdeen Proving Ground, including AMMP at the HEAT Center backed by \$38 million in federal funding.

Turning to quality of life, County Executive Glassman said, "The foundations of all strong communities are laid through the hard work and tireless efforts of public servants." He announced a "Hometown Heroes" program offering up to \$5,000 toward closing costs for first time homebuyers who are first responders, or employed by Harford County's public school system, sheriff's office or county government. Details are on the county website at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2672/Hometown-Heroes>.

To meet demand and supplement the volunteer EMS service, Harford County will staff and deploy its second "surge unit" ambulance, he said. The first unit deployed in January 2018 has thus far responded to 1,679 calls and provided 894 patient transports.

Regarding education, County Executive Glassman said that nearly all new, ongoing county revenue had been dedicated to public safety and education over the past four years, with Harford County Public Schools receiving approximately 50 cents of every county tax dollar.

He said the school board was finally coming to terms with difficult business decisions, similar to those faced by county government four years ago.

“Believe me, I know these decisions are tough, but being proactive on healthcare costs, pension and procurement reform does make a difference.” He noted that, in procurement alone, his administration has saved more than \$9 million over four years, making money available for other priorities such as the school board’s budget request.

Addiction and behavioral health services remain a priority with the continued build-out of the Harford County Crisis Center, helped by a recent \$750,000 state grant. The 24/7 crisis center launched a hotline and mobile crisis team in October. To date, it has handled 688 calls, and provided 138 visits, including 56 to adolescents aged 17 and younger.

As president of the Maryland Association of Counties for 2019, County Executive Glassman warned of a looming \$1.5 billion structural state deficit and education mandates from the state’s Kirwan Commission. The Commission’s recommendations are expected to cost \$4 billion over ten years, with a required local share that would force counties across the state to raise property taxes. The county executive also said he is supporting a state board to review the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs that are straining the county’s budget and forcing some seniors and families to choose between medications and other household expenses. He said that the combination of these developments outside the county’s control serve as a reminder to be fiscally prudent at the local level.

In closing, the county executive recognized several Harford County citizens, some of whom were in the audience.

Local veterans of the Korean War were honored for their effort to build a Wall of Remembrance at the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Harford is the first county in the U.S. to contribute to the wall where the names of 30 local citizens who lost their lives in the conflict will be inscribed, and he encouraged his counterparts nationwide to follow Harford’s lead.

Local residents Jacob and Tanisha, who have a young daughter, were recognized for achieving sobriety, demonstrating that recovery is possible. Jacob obtained full time employment with the help of Harford County’s Second Chance Job Fair.

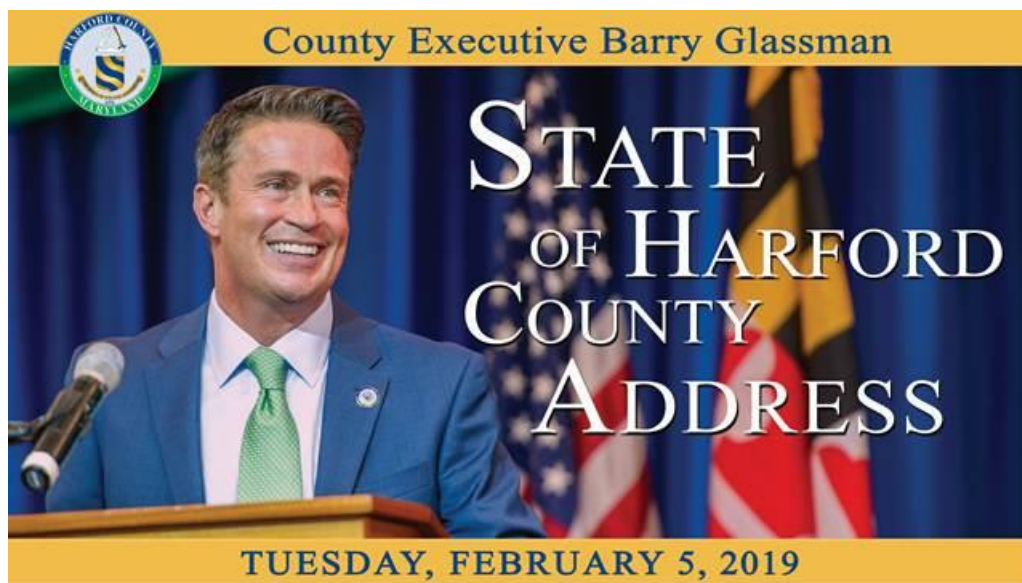
Joe Ryan, manager of the Harford County Office of Drug Control Policy, was recognized upon his retirement after 45 years of dedicated public service, including 19 with county government.

County Executive Glassman ended his address calling for national unity, citing his administration's partnership with Harford County Public Library in the "Choose Civility Harford County" campaign:


"In a time when our nation has become paralyzed by those who divide us by red, blue, race, color, creed or gender, we are hoping to reach for our better angels so that we might be a model for the state and the nation in our discourse promoting respect, empathy and tolerance everywhere ... I know some of you think this is naïve or too soft, but I have been through the murder of our deputies, workplace violence, the opioid epidemic, along with the loss of life in floods and blizzards. Through all of this, Harford County's citizens have proved to me that love always wins. Thank you and God bless."

The full text of the county executive's speech is available on the county website at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/1826/State-of-the-County-Addresses>.

The Glassman administration's 2014-18 progress report is on the county website at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2135/Annual-Progress-Reports>.



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