



Eye on Annapolis

By Bill Pitcher



Now that the Legislature has finally ended the 2008 Session and gone home, we can take a breath and take stock of where they have left the State of Maryland. Actually, they were in Session for nearly a month longer than usual due to the "Special Session" held in November last year, and then carried over to the 90 day Session of '08. As stated in our last Newsletter, most of the damage was done during the Special Session, when they 1) raised the Sales Tax from 5% to 6%; 2) raised the personal income tax on high earners; 3) raised the corporate income tax; 4) raised the cigarette tax by \$1.00 per pack.; and 5) applied the sales tax to Computer Services. They passed a number of smaller increases in fees etc., but in round numbers, they raised over \$1 Billion in new income. The Maryland Recruiting Association had a VICTORY in successfully avoiding a legislative attempt to apply the sales tax to your services as they did to computer services. They also passed a CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT to allow slot machine gambling in five selected locations around the State, which is subject to ratification by the voters at the General Election in November. More on that later. When they came back into the '08 Session in January, there was a hue and cry to repeal the sales tax on computer services, which they eventually did, as well as more taxes on "the rich", which they also raised again. But we had done our work educating legislators so well in the run up to the special session that they did not propose a sales tax on recruitment services again. We will continue to monitor the situation, as well as continuing to reach out to legislators in key positions on the Budget Committees to educate them as to the ramifications of taxing your fees.

Maryland politics will reach the boiling point at the end of this summer and into the fall toward the final days of election season! While no State wide elected officials are up for election this year, the combination of the Presi-

Just For Laughs

Mostly Business by Ted Goff



DATES TO REMEMBER

July

4—Independence Day



August

Dog Days of Summer



September

1—Labor Day

22—First Day of Autumn

29—Rosh Hashanah Begins at Sundown



dential and Congressional races, with the ballot question to ratify the Constitutional Amendment to legalize slots will make for a very interesting election season. You might find it interesting to know that in 4 of the last 5 States to hold such referendum elections on slots, the measure failed. Look for the Governor and leading Democratic officials to lead the charge in favor of the measure because the next few years' Budgets will be thrown into a tailspin without the anticipated slots revenue. If it fails, the Budgets will be unbalanced even more so than in the immediate past, and they will have to call more Special Sessions to raise taxes and cut programs in order to stay solvent. This coming campaign will be a real "barn burner".

As always, we were honored to represent the interests of MRA this past year and look forward to continuing to do so in the future.

Save the Date!

Annual Golf Outing & Dinner



"Hold these, I have to go back for my Wife"



Tuesday, September 9

Noon

Musket Ridge Golf Course

Golf, Dinner & Door Prizes

November 2008

SUN	MON	TU	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

New Member Fall Dinner

Coming Tuesday, November 11th
Baltimore / Howard County Area

Details to Follow

Watch Your Email!

Managing a Culturally Diverse Staff

According to the US Census Bureau, 100 million Americans, or one in every three, consider themselves part of a minority group. This means that workplaces are becoming more culturally diverse, which often requires managers and others to continually rethink the way they work with people.

"Cultural competencies are not something that you can learn in a four-hour diversity training," says Kelly, principal consultant and trainer of St. Paul, Minnesota-based Lila Kelly Associates. "They are developed through a lot of hard work, just like other skills and abilities. Diversity is the way of the future, and there's no turning back. If you want to be successful as a manager, working to become culturally competent is one way to get ahead."

For the past 15 years Steve Morris of Singapore-based Steve Morris Associates has worked with Global Fortune 500 firms headquartered throughout Asia, promoting diversity management into workplace cultures. He says awareness and acknowledgement are imperative for the future success of any manager.

"The main thing to remember is to respect each person as an individual. Everyone has a unique background and heritage," says Morris. "Show respect for others' heritage, traditions and most importantly, them as individuals. Don't generalize. No ethnic or cultural groups are exactly the same."

Caleb Fullhart is an Area Manager for Ajilon Office. He manages 8 direct reports and about 100 indirect reports, who together form a melting pot of ethnic backgrounds. "Managers should take the time to learn about the skills, knowledge and backgrounds of their staff," says Fullhart. "These conversations will allow managers to find out about the differences and similarities in the cultural values of their staff and build on those differences for the benefit of the group."

Fullhart says that managers should embrace the value of diversity in the workplace, which helps employees to work collaboratively and, in turn, be more productive. Morris, meanwhile, says it's important for managers of culturally diverse workplaces to dedicate time to bond as a team, including holding team sessions to discuss ideals or values, or where people can discuss their culture, heritage and history.

"When involved in a project, play to people's strengths - some will like to research, others will like to hunt for resources; others will like to suggest ideas, find out each person's talent of preference and assign roles that way," says Morris. "Ask people to play a particular role, involve everybody, and acknowledge everybody's contributions, particularly the ones that brought in something new to the team."

Kelly says successful managers must provide and demonstrate open and non-judgmental communication with all staff members by demonstrating respect, knowledge and awareness of the differences that are present in their workplace.

"If the manager is uncomfortable with the differences, it will show and affect all employees," says Kelly, who offers these tips:

- Look for opportunities to learn. Be humble and ask yourself, "What and how can I learn from this diverse situation?"
- Watch for opportunities to ask your employees about their culture. This will show them that you are interested, help you learn, and build rapport with that employee.
- If you are working with a group of people from a particular culture, have a few reminders written down that would help you communicate better with them.

"Working with a culturally diverse staff is an exciting opportunity to learn, grow and develop a better understanding of the world we live in today," says Fullhart. "Your management and leadership skills will also benefit as you focus on building a well-integrated team. As the team works together, and learns from one another to achieve a goal, everyone benefits, including the overall atmosphere at the company."



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