

Barrio de Langley Park

A Neighborhood Planning Newsletter Published by Action Langley Park
Issue Number 265, January 2013

!!Get Your Flu Shot!!

The flu can keep you home-bound and it might even cause death, so if you haven't done so already, get your flu shot right away. Most health clinics offer them, and these days, many so-called drug stores provide the shots.

MARYLAND LEGISLATURE IN 2013

The legislative session is beginning, and well over 100 bills have been filed, to be discussed and perhaps acted upon. Let's hope the wisdom of the state senators and delegates leads them to fair and equitable decisions.

One big issue focuses on transportation. There is a great need for money to maintain transportation infrastructure and to expand the systems. In the Langley Park area, that focuses attention on the Purple Line, the proposed light-rail ("streetcar") line from Bethesda to New Carrollton via Langley Park and the University of Maryland.

There are differences of opinion on how to get the needed funding, and all of the main options discussed are regressive, that is, they place a comparatively greater income-percentage burden on the less-well-off—including most Langley Park residents. The options include raising the sales tax or raising the gasoline tax. These work a bit like the lottery: they take a comparatively higher percentage of money from the less-well-off. Of course, one can opt not to play the lottery; it's hard to avoid taxes on necessities.

Of course there are many other issues. For instance, the death penalty is legal in Maryland. Maybe that puts us in the same category as Saudi Arabia—except we don't kill by chopping heads off. Some gun control may also be debated; the opponents cite the Second Amendment although we're not all in militias. And there are budget issues, fracking issues, and maybe some help for PG County on its deficit.

IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION?

"Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity." (President Obama, 21 January 2013)

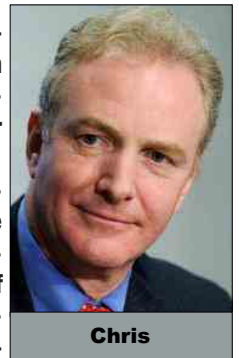
Will there be any new immigration legislation in the new Congress? And if so, will it meet the needs of the USA and the morality our country claims?

An NPR report suggests that immigration will be a major focus; lawmakers in both parties continue to call for a bipartisan approach—while also preparing for battle.

The messaging from many House Democrats and Republicans about the chances of passing an immigration overhaul remains optimistic. And some of them, such as Republican Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida and Democrat Zoe Lofgren of California, have begun to meet privately. But other statements indicate that at least some lawmakers are getting ready for a fight.

Of course, there are many other issues that the new Congress will face, including control of automatic weapons, getting our economy back on track, repairing our educational and health systems so that we do better in international competition, winding down the war, and more.

If you have a view on immigration legislation or any of the other pressing issues, consider sending an email to your representative stating the view. In the Langley Park area, there are two members of the House of Representatives, Chris Van Hollen and Donna Edwards. However, this newsletter reaches people some distance from the Langley Park area, so a full list of Maryland's representatives with contact information is below. And information about making contact with our senators is there too.



Chris



Donna

Member Name	DC Phone	DC FAX	Contact Form
Senator Barbara Mikulski (D- MD)	202-224-4654	202-224-8858	http://www.mikulski.senate.gov/contact/shareyouropinion.cfm
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D- MD)	202-224-4524	202-224-1651	http://www.cardin.senate.gov/contact/
Representative Andy Harris (R - 01)	202-225-5311	202-225-0254	https://harris.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
Representative CA Dutch Ruppersberger (D02)	202-225-3061	202-225-3094	http://dutch.house.gov/email-dutch.shtml
Representative John Sarbanes (D - 03)	202-225-4016	202-225-9219	http://sarbanes.house.gov/federal.asp
Representative Donna F. Edwards (D - 04)	202-225-8699	202-225-8714	http://donnaedwards.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=52&sectiontree=452
Representative Steny Hoyer (D - 05)	202-225-4131	202-225-4300	https://forms.house.gov/hoyer/webforms/zip_auth.shtml
Representative John Delaney (D - 06)	202-225-2721	202-225-2193	https://delaney.house.gov/contact/email-me
Representative Elijah E. Cummings (D - 07)	202-225-4741	202-225-3178	https://cummings.house.gov/contact-me/email-me
Representative Chris Van Hollen, Jr. (D - 08)	202-225-5341	202-225-0375	http://vanhollen.house.gov/contact/

DRAMATIC CHANGES IN EDUCATION

And the Rest of Our Demography

Once upon a time, the US-born Euro male dominated almost every sphere of the economy, polity, and society. It was these males who were on the Supreme Court, got medical and law degrees, headed universities, and more. Until less than a century ago, women couldn't even vote. (Free Blacks voted in Maryland beginning in 1776.)

What a change has taken place. California is already minority majority; the so-called minorities, added together, have reached 60%. In Texas, the figure is 55%.

In Maryland, Euro-Americans are 54% of the population; immigrants constitute 13.7%, 18.9% of the over-25 labor force, and 19.2% of the college-educated over-25 labor force.

According to the US Census Bureau's 2011 American Community Survey (ACS), immigrants accounted for 16% of the 58.8 million college-educated persons. However, their numbers were much higher among workers in certain occupations: Immigrants represent nearly 28% of physicians, 31% of computer programmers, and 47% of medical scientists. Here are a few more striking results from 2011:

◆ In the 25-39 age bracket, a higher percentage of foreign-born residents had a college degree (38%) than did the native-born (33%). For Latino/as, the figures are 17% for the foreign-born and 4% for the native born. (Only 4%? That's a tragic and dangerous figure.)

◆ Immigrants from Asia have by far the highest percentage of college-educated (51%). Among those from Asia, India has the highest percentage (13%). The figure for immigrants from Mexico is 5.6%.

The table below focuses on educational attainment and the changes that have taken place over the period of a decade. Note especially the rise in female and minority-group degree-holders. We are a diverse country, and those who don't like the changes should consider moving to all-Euro northern Siberia. (Is it all-Euro?)

Number of degrees conferred to U.S. residents by degree-granting institutions, percentage distribution of degrees conferred, and percentage of degrees conferred to females, by level of degree and race/ethnicity: Academic years 1999-2000 and 2009-10

Level of degree & race/ethnicity	Number		Percentage distribution		% conferred to females	
	1999-2000	2009-2010	1999-2000	2009-2010	1999-2000	2009-2010
Associate's	554,845	833,337	100	100	60.3	62.0
White	408,772	552,863	73.7	66.3	59.8	60.9
Black	60,221	113,905	10.9	13.7	65.2	68.3
Latino/a	51,573	112,211	9.3	13.5	59.4	62.4
Asian/Pacific	27,782	44,021	5	5.3	56.8	58.5
Native*	6,497	10,337	1.2	1.2	65.8	64.9
Bachelor's	1,198,809	1,602,480	100	100	57.5	57.4
White	929,106	1,167,499	77.5	72.9	56.6	56.0
Black	108,013	164,844	9	10.3	65.7	65.9
Latino/a	75,059	140,316	6.3	8.8	59.6	60.7
Asian/Pacific	77,912	117,422	6.5	7.3	54.0	54.5
Native*	8,719	12,399	0.7	0.8	60.3	60.7
Master's	406,761	611,693	100	100	60.0	62.6
White	324,981	445,038	79.9	72.8	59.6	61.8
Black	36,595	76,458	9	12.5	68.2	71.1
Latino/a	19,384	43,535	4.8	7.1	60.1	64.3
Asian/Pacific	23,538	42,072	5.8	7.0	52.0	54.3
Native*	2,263	3,960	0.6	0.6	62.7	64.3
Doctor's	106,494	140,505	100	100	47.0	53.3
White	82,984	104,426	77.9	74.3	45.4	51.4
Black	7,080	10,417	6.6	7.4	61.0	65.2
Latino/a	5,039	8,085	4.7	5.8	48.4	55.0
Asian/Pacific	10,684	16,625	10	11.8	48.8	56.5
Native*	707	952	0.7	0.7	52.9	54.8

*Native = Native American plus Native Alaskan Source: National Center for Education Statistics

TNI-LP

The Transitional Neighborhood Initiative has helped to improve the six neighborhoods where it has been implemented, and one of those neighborhoods is Langley Park. As but one positive TNI accomplishment in Langley Park, more than a thousand apartment code violations (leaks, bugs, more) were identified by a TNI team and reportedly fixed.

Having been identified as a comparatively high crime area (that's true judging by geographic space but not by population density), extra police efforts have been applied—apparently with crime-reduction success. That's sure a success.

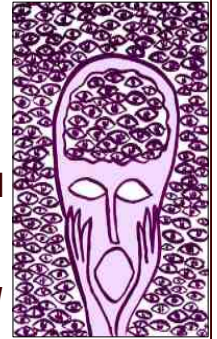
But a cold chill was felt when one of the large staff of BLP reporters was told by a resident, in a private conversation, that the purpose of TNI-LP was to "clean up" the neighborhood so that developers would be more interested in developments in accordance with the Sector Plan that calls for demolishing most of the affordable apartments and replace them with more up-scale and not very affordable apartments and condos.

Another resident wondered why the TNI team didn't include residents and local businesspeople in the team's meetings.

Surely fix-then-develop could not be the rationale. Surely. County Executive Rushern Baker would not think that way even though the county wants to increase its tax base and some major businesspeople want more money in the pockets of shoppers.

Surely, the people who express such a paranoid explanation for the TNI effort are wrong.

We must all assume the good will of the county in improving the quality of life in Langley Park—for the current residents, not some future gentry.



NEWS AND NOTES

Schools: Beware of Ratings

Our country is into ratings and lists of five or ten. Who are the ten most handsome men? The five best chefs? The ten best universities? And now it's rating school systems.

Former DC Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee runs something called "StudentsFirst" [no space!]. That organization graded all 50 states and the District on whether each jurisdiction's education system prioritizes high-quality teaching, provides parents with information and choices about their children's schools, and manages its finances well. Louisiana finished first with a B-minus grade, and Maryland received a D-plus! (That places us 17th.) Don't worry: Virginia received a D-minus and ten states were rewarded with Fs.

But wait! Education Week has just issued a report on education in the states, and Maryland ranks Number One! (1!) The letter grade is B+, suggesting that the entire country must improve. (We know that!) On almost all of the 23 indicators, the state does well—that is, gets a B or better. There are three C grades: equity, accountability for quality, and assessments. Ah equity: perhaps that shines a light on the poor performance of too many children in the Langley Park area.

If you like ratings and lists, and you're tired of rereading U.S. News, go to reportcard.studentsfirst.org or www.edweek.org for entertainment.

Schools: Will the School Board Change?

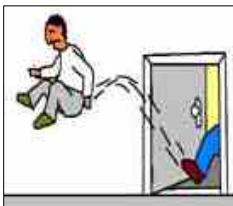
At the initiative of County Executive Rushern Baker and drafted by a County Council member, a taskforce may be established to study the composition, qualifications, and compensation of school board members. One change that might take place is the appointment of some or all board members. Would the further concentration of power be a positive step or not?

There may be a battle. Here's a just-received email message:

Five years ago, after many years of working together, we finally got our full voting rights back with a school board of nine members, each representing a single district (plus the student member, of course). Now, [a delegate] has introduced a bill to establish a task force to make recommendations as to "the composition and qualifications of members of the Board" and "the most appropriate method of selecting the members". In other words, [she] wants to start the fight all over again. Not surprisingly, she is an ally of Rushern Baker, who led the move to take away our voting rights in the first place. We must stop this bill!

Immigration: Deportations

Available data from the Immigration Courts show that during December 2012 the government reported 14,898



new Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) filings seeking deportation orders. Such filings were down 25% through the first three months of FY 2013 (which began in October) when compared with average monthly filings during FY 2012, according to the case-by-case information analyzed by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. And we have the Clearinghouse to thank for this information.

In Maryland, there were deportation proceedings

against 350 residents; Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras were the primary home countries of these immigrants.

Fully 148 of the total were "entry without inspection," which means that there were no criminal charges, just kick-outs. Entry without inspection occurs where the alien crosses the border without *any* inspection. This means that no authorities ever documented the alien's entry across the border—which might be by land or sea border. The "other immigration charges" applies to 140 of those who were put into deportation proceedings; the meaning of the charge includes not having a valid visa, falsely claiming citizenship, or being back in the country after previously being deported—which does not include anything terrible such as assault or rape.

So even the current practice hits families without a serious criminal charge, thus causing fragmentation. Are we enhancing safety or fragmenting families or both?

Source: http://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/charges/deport_filing_charge.php

Immigration: Driver's Licenses

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn plans to sign legislation that will enable undocumented immigrants to obtain three-year state driver's licenses. He thinks—correctly!—that the law eliminates "a dangerous risk" of people driving without having passed a driving test or obtained vehicle insurance.

In California, a new state law that took effect on January 1st allows driver's licenses to be issued to those given a work permit as part of an Obama administration program that suspends deportation for many people who arrived illegally as children. (The "mini-dream") Now, an assemblyman has introduced legislation to provide California driver's licenses to anyone who can show he or she pays taxes, regardless of immigration status. "Having uninsured drivers is a hazard for everyone. [The act] improves safety on our roadways because it will ensure that immigrants who pay taxes will be eligible for driver's licenses with insurance requirements."

The Illinois and California actions should be duplicated in Maryland and elsewhere for the safety of all of those who drive or walk across a street.

Hilda Solis

Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis has submitted her letter of resignation, to the regret of those in the labor movement, many Latinas, and many feminists. (In the cabinet: Hillary's going, Hilda's going, Euro males are coming.) So who will now be the vigorous voice to fight for the rights of laborers, including domestic workers? Let's hope for someone strong and skilled.

Ms. Solis was the daughter of a father from Mexico and a mother from Nicaragua. They both worked in factories and were members of unions. Ah unions; the large corporations and organizations



A few days ago, activist Erika Andiola* sent this message from her Arizona home: "Folks, my house just got raided by ICE and they took my mom and my brother." Apparently there was no warrant legally justifying the raid! Is this activity still going on? Hey Mr. President!

With Ms. Andiola's intervention and help from a lawyer, mother and son were eventually released.

*Ms. Andiola is president and founder of the Arizona DREAM Act Coalition.

have reduced the union reach by about two-thirds. So the Secretary of Labor must be the person to champion workers' rights—which Ms. Solis did.)

FBI Move

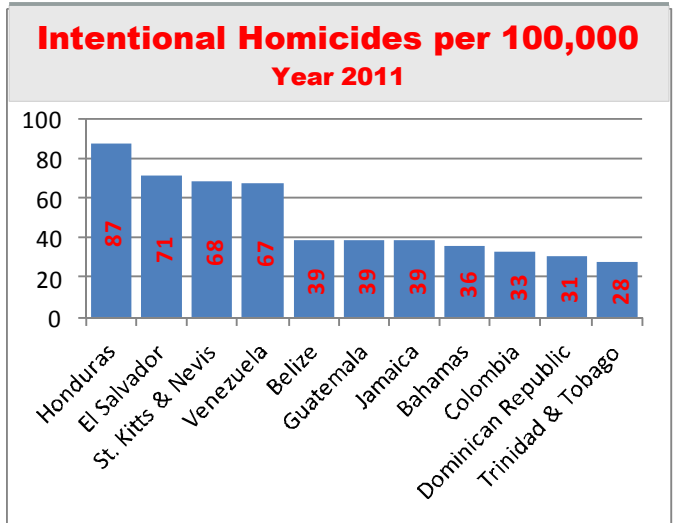
Prince George's County officials want the FBI headquarters to move to the county, and so do officials from several other jurisdictions in the DC Metro area. The latest lobbyists are from Virginia:

"We are here to make sure the FBI headquarters is located in Virginia," said Loudoun County Chair Scott York. "We have some outstanding sites throughout our region. And we committed today that when the one site in Virginia is selected, we stand united," said Prince William County Supervisor Maureen Caddigan.

The economic struggles of PG County indicate that for the wellbeing of a jurisdiction, it's the county that should get the boost. But there are powerful arguments offered by the competition. We will soon see.

Homicides in or near the Caribbean

What is it about Central American and Caribbean countries that lead to high levels of intentional homicide? The figures for 2011 (the latest seen by BLP) are dramatic in location. Of course, the drug trade is a factor. Could it also be that the "export" of criminals from the USA to their home countries have led to the slaughters? Whatever the explanation, be careful when you travel to these murder areas. Oh yes, the USA score is 5.



Politics: The Turf War

Should all high school playing fields be required to use artificial turf? A bill to that effect has been introduced in the state assembly. The reason for the action, apparently, is safety because the grass fields are not well maintained, and injuries result. Of course, installing the turf is expensive—some estimates put the cost of one field at about \$1,000,000. Overall, what are the pros and cons? BLP's large staff has no expertise on this subject, but here are a few items drawn from the internet:



Pros: lower maintenance costs, pesticide-free, increased playability, fewer concussions and other injuries, saves water.

FAST FOOD: OFTEN UNHEALTHY!

Try Something Else, Live Longer Thinner!

The food in any fast-food restaurants is fast and sometimes tasty but often dangerous to health because there is too much fat, too many calories, and too much sodium (salt). Below is Yahoo.com information on some of the popular fast food items and their health dangers.



Here are scary data from the CDC on our adults: Non-Hispanic blacks have the highest age-adjusted rates of obesity (49.5%) compared with Mexican Americans (40.4%), all Hispanics (39.1%), and non-Hispanic whites (34.3%).

So what can one eat if all of these items are eliminated from one's intake? Readers know the answer: more fruits and vegetables. But if the wish is to be fat and die early, go for the items listed below.

KFC

One Extra Crispy Breast

Fat: 33 grams, Calories: 510, Sodium: 1,010 milligrams

Popcorn Chicken- Large

Fat: 37 grams, Calories: 560, Sodium: 1,480 milligrams

Chicken Pot Pie (left)

Fat: 45 grams, Calories: 790, Sodium: 1,970 milligrams



Chipotle

Burrito: Carnitas, white rice, pinto beans, sour cream, and cheese (left)

Fat: 40.5 grams, Calories: 990, Sodium: 1,950 milligrams

Tacos: Soft flour tortillas, barbacoa, black beans, guacamole, fajita veggies, corn salsa

Fat: 30.5 grams, Calories: 810, Sodium: 2,130 milligrams

Salad: Lettuce, chicken, pinto beans, fajita veggies, vinaigrette

Fat: 32.5 grams, Calories: 600, Sodium: 1,575

McDonald's

Double Quarter Pounder with Cheese

Fat: 43 grams, Calories: 750, Sodium: 1,280 milligrams

Big Mac

Fat: 29 grams, Calories: 550, Sodium: 970 milligrams

Sausage, Egg, and Cheese McGriddle

Fat: 31 grams, Calories: 550, Sodium: 1,320 milligrams

Big Breakfast with Hotcakes

Fat: 56 grams, Calories: 1,090, Sodium: 2,150 milligrams



Taco Bell

XXL Grilled Stuff Beef Burrito

Fat: 42 grams, Calories: 880, Sodium: 2,080 milligrams

Fiesta Taco Salad with Beef

Fat: 42 grams, Calories: 780, Sodium: 1,380 milligrams

Volcano Nachos

Fat: 58 grams, Calories: 970, Sodium: 1,670 milligrams

Burger King

Double Whopper with Cheese (left)

Fat: 65 grams, Calories: 990, Sodium: 1,480 milligrams

Triple Whopper with Cheese

Fat: 82 grams, Calories: 1,230, Sodium: 1,550 milligrams

Tendercrisp Chicken Sandwich

Fat: 45 grams, Calories: 750, Sodium: 1,560 milligrams



Pizza Hut

Meaty P'Zone

Fat: 46 grams, Calories: 1,100, Sodium: 2,740 milligrams

Meat Lover's Personal 6-Inch Pan Pizza

Fat: 46 grams, Calories: 830, Sodium: 2,110 milligrams

Meat Lover's 14-Inch Pan Pizza (1 slice)

Fat: 28 grams, Calories: 480, Sodium: 1,180 milligrams

"News" continued from Page 4

Cons: heat hazard, lead in product (there are lead-free turf products available at cost by request), zinc in product, other harmful chemicals such as arsenic and selenium, toxic run-off, turf burns, bacterial breeding ground, and adverse affect on asthmatics.

One good source of information is NY state: http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/outdoors/synthetic_turf/crumb-rubber_infilled/fact_sheet.htm

Where Are / Where Aren't the Jobs?

Low unemployment: Professionals such as nurse practitioners, biomedical engineers, audiologists, etc. So for some, graduate school or the equivalent pays off.

High unemployment: forest workers, roof bolters, actors, furniture finishers, telemarketers, etc. (Professors in many fields too.) Maybe if manufacturing returns to the USA (and there's an indicating that it may slowly be happening), some of the occupations not requiring many years of formal education will open up.

The Purple Line

From Takoma Park, we read: "The City of Takoma Park announced that getting the Maryland General Assembly to come up with funds to support construction of mass transit projects is its top priority: **Purple Line**, Red Line (Baltimore), and Corridor Cities Transit (I-270). If Maryland does not find the required 50% match for federal construction funds, other transit systems from around the US will take Maryland's place in the queue.

"Takoma Park has supported the **Purple Line** since it was first proposed in 2001. Two stations--Long Branch and Takoma/Langley Crossroads--will serve Takoma Park residents, and the City believes the **Purple Line** holds immense importance in its long-term health. Land use plans along University Boulevard, New Hampshire Avenue, and Long Branch are all based on the coming of the **Purple Line**. They emphasize walkable, bike friendly streets abutting residential neighborhoods and new mixed-use development.* The plans support environmental improvements by reducing residents' reliance on autos, and redeveloping small commercial parcels and unused parking lots. They also provide tax benefits for Takoma Park, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and the State of Maryland."

What if there will not be sufficient state money to support all of the projects-in-waiting"? Is the **Purple Line** a priority? Or might transportation planners cut the **Purple Line** cost in half by creating a BRT (bus rapid transit) system instead of light-rail?

*The new mixed-use development will, of course, displace homes and businesses currently occupying the spaces.

Marc Rubio Proposes

Senator Rubio, the Florida Republican with Cuban roots, is developing an immigration proposal designed to counter what President Obama may offer. The Rubio proposal, in the *Wall Street Journal* (11 January 2013), shifts immigration access to those with high-level skills, and it offers a set of complex paths for those in the USA to move from undocumented to documented status and then perhaps citizenship. Maybe he understands that entering from Cuba is easy and legal thanks to the Cold War mentality (even though the primary threat from the Castro revolution was a loss of money by the rich), but that entering from elsewhere (despite the great dangers in home countries) is not.

Source: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323442804578235844003050604.html>

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL QUESTION

In the last issue of BLP, #264, there was a quest for an explanation of the sharp dip in standardized test scores by middle school students.

The decline at Buck Lodge MS 2010-2012 is shown here. (Note especially the across-the-board plunge in Math, with the biggest plunge by the females in the school.)*

% Math Read	6 M	6 R	7 M	7 R	8 M	8 R
All	76	74	66	70	52	65
Latino/a	67	63	63	68	49	62
Male	71	71	68	65	54	65
Female	84	77	65	77	49	66
Title 1	76	74	66	70	52	65

We've received a thoughtful explanation from Rachel LaRusso who is currently in South Korea teaching English:

Hi,

I wanted to address the last thing mentioned in your latest newsletter: the fact that grades and test scores drop once a student enters the 7th grade. I've been teaching middle schoolers since 2009 and I recently took courses on child psychology and brain-based teaching (methods and techniques developed based on the science of a child's brain at different ages). The studies show that grades don't drop for any cognitive reasons, but because children are beginning to gain more interest in (and therefore place more importance on) other things, like their friends, their looks, "fitting in" socially, etc. It's the exception—not the rule—when a student considers his or her grades to be a #1 priority.

Rachel LaRusso



Thanks Rachel. And the interest change might be explained in part by the so-called "raging hormones." (There's even a film with that title!)

The BLP staff was inspired to explore the web sites of the American Psychological Association. Here's a brief summary of one research project on middle school children conducted by University of Michigan scholars:

- On average, children's grades drop dramatically during the first year of middle school compared to their grades in elementary school.
- After moving to junior high school, children become less interested in school and less self-assured about their abilities.
- Compared to elementary schools, middle schools are more controlling, less cognitively challenging and focus more on competition.
- At a time when children's cognitive abilities are increasing, middle school offers them fewer opportunities for decision-making and lower levels of cognitive involvement, but a more complex social environment. At the same time, numerous teachers have replaced the single classroom teacher and students often face larger classes and a new group of peers.

The last item above certainly points one way to an improved situation. "Challenge Don't Compare" might be a theme.

Furthermore, concern about high school dropouts might be misplaced because of the middle school problem. Chester Finn (Fordham Institute) comments: "Trying to fix high schools while ignoring middle schools is like bandaging a wound before treating for the underlying infection." So PGCPs officials: Get to work!

*The nearby Nicolas Orem MS displays similar patterns. However, some schools in high SES neighborhoods do not display the plunge.

GUNS & HATE GROUPS

Worried about the widespread possession of assault and other guns in our country (and maybe even in our neighborhood)? Here's more to worry about: The so-called "patriot groups" numbered just over 100 four years ago; now there are well over 1,000. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, "Generally, patriot groups define themselves as opposed to the 'New World Order,' engage in groundless conspiracy theorizing, or advocate or adhere to extreme anti-government doctrines. ... Many warn of impending government violence or the need to prepare for a coming revolution." How dangerous: not everyone in the USA is of European heritage, and the rest of us must scare the heck out of the so-called patriots. "Black equals death!" "Spanish equals disease!" Of course, some of us are scared of them with their assault weapons and perhaps more.

For instance: For the past two years, former public relations director for the Gun Owners of America Richard Mack "has zigzagged across the country spreading dark fears and conspiracy theories about the federal government, hawking his self-published books about guns and God, and encouraging sheriffs to join his new organization, the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA), and be a 'line in the sand' against government agents. He recently bragged that he had spoken at 120 Tea Party events across the country ... in addition to the many law enforcement gatherings, local political fundraisers, John Birch Society (JBS) meetings, and other events where he is treated as a hero."

Maryland has its share of hate groups; the SPLC count is 18, including "white nationalist" groups in Gaithersburg and Silver Spring. In the state, there are four Neo-Nazi groups and three units of the Ku Klux Klan. Scary.

If you care about liberty, tolerance, and such, check out the Southern Poverty Law Center at <http://www.splcenter.org>. It's a forceful voice for such values.

PG BUDGET GAP = \$152M

The county has a rather large budget gap thanks to the decline in real estate taxes (because the assessed value of many properties has declined—that has especially happened in PG County due to its sluggish housing market) and some increased expenses, including pension costs. So what happens now?

Some cuts are coming, but we're told they will not be across-the-board cuts. Rather, much of the education and safety budgets will be protected. That means lots of the rest will be cut somewhere between 2% and 6%. Will infrastructure repair be delayed—and perhaps that's happened already thanks to the bumpy roads. What about health? Transportation? Inspection of code violations? Days and/or hours that centers such as the Langley Park Community Center will be open? Maintaining the futbol fields at Lane Manor Park? We should all be prepared to pay more for county services. Sad. Let's hope at the least that schools and safety really will be protected.

LOOK WHO'S SUPPORTING IMMIGRATION REFORM!!

Tom Donohue, the president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, asserts that the "door to the American dream must always remain open." And he's doing more than talking: He is working to form a coalition of business, labor, faith organizations, law enforcement, nonprofits, and ethnic organizations that will support new and more comprehensive immigration reform. Below are most of the section of his annual report that is devoted to immigration. For those who favor an effort to move undocumented immigrants into the formal sector, there is much to satisfy.

Quote . . .

America has grown and thrived because we have attracted and welcomed the most talented and the hardest working citizens of the world to our shores. Immigrants teach in our universities, invest and invent in our technology companies, staff our hospitals, care for our elderly and young, harvest our food, and serve in our armed forces.



Given our changing demographics, we need more workers to sustain our economy, support our retired population, and to stay competitive. Even with high unemployment, we have millions of job openings that go unfilled. Either the workers come here to fill those jobs or the companies take all of their jobs somewhere else.

Some argue that we should do a better job of educating, training, and putting our own people to work. Damn right. That's why the business community is fighting hard for school and job training reform. ... But we still need immigrants. We are locked in a global competition for the world's best talent. This is the competition that will separate the economic leaders from the laggards in the 21st century.

The Chamber is already teaming up with the labor unions, faith organizations, [ethnic organizations], and law enforcement to build a coalition for comprehensive reform.

We believe immigration reform should include the following inter-related components:

- ◆We need to secure our borders. It is imperative that people and commerce flow efficiently and lawfully through our nation's ports and across our borders. ...

- ◆Our laws must be revised to welcome needed labor and talent into our economy through thoughtfully-designed guest worker programs. This includes provisional visas for lesser-skilled workers. It also includes expanding the caps for high-skilled visas, and, expanding green cards for foreign nationals who graduate from our colleges and universities with advanced degrees.

- ◆We also need a workable, reliable national employee verification system.

- ◆And, we need to provide a path out of the shadows for the 11 million undocumented immigrants who live in the United States today—provided that they meet strict conditions.

As we have this important debate, let's remember who we are and where our families would be today if earlier generations of Americans had decided to slam the door shut. The door to the American dream must always remain open.

. . . Close Quote

HOUSING IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

The housing situation in the county is for the most part terrible. That's because the value of housing plummeted early in the recession, and it has not recovered (by a considerable percentage) its pre-recession value.

"The [USA's] housing market appeared to start a recovery in 2012. Home prices were up, and so were sales. But among the lingering reminders of the housing crisis were the 14 million homeowners who still owed significantly more on their mortgage than their homes were worth. It will take years, economists agree, for many of these homeowners to regain positive equity. In the Washington area, about 321,000 mortgages, or 28.5 percent of borrowers, were underwater. Those homeowners were clustered in the parts of the region hit hardest by the downturn, including many parts of Maryland. For example, more than half the mortgages in Prince George's County were underwater in the third quarter of 2012." (*Washington Post*, 14 January 2013)



The houses pictured here, in Langley Park, are typical of the housing in the neighborhood. However, these three are not known to be under water or otherwise endangered.

The result is two negative situations. As the table to the right indicates, about half of the houses purchased with a mortgage or other loan have not recovered their value. That is, the owners owe more than the house is worth. The county housing is at the bottom of the housing recovery rank for the Washington metropolitan area. And not surprisingly, the zip code that includes Langley Park, 20783, is among the struggling areas.

A friend of ALP purchased a condo near Langley Park for about \$220,000, and the unit is now selling for about one-fourth of that value. She walked away.

Indeed, one response by owners who are under water is to walk away from their under-water home. Abandoning the house and mortgage usually leads to a significant downgrade of one's credit rating, but it is probably rational to take that penalty rather than pay two or three times what the house is currently worth. There are about 2,000 empty foreclosed houses in the county.

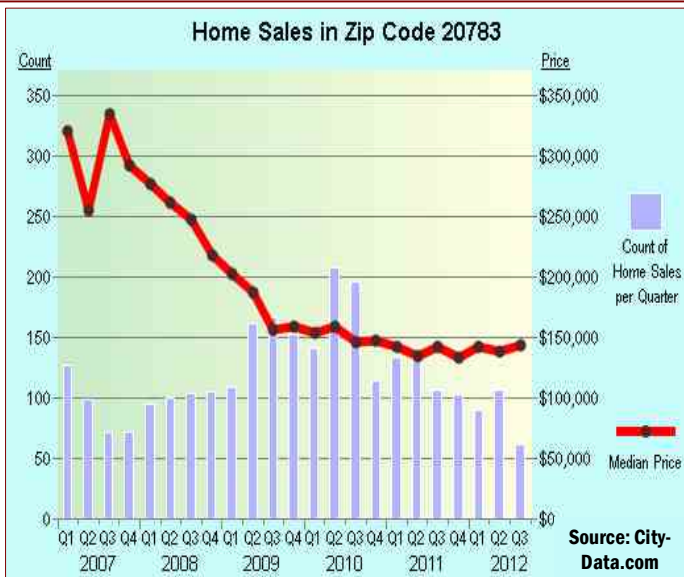
Some owners of severely under water houses try to burn them down. Fortunately, that option is not very popular in the county.

The *Washington Post* article points to another negative consequence of the decline in housing value: abandoned housing. Focusing on a house in Clinton, author Shin writes, "First, a door was busted. Then a window was shattered. Then the air conditioning unit was stolen." So the county or town or perhaps the bank has to board the house up or tear it down. And dreams are shattered.

Abandoned or poorly kept up housing has a negative impact on the neighborhood. Few people want to purchase a home in an area where there are boarded up houses, laws not mowed, and perhaps empty lots where homes once stood. So the neighbors suffer, and the value of their homes are likely to decline.

HOUSING IN LANGLEY PARK

As the Zip Code table reveals, more than 50% of the houses in 20783 are under water. The graph to the right shows that the average price of a house in the area has plunged from a high of just under \$350,000 just before the recession hit to under \$150,000 in the third quarter of 2012. Clearly, the area's housing recovery is very slow; the price of houses has hardly increased over the past three years. That flat value is almost unique in the county. For instance, in zip code 20737, the area with the highest percentage of under water houses, the past year has seen an uptick: from a low of \$100k, to about \$160k.



ZIP CODE	UNDER WATER
20608	19.20%
20723	28.70%
20715	37.80%
20721	41.90%
20724	42.70%
20712	43.30%
20740	45.10%
20607	47.30%
20769	47.80%
20720	48.20%
20705	49.50%
20708	49.90%
20748	52.20%
20782	52.30%
20781	52.30%
20722	53.40%
20706	53.50%
20623	53.70%
20716	54.30%
20735	54.30%
20744	54.40%
20783	55.30%
20707	55.80%
20710	56.10%
20772	56.30%
20770	58.00%
20613	58.50%
20784	58.80%
20774	58.90%
20743	59.80%
20785	60.00%
20746	60.20%
20747	63.00%
20745	63.20%
20737	65.40%



This web site can direct the user to more than 9,000 health, social service, and criminal justice resource programs. The first step is to go to the web site (above). There, the user enters his or her address, then indicates the distance from the user's location that is accessible (e.g., 10 miles). The next step is to select the service wanted, for instance, adult education, conflict resolution, food assistance, housing programs, schools, senior citizen resources, crime victim services, and much more. Not all resources in the state are participating organizations, but 9,000 is a good start. Check it out!

TAKE THE SAT EXAM FREE!

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) juniors can register to take the SAT college entrance exam during the district's SAT School Day on February 27, during the regular school day.

The SAT School Day helps states and districts foster a college-going culture and increases access to college, especially among first-generation college-bound students. The SAT can also be an important tool for assessing students' mastery of state standards in mathematics, reading and writing.

Students can register until February 13 and will need an email account, a free College Board online account, EDUID (State ID) number and the SAT student voucher, available in the school guidance office. Every SAT registration includes up to four free score reports that can be sent to colleges and scholarship services.

To register, go to <http://sat.collegeboard.org/schoolday/feb>

WHAT & WHEN



Here we list upcoming ALP activities and other events that are called to our attention. Have an event to list? If so, send information well in advance to actionlangleypark@yahoo.com.

February 2—Folk Society Festival, noon to 10:30 p.m., the Takoma Park Middle School, 7611 Piney Branch Rd, Takoma Park. The Takoma Park festivals offer a wonderful range of folk cultures. There is an entry fee. Parking is challenging.

March 7-9—Physics is Phun, "Energy and Motion." 7 p.m. U of MD Physics lecture halls. For information, call 301 405-6045 or email lohara@umd.edu.

March 14—Action Langley Park meets at 7 p.m. in the Langley Park Community Center. It's an open meeting: come one, come all! How can we help the residents and business-people of Langley Park? Let's explore and plan.

April 27—Maryland Day on the University of Maryland campus. Almost everything free; lots to see and do

May 2-4—Physics is Phun, "Water." See above Phun information.

May 5—Langley Park Day, a festival of music, dance, food, information, and especially health (there's a big health fair included as part of the event). The whole world is invited!!! Everything is free except purchases of foods or crafts. Time: Noon to 4 p.m. Location: Langley Park Community Center. Volunteer doctors, nurses, dancers, musicians, clowns, and guides will participate; other volunteers are all welcome (let us know). Food and craft vendors should contact Lourdes Sulc at 301 445-4508; health professionals and information providers should contact Bill Hanna at 301 405-4005.

June 1 and 2—Washington Folk Festival at Glen Echo park. Free!

Here & There

Education and Employment

Dramatic data on the relationship between one's educational achievement and employment have been released by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The table (right) shows that the more educational achievement, the greater the rate of employment for those in the 21-24 age group. Once the recession hits, the decline in employment is greater for the less-well-educated. For instance, the employment drop for those with only a high school diploma from before until after the recession, 55% to 47%; 47/55, is a 15% drop, whereas those with a bachelor's degree suffered only a 69% to 65% drop, 6%. Moral of the story: in good times and bad, get as much education as possible.

<i>Employment Rate in percent</i>	High School Diploma	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree
Before Recession	55	64	69
During Recession	51	62	67
After Recession	47	57	65

Health and Life Expectancy

Younger Americans die earlier and live in poorer health than their counterparts in other developed countries, with far higher rates of death from guns, car accidents and drug addiction, according to a new study of health and longevity in the USA. That's one finding of Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council. This is termed "the USA's health disadvantage," and it is clearly revealed by comparing the situation in the USA with 17 other well-off countries. Some of the differences are our high rates of heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes. Lack of education, poverty, and our weak "safety net" are factors. Yet our per capita health costs are well above the comparison countries. A single-payer system might well increase life expectancy and decrease health costs, but apparently the anti-government crowd will not let that to happen.

The report comments: "Without action to reverse current trends, the health of Americans will probably continue to fall behind that of people in other high-income countries. The tragedy is not that the U.S. is losing a contest with other countries, but that Americans are dying and suffering from illness and injury at rates that are demonstrably unnecessary."

<i>Country Rank for Life Expectancy</i>	Men	Country Rank	Women
1 Switzerland	79.33	1 Japan	85.98
2 Australia	79.27	2 France	84.43
3 Japan	79.20	3 Switzerland	84.09
17 USA	75.64	16 USA	80.78