

RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL

STATEMENT ON LEGISLATIVE POLICY

The Rural Maryland Council has a truly unique status as an independent state agency and a neutral consensus builder. As such, the Council is somewhat constrained in the legislative positions it should adopt. For example, pursuant to the Council's Bylaws, the Executive Board is prohibited from adopting public positions on legislative issues that are directly contrary to the stated positions of the Governor. This prohibition does not in any way constrain the Council from forcefully approaching the Governor and others in the Administration regarding issues of rural concern. Moreover, the Council currently has small staff and budget which potentially constrains the Council's ability to be effective and credible on multiple legislative issues simultaneously.

Accordingly, the Executive Board has determined that the Council should focus its energy and resources where it will do the most good for Rural Marylanders. For example, the Council should not expend resources on a public policy issue that it has no reasonable ability to influence the probable final outcome (i.e., no tilting at windmills), or if the issue is otherwise being appropriately addressed by other rural stakeholding organizations. (Obviously, it would be unproductive for the Council to try to duplicate the legislative advocacy efforts of such influential stakeholding groups as MML, MACo or the Maryland Farm Bureau.) The Council therefore should only adopt a position on a piece of legislation pending before the General Assembly if: **A**) it has at least a regional rural impact (the Bylaws prohibit legislative position-taking on purely local bills); and **B**) it meets one of the following criteria:

- 1) The issue is being put forward as an initiative of a RMC Working Committee or other ad hoc study committee.
- 2) The issue has a significant impact on Rural Maryland and other rural stakeholding organizations are (or are expected to be) unwilling or unable to offer effective advocacy on behalf of rural interests; OR
- 3) The issue is a major public policy issue broadly or uniquely impacting Rural Maryland and the Council can reasonably anticipate having some ability to help influence the final outcome in a way that benefits rural citizens.