

McKay gives overview of first weeks as state senator

by Brenda Ruggiero
STAFF WRITER

ANNAPOLIS — It has been just about a month since the 445th legislative session convened in Annapolis and Senator Mike McKay was sworn in.

“It was a privilege to join my 46 colleagues in what looks to be an interesting and busy 90 days,” he said in his first newsletter.

In a phone interview on Feb. 3, McKay noted that the transition hasn’t been too difficult for him, since he had already represented two out of three of the counties in the Maryland General Assembly in the House of Delegates. This made him familiar with some of the players, contacts and concerns ahead of time.

“But I will tell you that having 23 towns/municipalities, three boards of educa-

tion, three boards of county commissioners and having a district that runs about two hours and 37 minutes from one end to the other is a little challenging,” he said. “So we are doing our best to introduce ourselves to each and every one within the district.”

McKay said he is also working on putting together a staff.

“Hopefully ... we’re going to be able to have somebody who might be a stand-in for me as a representative in some of those towns and municipalities when I’m called to be in Williamsport and Oakland at the same time,” he said.



McKay

McKay stated that the No. 1 priority is making sure that any type of funding or issues that were happening in Garrett, Allegany or Washington counties over the last four years still continue to be front and center.

“I don’t want that conversation to be dropped, so whether it be lake issues or it be the Yough or it be just general needs from Garrett County, we’re making sure that that’s there,” he said.

One current bill that McKay mentioned is the Whole Home Act, which he explained will create an entity of funds that will help seniors age in place and also help small landlords.

“We have a population migration in Western Maryland, and we need to make sure that people stay in place as much as they can,” McKay said. “We also need

to make sure that we have workforce housing and so this Whole Home Act will take a senior who has gotten older and maybe they physically ... and financially can’t take care of their home.”

The Act would take weatherization-type dollars that come from the federal government and put them into one pot to help seniors with grants to keep their homes in good working condition.

“We need to really strengthen our seniors to allow them to age in place and help them to continue the values of their home so it doesn’t become blight,” McKay said. “And then when it’s time for them to sell their home, they now already have workforce development housing already created. So now people can afford to come and live in Garrett County and not in

the big homes around the lake.”

McKay stated that a hearing for the Act is planned for Feb. 14.

“What we’re asking is to do a pilot program and then let the governor decide what kind of money they want to put in the program,” he said.

When speaking about taking the place of retired Senator George Edwards, McKay stated that the two have worked well together over the last eight years. Edwards was also McKay’s senator when he was a county commissioner in Allegany County.

“What that has done is kind of laid the path for me to follow and it is extended down here in the General Assembly,” he said. “Because of the work we had done with rural health, especially when it comes to

oral health and getting oral health put into the Medicaid portfolio, I’ve already made a name for myself looking at statewide issues and how we can help everybody.”

McKay noted that he feels that following the same path as Edwards and also working on relationships gives him an out-of-the-gate advantage compared to somebody who had not been there before.

“So we will continue it,” he said. “One of the things that George was always good at was listening, and I hope to follow exactly in his footsteps that way.”

McKay can be reached in his Annapolis Office at 410-841-3565 or his District Office at 240-362-7040. His public email address is mike.mckay@senate.state.md.us.

Ranger Donnellan retires from Jennings Randolph Lake

by Brenda Ruggiero
STAFF WRITER

BLOOMINGTON — After 38 years of federal service, Lead Park Ranger Bill Donnellan retired from his work at Jennings Randolph Lake on Jan. 31.

“Bill began his career with Jennings Randolph Lake in 1985 and has been an integral part of the JRL team,” a Facebook post stated. “From the development of recreation areas to the implementation of programs, Bill has played a part in every decision.”

The post also noted his sense of humor and his commitment to his principles that have endeared him to co-workers, visitors, and recreation and resource partners.

Donnellan mentored countless rangers throughout his years as a park ranger, many of whom have furthered their careers with the Army Corps of Engineers.

During the recreation season, his duties included visitor assistance and overseeing six recreation areas and two leased areas. These include a 65-site campground, beach area, picnic area, two boat launches, two day use overlooks and a downstream whitewater recreation area.

“As a park ranger, you do wear multiple hats,” Donnellan said.

One of his most notable accomplishments in his career is the Bill Nesbit Memorial People with Disabilities/Wounded Veterans Deer Hunt. Since 2006, Donnellan has grown the program from 10 volunteers to well over 80 volunteers. He has provided hunting opportunities to more than 170 hunters over the past 17 years.

“I had so many people lend their time, support and money to this event,” Donnellan said. “I could never do it on my own. I just planted the seed and watched it grow.”

He also noted that he was very active in the Corps water safety program, which also involved speaking at local schools for over 30 years.

“Several years ago, we were able to make two water safety PSA videos that I am very proud of,” he said.

See RANGER, B2



Submitted photo

Lead Ranger Bill Donnellan bids a fond farewell to Jennings Randolph Lake upon his retirement.



Submitted photo

Bill Donnellan measures a tree as part of his job as lead ranger.



Submitted photo

Bill Donnellan was very active in the Corps water safety program, which also involved speaking at local schools for over 30 years.

Heckman: Fusion energy is coming

From Staff Reports

MCHENRY — “The old joke used to be, ‘Fusion energy is 25 years into the future and always will be,’” Kurt Heckman told a packed recital hall Wednesday night at the Performing Arts Center at Garrett College.

“That’s not true anymore,” he continued. “I think we’ll be looking at fusion energy on the grid in a decade — and maybe sooner than that.”

That was one of the biggest takeaways as the former U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) official talked about some of the recent developments in the field of nuclear fusion. Another was how nuclear fusion is likely to dramatically change the worldwide energy equation.

“Through nuclear fusion, the lithium in a common laptop and the hydrogen from a bathtub of sea water can create more energy than 80 tons of coal,” said Heckman, who served as DOE’s director of Secretarial Boards and Councils during the Trump Administration.

The former aerospace engineer noted that nuclear fusion is accomplished without most of the issues associated with nuclear fission.

“There are no greenhouse gases, no meltdown potential, no proliferation material, and no long-term radioactive waste,” said Heckman. “And every country in the world can potentially have domestic energy in abundance.”

Heckman said a recent scientific breakthrough is just the latest step in the pathway to fusion energy. That milestone took place this past December at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) located at the Lawrence Livermore Lab in Livermore, (Calif.).

“Scientists used a large array of 192 lasers pointed at a single target,” the Friendsville resident explained. “Energy in; energy out — low and behold, they broke the barrier. For the first time, there was more energy coming out than going in.”

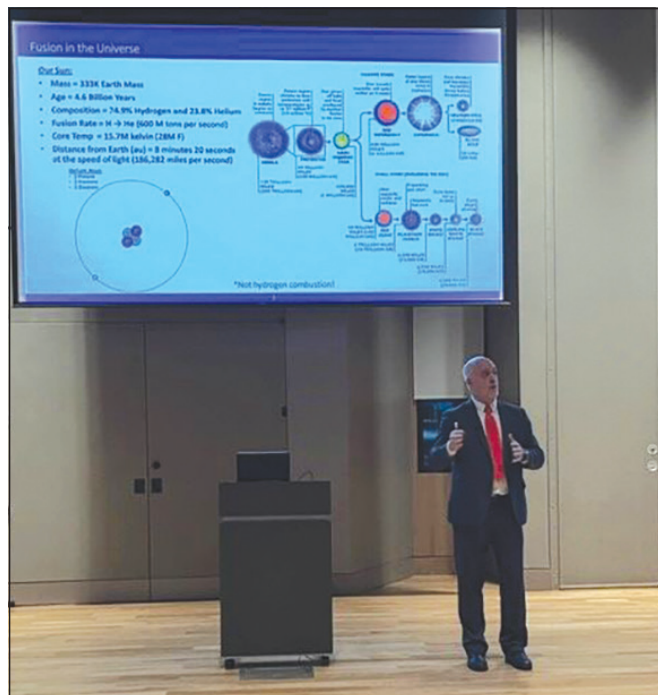
This seminal event was possible due to improvements in the machines built to house these reactions.

“The engineering challenge has always been creating a machine that could



Submitted photo

Pictured above is former DOE Kurt Heckman at the Garrett College Performing Arts Center.



Submitted photo

Kurt Heckman, speaking Wednesday night at the Performing Arts Center at Garrett College, says commercial applications of nuclear fusion could be “on the grid in a decade.”

withstand the necessary heat and neutrons,” said Heckman. “We now have machines creating temperatures 10 times the temperature of the middle of the sun.”

“So, we’ve actually gotten to fusion conditions for years. Now we’re trying to get fusion reactions that can go on for long periods of time without breaking the machine,” he added.

Heckman said moving fusion energy from a neat scientific breakthrough to readily available commercial applications will likely become possible due to “American capitalism” that has funded advances in lasers, high temperature super-conductors, artificial intelligence, and other advanced materials to service existing economic demands.

“Since the Reagan Administration, fusion en-

ergy science was solely a long-term government investment,” said Heckman, who added that the involvement of the private sector is “the real breakthrough.”

“There are now companies attracting significant commercial funding to turn nuclear fusion into a commercial energy source,” said Heckman, highlighting the \$1.2 billion in capital investment attracted by TAE Technologies, which is based in Foothills Ranch, California.

Heckman foresees a possible future where smaller, more efficient nuclear fusion facilities replace the large, aging nuclear fission reactors.

“The commercial research being done now,” said Heckman, “could get us to where we have small fusion reactors in places like McHenry and Friendsville.”

Love is in the air - so are germs!

Here are some tips on how to stay healthy!



Get vaccinated!



Wash your hands!



Avoid touching your eyes, nose & mouth!



Stop the spread!

(301) 533-3300 | www.mtnlaurel.org

MOUNTAIN LAUREL MEDICAL CENTER

Making a Difference