



# Raising UU Voices

Advocacy for Justice and Human Rights

*Unitarian Universalist  
Legislative Ministry of Maryland*

## Maryland UUs Make a Difference

During the 90-day 2008 Maryland General Assembly session that ended in April, the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) advocated for health care expansion, efforts to reduce global warming, and civil marriage rights for same-sex couples. Our UU voice made a significant impact, thanks to the work of our task forces, legislative network members,

and Annapolis Corps.

Increasingly, our coalition partners as well as state legislators look to UULM-MD for input, testimony, and training sessions on critical social justice issues. They count on us to mobilize constituents to act.

UULM-MD's reach extends beyond Maryland as well.

We work with the UU State-wide Advocacy Networks to communicate about national issues, share best practices, and foster the growth and development of emerging statewide advocacy networks.

With your continued participation, we will nurture both a statewide and national UU advocacy movement.

## Lay the Groundwork for the 2009 Session

Much important work can be accomplished during the nine months that the General Assembly is not in session. It is a great time to visit your legislators and take the time for an in-depth conversation. Get to know them and the issues they care about, as well as sharing about yourself and what you value. Thank them for their past work, especially if they have sponsored or supported legislation related to UULM-MD priorities. Here are some tips to keep in mind, as offered by former Governor Parris Glendening and Senator Richard Madaleno at UULM-MD's first annual meeting:

- Constituents are the most powerful lobbyists
- Go beyond statistics—tell a story
- Be targeted—focus on legislators who are open to persuasion
- Make no assumptions—communicate with legislators even if you think you know their opinion

## Join UULM-MD and Double Your Impact

The UU Fund for Social Responsibility will match any new contributions we receive, up to \$4,000. Please join today, and turn your \$25 dues into \$50!

Already a member? Renew your membership and recruit a friend to become a new member!

Complete the form on the back of the newsletter or go to [www.uulmmd.org](http://www.uulmmd.org).

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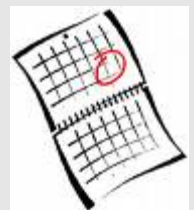
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Fall 2008

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### Save the Date



### Annual Meeting

Saturday, Nov. 15  
9:00am—1:00pm  
UU Church of Silver Spring



*Health Care advocates celebrate Medicaid expansion with Vinny DeMarco, leader of the MD Citizens' Health Initiative*

## UULM-MD 2008 Annual Meeting

Our fourth Annual Meeting, "Expanding UU Influence in Maryland: Visions for Legislative Action in 2009" will be held on Saturday, November 15 from 9am until 1pm at the UU Church of Silver Spring. Part of the morning will be spent examining the impact of the 2008 national elections and the Maryland slots referendum on UULM-MD's priority issues.

## Marriage Equality

There was a great deal of activity related to the civil rights of same-sex couples during the 2008 session.

The Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act (SB 290 & HB 351) did not come to a vote in committee, but it did garner major support, including 7 lead sponsors and 42 co-sponsors. Legislators plan to introduce this legislation again next year.

In contrast to the major support for civil marriage equality this year, there was little support for legislation to create a constitutional amendment that limits marriage to heterosexual couples. HB 1345 and SB 169 died in committee.

Two significant steps toward civil rights for same-sex couples were taken during the session. A bill protecting hospital visitation and medical decision-making rights for domestic partners passed, and a bill exempting domestic partners from recordation and transfer taxes passed.

Maryland UU influence on the issue of marriage equality was most evident at Equality Maryland's Lobby Day on February 11. Over 100 UUs, some arriving on the Cedar Lane Freedom to Marry bus, participated in a rally and met with their legislators. Many also took part in an inspirational, informative training session at the UU Church of Annapolis prior to the rally.

## Health Care

UULM-MD and its health care coalition partners accomplished several important goals during the 2008 General Assembly session. First, critical funding for the Special Session's Medicaid expansion, which began July 1, was left intact.

Second, the Kids First Act (HB1391) was passed. This legislation helps start Maryland on the road to universal health care for our children. There are 90,000 Maryland children who are already eligible for public health insurance, and HB 1391 will help ensure that they are able to access this coverage.

In the spring of 2008, the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative held more than a dozen town hall meetings across the state in order to share information and seek input on the next steps toward health care expansion in Maryland. Four of these meetings were held at UU churches. UULM-MD will continue to be involved in the development of plans leading toward universal health care in Maryland.



*The UU Fellowship of Harford County, led by UULM-MD Board member Rev. Lisa Ward (second from left), celebrates the raising of its "Civil Marriage is a Civil Right" banner.*

## Darfur

Join the UU Service Committee's Drumbeat for Darfur campaign to educate about and advocate for the people of Darfur. Tents of Hope is a program that brings community members together to create a piece of art to show solidarity with the people of Darfur. It brings attention to the plight of the women and girls in the refugee camps, where they are particularly vulnerable to violence. For more information, go to [www.uusc.org/tentsofhope](http://www.uusc.org/tentsofhope).



## Global Warming

The Global Warming Solutions—Reductions in Greenhouse Gases Bill (SB 309) passed the Senate 88-46 with amendments, but became bogged down in the House Economic Matters Committee on the last day of the session. However, a number of important measures advancing energy efficiency and renewable energy did become law.

For a second year, global warming was the focus of UULM-MD's youth advocacy efforts. On February 18, UULM-MD and Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light sponsored Global Warming Action Day—Interfaith Youth *Cool It* in Annapolis. Over 30 youth and adults participated, in conjunction with the statewide Environmental Action Day. They discussed why they feel that global warming is a critical issue, heard from elected leaders such as Speaker Mike Busch and Congressman Chris Van Hollen, participated in advocacy training, and most importantly, met with their senators and delegates to express their views.



Gov. O'Malley speaks at a Global Warming rally. Check out the two UULM signs in the background!

## News from Congregations

Congregations in Maryland are stepping up to support UULM-MD and its issues in numerous ways.

The River Road UU Congregation's Social Justice Council made a generous \$2,000 grant to UULM-MD.

The UU Church of Annapo-

lis and Goodloe Memorial UU Congregation held special collections, and the Annapolis church voted to affiliate with UULM-MD.

We continue to seek one member from each congregation in Maryland to serve on our Congregation Liaison Council. Liaisons help coor-

dinate education and action on priority issues and keep their congregations informed about advocacy opportunities.

Affiliation is a great way to formalize your congregation's support for UULM-MD. For more information on this mutually beneficial relationship, go to [www.uulmmd.org](http://www.uulmmd.org).

## Other Issues of Interest to UUs

While UULM-MD aims to maximize its effectiveness through a limited focus on a few priority issues, many UUs in Maryland engage in advocacy on numerous other important public policy issues.

UULM-MD will work with congregations to promote their priority issues by adding them to the UULM-MD website and coordinating with Legislative Watch, led by Keith Smith of the UU Congregation of Columbia.

### UULM-MD Board

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## Join UULM-MD!

Join online at [www.uulmmd.org](http://www.uulmmd.org) or complete  
this form.

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Membership dues: \$25 (tax deductible)

Additional contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your tax deductible check  
payable to UUCA, with UULM-MD in  
the memo line, and mail to:

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c/o UU Church of Annapolis  
333 Dubois Road  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Please contact me about be-  
ing a UULM-MD volunteer.  
I am interested in learning  
more about:

\_\_\_ Congregation Liaison

\_\_\_ Annapolis Corps

\_\_\_ Legislative Network

\_\_\_ Youth Participation

\_\_\_ Board of Directors

\_\_\_ Issue Task Forces

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