THE BANNER

Maryland Senate District 11

Banner Staff

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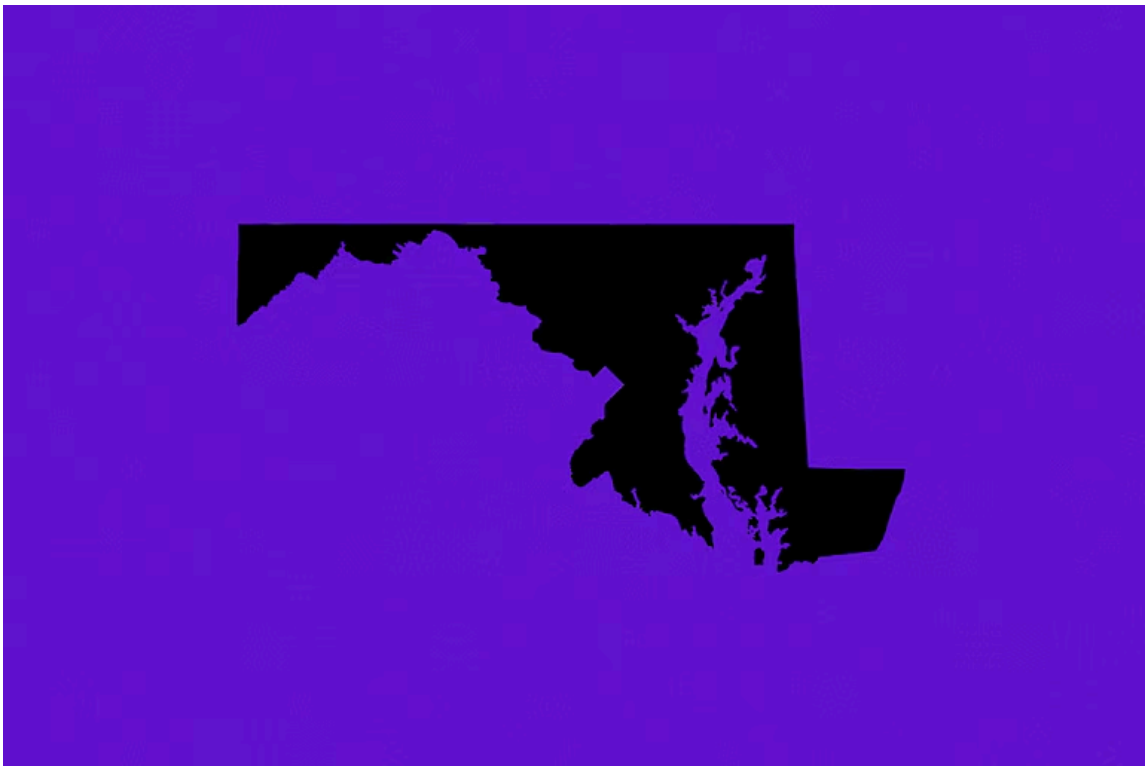


What's the job: One of 188 members of Maryland's General Assembly, split between the House of Delegates and the Senate. Responsible for introducing and voting on legislation, approving state spending and providing oversight of Maryland government operations. Elected to a four-year term.

Jump to a candidate

Candidates are listed in order of appearance on the ballot

Shelly L. Hettleman (D) | Jim Simpson (R)

Democratic

Name: Shelly L. Hettleman

Shelly Hettleman. (Brion McCarthy)

Age: 62

Personal: Married, two children.

Education: Bachelor's degree, political science, Northwestern University.

Experience: Member, Maryland Senate, District 11 (2020-present); chair, subcommittee on public safety, transportation and the environment of the Budget & Taxation Committee (present); co-chair, Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee (2023-present); chair, Special Joint Committee on Pensions, (2025-present); member, Maryland House of Delegates (2015-2020); campaign director, Ben Cardin for Senate (2007-2014); senior planner, The Associated: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore (2005-2007).

Questionnaire

Q: Maryland's state government is facing a structural deficit in future years. Please describe how you would approach closing the gap. Be specific about any spending cuts or revenue increases you propose.

A: Our state Constitution requires that we pass a balanced budget and each year we do. We have a conservative method of determining our revenue projections and the balance of responsibility between the executive and legislative branches ensures that we take a deliberative and thoughtful approach to budgeting. Rating agencies have given us the highest ratings, which translates into lower borrowing rates, so clearly, our methods have garnered the respect of national reviewers. Each year we need to make a determination about whether we have the revenues available to support the continued investments in programs that address Marylanders' needs. If we do not, then we need to decide whether some programs should be pared back or whether we should raise revenues. In all likelihood, it's

a combination of both, but we need to make that determination only after reviewing the data.

Q: What do you consider the three most pressing issues facing Maryland?

A: The rising cost of energy, growing our economy to be less dependent on the federal government, and protecting Marylanders from the overreaches of the Trump administration.

Q: What would you do to lower the cost of living for Maryland residents?

A: The reality is that much of what is driving increased costs in Maryland has to do with federal policy. The rise in gas prices has nothing to do with state policy, and we know that transportation is the second-highest cost, behind housing, for Maryland families. The costs of this administration's tariff policy has resulted in higher prices of goods being sold in Maryland.

Housing is an issue over which we do have some impact and is a high-cost item for Marylanders. Maryland has a shortage of over 100,000 housing units for our residents. In light of not having enough supply, I have supported policies, including permitting reform, that both address expanding the supply of housing as well as providing support to those who struggle with housing costs through the expansion of rental assistance programs. We are also keenly aware that Marylanders are feeling the effect of rising utility costs, and we passed legislation this year and last year that will bring some relief to ratepayers. This legislation includes implementation of policy reforms that we believe will expand energy supply as well as

address the power needs of data centers that are one of the important causes of our rate increases.

Q: The cost of implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future education plan will exceed the money available in the Blueprint's fund over the next few years. Should the state raise new revenue for the programs, or should the programs be rolled back or adjusted?

A: We need to take a look at the statewide comprehensive assessment of what has and has not been successful in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. That assessment is being worked on now and is due before the next legislative session. Based on that assessment, if there are policies that are not effective or need reform, then we need to learn from the assessments and be prepared to make changes. I believe in and support the goals of the blueprint and that our students deserve the highest quality education. I also believe that investing in what is working in our public schools is among the most important things that government should be investing in and has ramifications not only for those individual students and their families, but in our business environment. Businesses also make decisions about where they are to locate based on the school systems that their workers' children will attend.

We meet regularly with Baltimore County public school officials and I am pleased that Baltimore County public schools have made demonstrable gains: Student groups across all levels have demonstrated improved proficiency in math and language arts. Academic achievement and progress have improved in elementary and middle schools.

Q: Besides an election, how do you want constituents to review your job performance?

A: I hope that constituents take a look at my legislative record by reviewing what bills I have introduced and successfully passed and supported. It's easy to search via the Maryland General Assembly website here: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Members/Details/hettleman02. No one gets anything done alone in the General Assembly, and I've worked well with my colleagues to make meaningful change. Bills I have introduced and passed have helped many people who care about keeping private their healthcare records, who care about protecting their reproductive health, who have student loan debt, who need rental housing assistance, who require legal representation in eviction proceedings, who have been sexually assaulted, who care about transparency and accountability in state spending, and who care about reforming our prison system. There are many other issues I've worked on over the years that have made a meaningful impact on Marylanders' lives.

Constituent service is also an incredibly important aspect of this job. We have responded to hundreds of District 11 residents' requests to solve their problems with state agencies and have saved them time and effort in getting a resolution to their issues. We are in the business of representing our community and being responsive to their needs.

Republican

Name: Jim Simpson

Jim Simpson. (Courtesy of Jim Simpson)

Age: 74

Personal: Divorced, two grown children.

Education: Master's degree, economics, University of Delaware.

Experience: Security, including as a Department of State diplomatic security officer; certified pistol instructor; author.

Questionnaire

Q: Maryland's state government is facing a structural deficit in future years. Please describe how you would approach closing the gap. Be specific about any spending cuts or revenue increases you propose.

A: The fiscal 2027 budget was balanced with some modest spending cuts, transfers from various investment funds, e.g. the Strategic Energy Investment Fund, transferring some costs to local governments, general obligation bonds and other measures. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, i.e. the Kirwan fund, is the primary driver of future unfunded obligations. In the education section, I propose abandoning Kirwan entirely. We already spend too much on public education with too few results. Throwing more money on it won't help. What would help would be to throw out the teacher unions, which would end their symbiotic relationship with the Democrat Party, a relationship that keeps Democrats in power and put us in this position in the first place. We already pay too many taxes. I would advocate substantial reductions in taxes and regulations, enabling Maryland to grow a more robust private sector. I would also abolish Maryland's illegal sanctuary policies and send home the hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens that have made our state their home — driving up school, housing and other costs, while also contributing to growing crime.

Q: What do you consider the three most pressing issues facing Maryland?

A: Taxes, taxes, taxes and more taxes; and the other side of the coin: spending, spending, spending and more spending. Too much by far of both.

Our abysmal education system, described in detail below. Our absolutely idiotic energy policies. Green energy is only green for the politicians and companies supporting it. We have ample energy to support our population at drastically lower cost and could become an energy exporter, bringing jobs and affluence to Maryland. You will never get that from the Democrats, however.

Q: What would you do to lower the cost of living for Maryland residents?

A: 1. Cost of living in Maryland is about 15 percent above the national average. I would reduce taxes of course, and roll back regulations, especially those governing new home construction. Housing costs in Maryland are 30 to 40 percent above the national average, and there is a large shortage of housing.

2. Revert all energy sources to natural gas, hydroelectric, nuclear and clean coal. Utility costs are skyrocketing as a direct result of Democrat polices. Solar farms that destroy wildlife and disfigure the land should be removed, with the exception of rooftop solar on homes that choose it. The ridiculously expensive, environmentally destructive and navigation hazard offshore wind project should be completely abandoned.

3. Make school taxes portable, so people choosing to send their kids to private school or home school could keep those monies currently being assessed to all families for public school, whether their kids go there or not. There is a very limited state-funded voucher program for poor students, but most taxpayers continue to pay the taxes necessary to support our failing public schools.

Finally, one issue that affects all Marylanders is the huge number of illegal aliens in this state. They need to be sent

home.

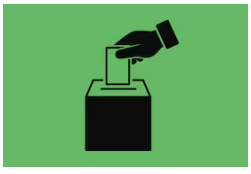
Q: The cost of implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future education plan will exceed the money available in the Blueprint's fund over the next few years. Should the state raise new revenue for the programs, or should the programs be rolled back or adjusted?

A: The program should never have been implemented. Maryland has a bloated education bureaucracy, and already pays per-student rates that are among the top in the 50 states' school spending. Maryland's legislature has been pouring money into public schools for years, especially in cities, yet students graduating in those same city schools, in many cases, cannot read past the sixth-grade level. At Patterson High School, a recent investigation found 77 percent of students could not read past the elementary school level, with dozens reading at kindergarten or first-grade levels. This can largely be blamed on the teachers' unions, which exist to serve themselves and their Democratic paymasters, who receive kickbacks in the form of campaign donations. While many teachers are not Democrats, much of their union dues go to political campaigns and parties. AFT donates 99 percent to Democrats, while the NEA donates 98-99 percent. It is a corrupt system which desperately needs reform. But don't ask the Democrats to reform anything. They have too much to lose. This also explains the furious effort to bring charter schools under the control of the state. The unions hate competition because if they had to compete fairly, most families would choose non-union schools.

Q: Besides an election, how do you want constituents to review your job performance?

A: As a Republican I have no illusions about how difficult it will be to accomplish anything meaningful unless more voters come to their senses and begin rejecting the radical Democrats occupying both chambers of the State House and the governor's mansion. We have only had a few brief years of breathing room in the last two decades when Maryland elected Republican governors. And they too had to contend with the General Assembly. I am willing to work with anyone who is willing to put his/her cards on the table and play fairly, in order that we can find positive solutions. But it really starts with voters. You have to recognize that practically every problem Marylanders face is the direct result of decades of corrupt, self-serving and destructive "leadership" by the radical Democratic Party of Maryland, at the state and local levels. Someone once quipped, "It is easier to fool people than to convince them they've been fooled." Too many Marylanders have been taken in by Democrats' fraudulent "compassion" narrative, used to justify overspending and vice-grip control over businesses and our people. I suspect many more than will admit it can relate to that quote, but won't admit it to themselves.

VOTER GUIDE 2026



Key Races

Statewide

US House

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