

Delegate Robinson's Interview
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Question: What motivated you to seek the position of Chair of the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland (LBCM)?

Answer: LBCM has a great job of representing Black people socially, economically, politically, educationally, professionally and racially, in Maryland, in the community and in business. There's so much conversation now about minority businesses, but not all businesses identified as "minority" are African American owned and operated businesses and I believe the LBCM should be more proactive to ensure that black businesses are at the table where the contracts are discussed and awarded. In addition I would like to see the 6% African American sub-goal that is in every contract be increased to 20% or more.

The MBE-WBE-DBE (minority business enterprises, women-owned business enterprises, disadvantaged business enterprises) Program in Maryland was created because of the disparity treatment towards African American businesses, yet they earn the least amount of money spent with all Minority Business Enterprise sub-groups. Originally Maryland's MBE program was created because of the disparity treatment in business to which African Americans are subjected; however, other ethnic and gender businesses are also categorized as "minority" businesses and are awarded contracts; thereby, allowing prime contractors to use that practice to substantiate them as fulfilling the required minority sub-goals and that practice has to change.

I believe that not only African American businesses should be treated fairly; I also believe that African American employees should also be treated fairly. There are incidents at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport where Black employees are not being treated fairly. I will report on that matter later in the year after the LBCM has had an opportunity to gather more information.

Question: What is your greatest accomplishment while serving in the General Assembly?

Answer: My greatest accomplishment has been to educate my colleagues that 501(c) 3 type non-profits entities are not true and legitimate minority owned businesses. As such, they as a group should not be members of Maryland's MBE program. In 2013 my bill, House Bill 48, became law with Governor O'Malley signing off removing all non-profits from the state's MBE certification ranks. This historic legislation brings back more than \$900,000,000 to true and hardworking certified MBE businesses. Understand I am not against non-profits. I operated a non-profit organization for more than twenty years and non-profits do serve a great need. However, they do not belong in the MBE Program.

Question: What is your view on the election of Governor Larry Hogan?

Answer: People who did not vote should not complain about who was elected Governor. I am concerned about some of his proposed budget cuts, such as his proposal to cut money from the school budget. Cutting that budget disproportionately affects Baltimore City, Prince George's County, areas where the largest concentration of African Americans lives. Representatives of

those areas and I, as chair of the Legislative Black Caucus, met with the Governor to voice our concerns about the budget being balanced on the backs of our children. We will do whatever we can to make sure that does not happen.

Question: What's your view on most of the state's Public utilities not meeting the state's 29% MBE spending goal?

Answer: I have a real issue with that and I have invited Chairman Hughes of the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to address that issue at one of LDCM's weekly meetings. When we meet with PSC we will discuss the Public Conference 16 – MOU that was signed in 2008, when the utilities agreed to meet the goals. However, utility companies that are members of the PSC appear not to respect MBEs enough to honor their sub-goals agreement with PSC. This cannot be tolerated. If it is necessary to introduce new legislation in 2016 and modify it to include all the public utilities regulated by the PSC, I will consider that option. I will also consider introducing legislation on all new generation permits and licenses. My focus may also include reviewing the index for spend counting of only State of Maryland certified MBE's and if a public utility does not meet the goal, the PSC should not grant requested rate increases as they come in. The utilities by and large don't respect spending money with MBEs and black businesses.

Question: What's your take on Maryland Casino's not meeting the state's goal of 29%?

Answer: Presently I don't have enough information to comment on that, but I will request statistics from Maryland Lottery Director, Steven Martino and invite him to present to the Caucus as well. If we find that the casinos are showing no progress in achieving goals and disrespecting black businesses, LBCM will decide what position we will take.

Question: What advice can you offer to the freshman legislators this session?

Answer: Respect that LBCM is more than 44 years old and we are the voice for black people. Understand that serving in the Maryland General Assembly is not a social or entertainment affair, but hard and consistent work for and about the people. Understand that the Caucus was started because there was a need to unite black legislators. Most of all, the Caucus is the pulse and voice of black folks and that is a major responsibility.

Question: Your comments in this interview cut towards your representation of black businesses and black people. How should this be interpreted?

Answer: First and foremost, I was elected by a constituency (District 40) that is predominantly populated by African Americans and I am an African American woman. However, to be pro one thing does not mean I am against another. I am for the rights of all people. I understand the plight of people of color, specifically African Americans. I will not lose sight that I was elected to represent, without partiality, the rights and issues of concern of all Marylanders specifically those residents of the 40th legislative district in Baltimore City. I was sent to Annapolis to do the work for them and hopefully improve the lives of all Marylanders. I am the voice for the voiceless, hope for those who are in despair and a person who understands the need to listen to

the needs of the most vulnerable such as seniors, youths, children, people with disabilities, victims of human trafficking and domestic violence. I am also for economic development and improving the lives of all people of Maryland such as reducing the recidivism rate of ex-offenders and reducing the welfare rolls.

As chair of the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland, I will work with other coalitions and other organizations that represent people of color to advance or defeat unfavorable legislation. However, if it undermines or interferes with progressing African Americans in business, I will not support it.

Thank you Delegate Robinson.