

**REMARKS BY GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY**

to the  
*League of Conservation Voters*

June 6, 2012

Thank you all very, very much. Are you all fired up? It's so good to be with friends.

Karla, thank you for your tremendous leadership of a great group, the League of Conservation Voters' Maryland chapter. Thank you for coming to Maryland from Montana. I have some great memories from Montana. When I was in high school I went camping in Glacier Park – it shows you how old I am, there were actually glaciers there at the time. (laughter)

It is great to be here with all of you tonight with so many friends – including so many friends from Maryland. Keith Campbell whose group does so much for our State,... (applause)

John Griffin our Secretary of Natural Resources in the State of Maryland,... (applause)

It's an honor to share this podium with Valerie Jarrett who is tireless in serving our President and therefore all of us, day in and day out in this tough political environment,... (applause)

Senator Sherrod Brown, who I'd never heard speak before; I thought he had a very nice voice,... (laughter, applause)

It's also great to see Congressman Ed Markey. Not only has Congressman Markey been a visionary on the environment, he's also very good at giving advice to younger public servants. He once gave some advice to me, which was to "be Irish, dress British, and think Yiddish." (laughter, applause)

Let me begin with two of the most important words in the English language, and perhaps two of the most underutilized, and those are the words: "thank you." Thank you for what you are doing to move our country forward, whether it's in State Houses, or in counties or national organizations, each of you is very important to this movement forward.

With your help and your endorsements in 2006 and 2010 I was elected to the office of Governor; I dare say I would not have succeeded in either of those races had it not been for the League of Conservation voters. (applause)

When I was first elected, it was still during the presidency of George W. Bush. During that time, many Republican governors and advocates of states' rights liked to talk about states being the "laboratories of democracy." Well back in those days, many of in the states considered ourselves more "lifeboats of progress." (laughter, applause)

How great it is, with President Obama in the White House, to actually be able to call up the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and actually engage in a substantive conversations about the CREP program, environmental easements, buffers, and things like that,... to be able to call up EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson,... to have a President whose first Executive Order on the environment, is the cleanup and protection of the Chesapeake Bay! (applause)

## **PROGRESS TOGETHER**

You know, like most of you, I'm old fashioned,... I think because we have to pay taxes, our government should perform and deliver results.

Two of the things in public life that give me the most satisfaction are first, the crime reductions we've been able to achieve in the City of Baltimore and throughout Maryland,... and secondly, the progress we've been able to achieve for our environment. And I think the reason why these achievements make me very happy in my core is that I know that they are the true definitions of that elusive thing called "legacy." That ability to do something that will be of benefit to others after we are gone.

I'm so proud of our allies, the Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab who came roaring back. (laughter, applause)

I knew that we could count on the tremendous Department of Public Works to achieve the pothole guarantee, but I never thought the Blue Crabs would listen to us and actually come back. We rescued the Blue Crab population with help from the Great Governor of Virginia, whose going to be a great U.S. Senator, Tim Kaine! (applause) Credit where is credit due: Governor Bob McDonnell has continued on with that science-based decision that Tim Kaine helped us to make.

In addition to rescuing the Blue Crab, we've met all our commitments to the EPA on our Bay Restoration Plan. Instead of a 20-year plan, we actually have set two-year benchmarks so we know whether we're hitting our targets or whether we're not,... so that we know whether we need to do more of the things that work.

Together we've been fighting to protect our vital land preservation funds – which used to be the first things a legislature would look to cut.

## **WRITING A NEW STORY**

Our actions in Maryland, I submit to you humbly, I believe are part of a much, larger story. It's a story that each of you is writing. Tonight, I want to talk with you about how we can continue to write this story together. I want to talk with you about the common good that we share,... about the Great Work to which we are called,... about the actions we need to take in order to give our kids not only a cleaner and greener future,... not only a future that's more sustainable,... but a future that's actually more *prosperous*.

In fact, it cannot be more prosperous unless we make it more sustainable. The two absolutely go together. (applause)

Father David Hollenbach of Boston College who is a leading political scientist in our country, in his book about the common good and Christian ethics wrote this, and I want to share it with you: *"When people interact in a way that expresses reciprocal respect for their dignity as persons, their well-being becomes a shared good,... the good of each member increases or decreases as the common good grows or declines, for the well-being of each is linked with that of the others through their reciprocal relationship."*

The same, my friends, can now be said of mankind and our relationship to the other species – plant and animal – of this finite and interdependent planet.

In Maryland, we consider ourselves pro-growth Americans – and before you get “wiggy” about that term, let me explain: We believe in growing jobs and growing opportunity. Like you, we believe in children growing healthy, growing educated, and growing strong. We believe in grandparents growing old with dignity and with love. Like you, we believe in growing trees, growing sustainable Bay fisheries, growing food locally to feed our citizens. And we believe in growing prosperity for every generation. (applause)

We believe that together, we are called upon to accomplish what Thomas Berry called, “The Great Work.” It is the work of healing and restoring the common good we share with all natural beings. Yes, growing in our mindfulness,... growing in our awareness,... growing in our understanding of the balance we must rediscover and reconcile with the other living systems of this one Earth — this one Earth that we choose to share, or not share, with the generations that will come after ours.

And now we find ourselves in this urgent struggle, don't we? The signs are all around us. We're at a critical point in our human history: it is an urgent and elemental and evolutionary struggle for our children's and grandchildren's very future. Because the Earth will continue to live – that is certain; whether or not we continue to live along with her as human beings is not as certain.

We must act, and we must act now.

I loved that phrase that Senator Brown shared: *“don’t tell me what you believe, show me what you’re doing.”*

Together for the last several thousand years we have been co-authors with Creation of the emerging story of the Earth — that fundamental truth that gives context to the story of our shared humanity. But right now, the Earth – which determined its own movement forward over these millennia – is seeing its immediate future determined by the choices and actions of us; of human beings: the one species most capable of manipulating our environment, and the only species intellectually capable of free choice.

What an awesome and terrifying responsibility.

We are the first generation of human beings to see our planet from space – and yet, so too are we the first generation of humans to see our population double in our own lifetimes. And to survive, we know in our gut, we must move forward; forward from a history of depletion to write a new story – a future of conservation; a future of regeneration by design.

## **OUR “GREAT WORK”**

Our great challenge – our great work – is really to find ways to live in better balance. To politically harness the job creating innovation needed. To remake our world, to speed the development and revolutionize the ways we feed, fuel and heal our planet.

The question, therefore, on so many of our minds is *“how do we get out of the weeds and shift the momentum? How do we accelerate our progress with better choices and more sustainable ways forward?”*

Perhaps, a big part of the answer is in better connecting and better communicating the mounting evidence that is right before our eyes,... Evidence that can be seen plainly and clearly in the life signs of our Chesapeake Bay.

It’s clear,... and it’s visible,... and it’s measurable. Get this:

- In Maryland alone, we are losing about 580 acres of land per year to erosion;
- Water temperatures in the Chesapeake Bay have risen 2½ degrees since 1960. This isn’t like turning up your oven from 350 to 352. It has consequences. We have already seen declines in eelgrass – an underwater grass that provides absolutely critical habitat for young crabs and fish. Scientists are now concerned that it could be eliminated altogether from the southern-most portions of our now warmer Bay;

- We have already lost at least 13 mapped islands from the Chesapeake Bay. One of our last inhabited islands, Smith Island, is facing a very bleak and submerged future;
- Higher Bay water temperatures are also increasing stress on rockfish and other recreationally and commercially important species trying to avoid the oxygen-depleted zones of the Bay that we are working to reduce.

And so, with LCV's help, we take action:

- Working together with groups like LCV, we're one of only seven states that set a statutory cap to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; (applause)
- Working together, with LCV's help to move forward and not back, we've chosen to advance solar energy as well as on-shore and off-shore wind; (applause)
- Working together with General Motors and the men and women, yes, of *organized*, labor, we're creating green jobs building GM's next-generation green, electric motors – and when Mitt Romney was in Maryland I tweeted him "*you should go there, they're hiring*"; (laughter, applause)
- Working together with the Obama Administration we're using investments from President Obama's Recovery and Reinvestment Act to weatherize Maryland homes; (applause)
- Working together we've adopted green building standards and actually, we're the first state to adopt the international green building code; (applause)
- Working together, we're creating tax incentives for revitalizing Maryland downtowns with sustainable design; (applause) and
- Working together, we've set ambitious goals for creating green jobs, and increasing in-state renewable energy generation 20% by 2022 – and in a remarkable innovation in government, we're actually measuring performance to see whether or not we're hitting it. (applause)

## **TWO DIFFERENT VISIONS**

I'm proud of the things we're doing as a State. In Maryland – I don't know, Keith Campbell if it's because of our proximity to the water, the people of our State seem to be ahead of the curve in seeing how our actions affect the life-workings of our environment.

All these actions matter – but look, let’s be honest, as great as it is that individual states can sail out and do these things, all of this would be more impactful – wouldn’t they? – if we would start acting like Americans again and actually act, together. (applause)

We need national action – and you know what? There is no magic button in the White House that the President can simply push to accomplish what we have yet to accomplish by forging the consensus necessary.

*We elected a courageous, a smart, an intelligent, good-hearted President in Barack Obama, but we did not elect a magician – he needs our help and now is the critical time!* (applause)

There is very big struggle going on in our country’s political voyage right now. There are two very different visions. One is the vision of an America that’s still moving forward, that’s still creating jobs and expanding opportunity, that’s still has our best days in front of us.

The other vision is of an America that has our best days behind us. Where wealth is concentrated. An America where jobs and opportunities are shrinking. Where workers’ rights are rolled back. Where women’s rights are rolled back. Where voting rights are rolled back.

When some of these folks say they want to take America back, tell them that nostalgia is not all that it used to be, ... we don’t want to go back.

We see this struggle very clearly when it comes to whether we move forward to a more sustainable future and whether or not we choose to use the common platform of our government to protect our land, water, and air.

One vision – the vision shared by President Obama, the League of Conservation Voters, Democratic governors, and citizens in every part of our country – believes in science and science based-decision making. It believes in embracing the revelatory beauty of the facts of nature, ... it believes in building upon the great legacies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century like the ban on DDT to bring back the majestic bald eagle, ... the creation of the Superfund program to clean up and address horrors like Love Canal, ... the ban on lead in gas and paint that infected the blood and potential of our children.

It is the vision which inspired the President to move us forward with the largest expansion of land and water conservation in a generation.

It’s the vision the President is advancing through green jobs initiatives which have put hundreds of thousands of Americans to work. Folks, green jobs is not only solar, it is not only wind, it is roofers who are training to go up and do weatherization in your home. It is

those men and women working at GM building the next generation green electric motors. It is the men and women who are working in Maryland with greater investment to replace old, failing septic systems and upgrade them and upgrade our wastewater treatment plants,...

These are all green jobs and do you know what? There's a yearning that everyone feels in our country to belong, to be connected, and to be recognized as part of something larger,... and there is only one thing that approaches the par of being red, white, and blue and that is being green.

The alternative vision is not a vision forward. It is a vision that rejects even the most minimal regulation of environmentally destructive behavior. The followers of this vision – mainly the tea party wing of the Republican party (who are a lot more like the Alice in Wonderland tea party than Samuel Adams' tea party) – believe we'd be better off dismantling the EPA and opening more public land to coal mining and oil drilling. They oppose common sense efforts to protect wetlands and streams – like the Moran amendment which was voted down last week. Many deny climate change even exists; others say they are not certain that it's even caused by human activity.

Some like Governor Romney, even publicly doubt whether carbon emissions are health hazards.

So strongly do this vision's followers oppose green energy, they do not even believe in the benefits of fuel efficient light bulbs.

Our challenge, therefore, is this,... without anger, and without any meanness and without any fear, we need to actually talk to one another, with respect for the dignity in one another, and ask one another *how much less do you think would be good for our country? How much less clean air do we need for our generation and the next? How much less clean water? How many fewer healthy streams do we need? Do our children need? How many fewer species can we get along without?*

## **CONCLUSION**

Progress is a choice. Job creation is a choice. Whether we choose to move forward toward a cleaner, greener more sustainable and prosperous future, or we whether we slip back is a choice?

Many of us in government who balance budgets and attack deficits understand that there can be no social progress without fiscal responsibility. I think that the following is true as well: there can be no generational progress without bio-responsibility.

And being aware of the bio-capacity of our finite planet does not mean that we want less for our children. It means we want more. It doesn't mean that we choose to fall back, it means that we choose to move forward.

For as great man once said, "*...there is an absolute direction of growth,... life advances in that direction,... life is never mistaken, either about its road or its destination,... it tells us toward what part of the horizon we must steer if we are to see the dawn light grow more intense.*"

Thank you again for all that you do. (applause)