# Hughes' first six months: low-keyed, straight forward progressive

ANNAPOLIS — "This was a last year," Gov. Harry Hughes said in his first matter-of-fact manner — not one of the promises he campaigned on.

"None of the press expected me to be governor — not one person predicted one."

Yet for the last six months, Harry Hughes has been Maryland's governor — a fact that still seems to even surprise Hughes himself.

Although the first of his four years in office is nearly half over, Hughes has already gone through the 90-day General Assembly session — handling everything in the legislative cycle from reducing budgets to killing bills.

He has also had to deal with a winter blizzard that paralyzed the state and summer gas shortages that threatened to be the same.

While an assessment of his performance is probably premature, Hughes has unquestionably set the tone for his administration in his own likeness: low-key, straight-forward, and sometimes surprisingly progressive.

Not exhibiting Hughes' style has been steady, seemingly open and honest, and undoubtedly hard working.

"I haven't been flamboyant, and maybe that's been difficult for the press," Hughes said.

But that is not to say that Hughes' fledgling administration has not been beset by the mistakes inherent in being new at a job — mistakes that have led to bumbling programs or amateur responses to difficult problems.

Without hesitation, Hughes conceded the gas crisis has been his most difficult test to date.

"It has been a tough decision trying to avoid overreacting to avoid panic, but, on the other hand, acting in a timely fashion," he said.

But the criticism has been that Hughes underreacted, that he responded too slowly to a gas crisis that some were predicting as early as March or April.

Hughes was one of the first governors to propose tough statewide heating and cooling restrictions — a measure torpedoed by a legislative committee and given short shift by governors of other states. Maryland was also the first state to sue the federal government this year to try to change the national gas allocation system.

But members of Hughes' own staff privately concede that Hughes' minimum purchasing requirement and his odd-even rationing plan were so hastily thrown together that most state officials charged with implementing the plans barely knew of their existence.

For two solid weeks, the governor's offices were beseiged with hundreds of telephone calls a day from citizens who misunderstood the plans or wanted exemptions, or from state officials who simply wanted to know how the plans were expected to work.

Hughes, however, maintained he was true to the promise he made in his inaugural speech that his style would be to "act rather than react."

"It must be remembered," he said, "there is no way you can have a gas allocation system or an odd-even plan that everybody is going to be happy with."

Hughes' aides said the governor usually works seven days a week, eats a quick sandwich at his desk for lunch, depends heavily on staff briefings, takes home piles of documents to read at night on issues he does not personally understand, and has virtually given up his non-official social life because of his official duties.

"The thing I've seen him doto relax is work," said Michael F. Canning, Hughes' chief-of-staff and one of several key aides the 52-year-old Hughes brought with him from his old job as State Secretary of Transportation.

Hughes said his decisions to veto one bill and not another and his personal involvement in the hundreds of appointments a governor must make each year have been the other most difficult and time-consuming actions he has taken so far.

They also each provide some insight into Hughes' thinking and his way of making decisions.

The bill he signed was one that permitted adults to ride motorcycles without protective helmets, and the one he vetoed would have stopped the state from preventing waterfowl hunters from using potentially poisonous lead shot in their guns.

On the helmet bill, Hughes came down on the side of individual rights and personal freedom, narrowly rejecting the arguments of those who claimed the helmet requirement was a proven lifesaver.

The lead shot issue was more political in nature, with the governor's decision to side with environmentalists going against the wishes of legislators from the Eastern Shore, where duck and geese hunting is big business and where Hughes himself was born and raised.

Hughes said he read everything he could find on the effects of lead shot on waterfowl before reaching his decision.

"There are arguments on both sides of that one," he said. "After my in-depth review and (reading) everything I could find, I just came down on the side of conservation."

Louise Keelty, Hughes' appointments secretary, said she was surprised at the detail with which Hughes reviewed nominees for appointment or reappointment to the state's hundreds of boards and commissions.

"He wants to hear all aspects before making a decision," said Ms. Keelty, an aide whose own star as an inner-circle adviser seems to be on the rise. She said she was also surprised to learn that with Hughes, "if you disagree, you should say it."

Hughes was elected on his pledge to restore integrity to Maryland politics and the voters appear to have gotten what tey wanted.

"I think the man is impeccably honest and that has a great ring to it with the people," said Ocean City Mayor Harry Kelly.

But the outspoken mayor, who supported Hughes' Republican opponent last November, said in situations like the gas crisis, voters are more concerned with performance.

"They're going to put that honesty factor in the back of their minds," he said.

Probably the most controversial program shift since Hughes came to power is in the increased emphasis he and his prisons chief, Gordon Kamka, have placed on expanding community corrections facilities and probation and parole programs.

"The legislature has said for the last eight or nine years that that should be the policy of the state," Hughes said in defense of the concept. "Now, when someone wants to implement it, some people are getting excited."

He said, "the system we had wasn't working, and building a huge or huge new prisons was not theanswer. There were other things that had to be done."

If prisons philosophy has been the administration's major shift, then economic development — or, more precisely, the finding of a secretary to head the Department of Economic and Community Development — has been its biggest embarrassment.

The governor's staff began the search after Hughes' election last November, and did not settle on a candidate to fill the long vacant cabinet post — which Hughes had said would be among his most important appointments — until June.

Another embarrassment was Baltimore Port Administrator W. Greg Halpin's off-the-cuff and nearly off-color comment about the way chinese dress. The comment, quoted ina Washington newspaper just days after Hughes announced plans to lead a trade delegationto China this fall, prompted a formal apology.

But for the most part, Hughes' first half year in office appears to have fulfilled his modest promise to head a state government more interested in efficiency and economy than in posturing for the press.

State Republicans generally give Democrat Hughes high marks for including them in his meetings and their views in his decisions, and even the hundreds of patronage appointments Hughes has made so far have been virtually free of charges of partisan bias.

But when someone calls him "governor," Hughes still flashes the look of a man who cannot believe he is the person who is being addressed.

He insisted he has grown accustomed to living in the spacious brick Georgian mansion across from the state house, and maintained he is even used to being Maryland's Chief Executive.

But he said he cannot get used to his ever-present security guards.

Witha smile that would make a sneak-thief proud, and with a look to the side to make sure the guards were not listening, Hughes confided that he has already given them the slip twice.

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# Fair housing law not violated in Randallstown

The Department of Justice has concluded fair-housing laws are not being violated in the Randallstown area of Baltimore County.

John Hoyle, deputy chief attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the Department, said that federal investigators found no evidence of realtors "steering" minority homebuyers to move into certain areas.

The investigation, which began a few months ago, included FBI field interviews last month with Maby Basso, president of the greater Randallstown Community Council.

Mrs. Basso has led opposition t a subsidized housing project proposed for liberty and old court roads.

The building project was approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development June 22, after months of protest from some area residents.

Hoyle aid the investigation had nothing to do with community opposition to that project. He aid oficials were concerned because housing in the county appeared segregated.

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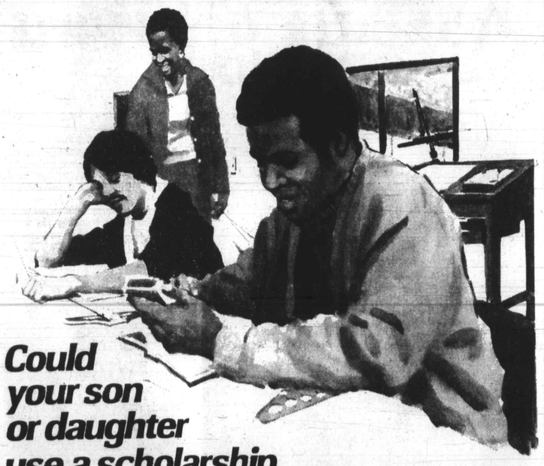
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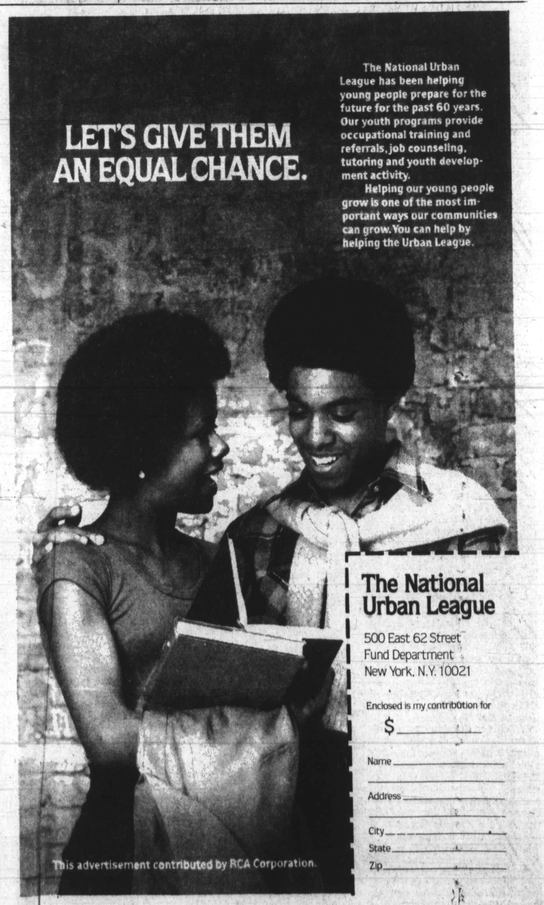
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# Lottery commission loses on higher payoffs

ANNAPOLIS—The State Lottery Commission's attempt to raise the payoff to lottery winners was defeated Tuesday by a legislative committee that said the actio would unconstitutionally throw the state's budget out of balance.

The administrative, executive and legislative review committee voted 5-1 to reject the commission action that would have raided the payoff to holders of $1 winning tickets from $500 to $550, effective July 29.

The commission, thwarted this spring in its initial attempt to raise the payoff by an Attorney General's opinion that said the commission had acted illegally, tried again by voting to raise the payoff through "emergency" rile procedure.

But most of the senators and delegates on the Aele Committee, a panel charged with approving or rejecting emergency (ules promulgated by state booards and commissions, said no emergency existed to justify the increase.

Lottery Commissioner George P. Mahoney, however, said the committee action left the people who water on the state-operated numbers game as the real losers.

"I think the public is entitled to better treatment," the 77-year-old Mahoney said.

Mahoney said, however, he would not again attempt to administratively increase the payoff in the face of opposition from both legislators and the governor.

When he first unveiled his plan to boost the payoff on April 23, Mahoney said it was to keep the state game competitive with the payoffs from the illegal numbers game operating in Maryland.

But Gov. Harry Hughes was angered by the committee action, wchich he learned about through the newspapers. Hughes was also bothered by the estimated $18 million it would take to pay off the higher winnings.

He asked for a legal opinion and, onJune 14, Attorney General Stephen Sachs said the commission's April action had been illegal because it was taken behind closed doors in violation of the state open meetings law.

Undaunted, the Mahoney-dominated commission passed the rule to increase the payoffs a second time, maklig it an emergency rule so it could take effect July 29, the same date the state lottery switches computer companies.

The emergency nature of the rule was also the factor that required the aelr concurrence.

Sen. Charles H. Smelser, D-Carroll, told Mahoney, "I think what you're doing may be right, but your timing is wrong." Smelser and others suggested that Mahoney ask the legislature to approve the change while formulating the state budget, which sreqiured by the state constitution to be balanced.

Lottery Director Martin M. Puncke also opposed the increase, In part due to its economic impact.

But Puncke also said he was told by a representitative of Control Data Corp., the computer company that will take over the lottery contract at theend of the month, that it would take at least two months to reprogram the computers to incorporate the change.

Puncke said the lottery would have to do about $1 million worth of business more each week—from $6.6 million to $7.6 million—to offset the loss of revenue from the proposed higher payoffs.

(AFRO Photo by Roman Hankewycz)
PRIZE WINNER—Darryl Carter, son of Mr. and Mrs. Kermit Carter of the 1500 block of N. Gilmor St., recently received first prize in a citywide dramatic reading contest. Darryl, formerly a student at Booker T. Washington Junior High School, was awarded his trophy at ceremonies held at Harford Heights Elementary School. Darryl will attend Baltimore Polytechnic Institute in the fall. His dramatic coach was Betty Foy, an English teacher at Booker T. Washington Junior High School.

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# Top car insurance firms ask rate hike

Four of the 10 largest private automobile insurers in Maryland, serving at lest 250,000 motorists, have requested rate hikes of from 4.5 percent to 15.9 percent, the state insurance commission said Wednesday.

GEICO, the second largest automobile insuree in th state, rquested a 15.9 percent increase and Allstate, the third largest company, filed for a 5.4 percent increase, aid Eugene Graham, an insurance official who is studying the increases.

A 7.2 percent rate increase was requested by Aetna, the ninth largest automible insuree in Maryland. The Kempee Insurance Group — the sixth largest auto insurance carrier — filed for increases for two of its member companies, Graham said.

One of them, Lumberman's Mutual, requested an 11.9 percent hike. American Motirists, the other Kemper Firm, asked for a 4.5 percent increase, Graham said.

The rate requests were the first in the two years and could trigger applications by other automobile insurance carriers, Graham said.

GEICO attorney John G. Lewis said the new rates are needed to cover losses the company has incurred doing business in Maryland.

Graham said the commission has scheduled a 10 a.m. public hearing for July 30 on all four rate applications and will probably make its decision by Aug. 15.

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