

The Maryland General Assembly created the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) in 1977 for the purpose of preserving and ensuring continuation of the agricultural interests of Maryland. Agricultural preservation districts are formed when qualifying landowners sign voluntary agreements to keep their land in agricultural or woodland use for a minimum of five years. Landowners agreeing to place their farms within an agricultural preservation district relinquish their interests in the land and may sell a development rights easement on the property to the Foundation which protects the property from further development.

Currently, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation is at its maximum subscription level, and it is unnecessary to provide this type of incentive to induce property owners to conserve their land in this program. House Bill 567 is another in a continuing series of bills that have been introduced in the past few years to weaken easement restrictions purchased by MALPF. It would be a bad precedent to begin eroding the agricultural land preservation program by carving out and creating a special exception to the Foundation's policy of requiring the subordination of other interests in preserved property. I am also concerned about language in the bill that requires the Foundation to make a determination regarding whether the exercise of the natural gas rights will interfere with the agricultural operation. This provision could lead to many disputes involving the Foundation, landowners and the owners of natural gas rights.

We have protected over one million acres of land in Maryland and, for the first time, we are preserving more land than we are losing to development. House Bill 567 is one of several bills that passed this year and in prior years which, taken together, would seriously erode our efforts to preserve land for future generations. I respectfully urge future Governors and future legislatures to remain vigilant in these protection efforts and proceed cautiously in altering these programs.

For the above reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 567.

Sincerely,
Parris N. Glendening
Governor

House Bill No. 567

AN ACT concerning

**Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation - Allegany and
Garrett Counties - Natural Gas Rights**

FOR the purpose of prohibiting regulations and procedures adopted by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation for the establishment and monitoring of agricultural districts from requiring, in Allegany and Garrett counties, a natural gas rights owner or lessee to subordinate its interest to the Foundation's interest under certain circumstances; requiring that a certain report be submitted by a certain date; and generally relating to the Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Foundation.