

# For Katie O'Malley, 'First Lady' Is Just a New Ball to Juggle

By LISA REIN

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Among Katie O'Malley's first public acts as Maryland's new first lady was nodding off during the State of the Union address.

This would, for some, be an embarrassing moment, six days after her husband was sworn in as governor. Her drooping green eyes were caught on camera. But she's relishing it.

"I told Martin I'm framing the photos," she said. "I love it: Katie O'Malley falls asleep while the president talks about sending more troops to Iraq. Sorry, Mr. President!"

Gov. Martin O'Malley's wife had risen at 5:30 a.m.; awakened, fed and hauled four kids into the family's Chevy Suburban; made three drop-offs at their schools in Baltimore; driven to one of that city's district courthouses, where she is a judge; picked the kids up from her parents' house; rushed back to the governor's mansion in Annapolis; and slipped into a dress for the ride to Washington.

This juggling act will become even more complicated when she tacks on entertaining and other official func-

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# O'Malley Already Knows How to Make a Difference on the Job

O'MALLEY, *From CI*

tions, including fighting truancy, an underlying problem in many of the cases she hears.

But Catherine Curran O'Malley, 44, is not trying to find her way as a traditional political spouse or become a behind-the-scenes adviser to her husband. As a member of Maryland's political royalty — her father, Joe Curran, a former lieutenant governor and longtime attorney general, retired last fall — she is behind her husband's career 100 percent. But she has no time for roles. Frankly, she's too busy.

"If I weren't working full time, I would have a much fuller first lady role," she said, kicking off her black pumps and relaxing with a Diet Coke on Wednesday after a reception at the mansion for guests at the State of the State address. Before she took her seat in the House chamber at noon, she had heard domestic-violence cases for four hours.

Some political wives have advised her to quit her job so she can help people as first lady. "I explained that I help people every day with the job I have," she said with a hint of frustration. "I'm not going to quit my job, because I love it."

O'Malley is a rare bird in politics: She is a completely unscripted spouse. She talks a lot faster than her husband, a former Baltimore mayor, who is known for grand expression. When an interview has reached its appointed end, she isn't finished. She is so frank that aides interrupt frequently to say, "That's off the record." She is fiercely energetic, although she worries that she's flagging at work these days because the commute between Annapolis and Baltimore has cut into her early morning workouts.

"I don't know when in her adult life Katie hasn't had a lot going on," said her sister, Mary, a freelance photographer. "I would say she thrives that way."

Not since Herbert O'Connor became governor in 1939 have so many children moved into the governor's mansion, a



BY ANDREA BRUCE — THE WASHINGTON POST

## Wife, mother, District judge and Maryland first lady Katie O'Malley relaxes — briefly.

Georgian brick estate on State Circle. The O'Conors had five, ages three to 16; the O'Malley brood is four: Jack, 4; William, 9; Tara, 14; and Grace, 15. The girls are ninth- and 10th-graders at Notre Dame Prep, their mother's alma mater.

They have a golden retriever, Lady, an Airedale terrier named Scout and two cats still in hiding in the 54 rooms of their new home.

Now that the family has decamped from their four-bedroom house in northwest Baltimore, the O'Malleys are determined that their children's new status doesn't go to their heads.

They have a full kitchen staff now, including three chefs, courtesy of the state. But William and the girls help clear the dishes. One recent night, the first lady told the staff to go home early so she could clean up. "I love doing dishes. It's my alone time," she said.

Ilene Frame, a public defender and close friend of the family, recalls saying to the first lady: "Well, I think it's going to be time for a nanny, isn't it?" She said, "No way."

A state trooper could drive the kids to school. But "we don't like to put the kids

in the car and say, 'See ya, have a nice day at school,'" Katie O'Malley said. Plus, it's valuable time. "You hear stuff in the car. You hear them talking about things."

The last teenager in the governor's mansion was Raymond Glendening in the late 1990s, but he was rarely there — his parents mostly lived in their home in Prince George's County. To guard their daughters' privacy, the O'Malleys have declined to let them be interviewed.

Do they date? "Oh, they won't tell you a thing about that," their mother said.

The girls have endured their share of taunts from envious classmates, and their mother has encouraged them to stand up for themselves and their father.

But the first lady has been stern on this: Don't go to a party where there are no parents — if something goes wrong, you could end up in the newspaper.

"Say there's alcohol and the police come," she told her daughters. "God forbid there's marijuana. If someone gets arrested, even if you don't do anything wrong, you'll be singled out."

She gave birth to Grace in law school and was pregnant with Tara when she took the bar. After 10 years as a state

prosecutor in Baltimore County, she was promoted to lead the white-collar crime unit. She has sat on the District Court bench, one of the state's busiest, since 2001, earning \$115,000 per year.

The Democratic governor's wife didn't race with him all the way to the mansion. Unlike Kendel Ehrlich, a fixture on the campaign trail when her husband ran for governor, Katie O'Malley was a spectator, prohibited by the judicial code of conduct from getting involved in partisan politics. She said she will recuse herself from civil cases that involve the state.

She and her husband agree on most things politically. "I deal with the individual who comes to court; he deals with the big picture." If there is one thing she is prodding him on, it's expanded services for drug treatment. She is adamant that schools intervene early to keep at-risk students in class. "It's so sad. People drop out of high school and they get addicted."

She added: "People call these liberal causes that cost money, but ultimately, it's putting money back into the workforce. Nobody wants to be an addict."

Toward the end of a long workday recently, the first lady let out the dogs and wandered into her elegant blue dining room, where the long table was set for breakfast with General Assembly leaders. She walked through one door, hoping to find the stairs, but found a closet instead.

It's the State House, 20 paces away, where she grew up, tagging along with her dad in the state Senate. Now she has an office in the basement, where she snatched a few minutes on a day off Monday to settle in. She arrived with Jack and William, home sick from school.

"Mom! I want go up to dad's office," William said.

"Can he just run up?" the first lady asked the state trooper assigned to her, who nodded, if a bit warily. With her 4-year-old entertained by an aide, she unpacked a few boxes.