

GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY

THE STATE OF THE STATE

Forward Again, Protecting our Families; A Better Future for Our Children

January 29, 2009

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Mr. Lieutenant Governor; Madame Treasurer, Mr. Comptroller; Congresswoman Edwards; Former Governors; Mr. Ambassador; my colleagues in local government; men and women of the Maryland General Assembly; Katie O'Malley; Members of the Cabinet; my fellow citizens:

I have never felt more energized, more positive about or more committed to the tough work ahead. And the work that we do has never been more needed than it is today by Maryland's families.

Since 1788, the State House dome, under which we gather, has served as a beacon of progress and hope.¹ Standing tall and resolute even over times of disagreement, adversity and conflict, this State House has symbolized for our diverse people a clear unity of purpose. From time to time, the foundations have cracked, piping and wiring has failed, but with renewed commitment, energy, and investment, the repairs have been made; the dome has been secured.

And so today, that unity of purpose continues: to strengthen and grow the ranks of Maryland's upwardly mobile middle class. To improve public safety and public education; and, to expand opportunity – this is our unity of purpose. This is our mission, as we fight to make our State government work again for the people we serve.

It is a mission and purpose founded upon the belief we share in the dignity of every individual; and upon the belief we share in our own individual responsibility to advance the common good.

It is a unity of purpose that is even more important for Maryland families in these very tough and challenging economic times.

In our short time together, I would like to talk with you about our hard-won progress, the serious economic challenges at hand, and the choices and actions we must take today in order to stand up for the families of our State in these tough economic times,...

¹ Source: Maryland State Archives: The exterior portion of Maryland's State House dome was completed in 1788.

And finally, I want to talk with you about how, together, we will emerge from this recession with the real hope of a better future for all of Maryland's children.

Making Progress Again

Thanks to the tough decisions we've made together over these last two years, the state of our State is once again strong enough to overcome the very challenging times at hand. And with the inspired leadership of our new President Barack Obama, we finally have a federal partner who shares our commitment to progress.

Even as we face the most serious national economic crisis in recent history, our unemployment rate in Maryland is 19% lower than the national rate.² We remain one of only seven states to earn a Triple A bond rating.³ And we continue to draw upon our clear competitive advantages in key Maryland business sectors like life-sciences, bio-technology, information technology, aerospace and healthcare.

How do we measure our progress in these hard times?

- We measure our progress in public safety by the 66 fewer Marylanders we lost to homicides in the last year, our second largest single-year reduction in nearly a quarter century;⁴ by the 34 fewer lives we lost to fire deaths last year, and by 60 fewer lives lost on our roads to traffic accidents last year – all thanks to the heroic work of our police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical staff.⁵
- We measure our progress in education by the #1 ranking we received this year from Education Week Magazine.⁶ Let's say it again shall we? Maryland has the best public schools in America. Thank you Armistead Gardens – last year's highest scoring elementary math class in Baltimore City -- for being here to represent the generation which makes us so proud.

² Source: Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. Maryland's December unemployment rate was 5.8% versus a national unemployment rate of 7.2%.

³ Source: Office of the Maryland Treasurer: AAA received from Fitch Ratings, Moody's Investors Service, and Standard & Poor's.

⁴ Source: StateStat – 2008 recorded the 2nd highest percentage drop in homicides since 1985.

⁵ Source: Maryland State Police. In 2007, Maryland experienced 561 homicides compared to 495 in 2008, showing nearly a 12% drop year over year. Source for traffic fatalities: Maryland Department of Transportation. Decreased 10% from 610 a year ago to 550. Source for fire deaths: Maryland State Police. A decrease last year from 94 in 2007 to 60 in 2008 (36%). Additionally, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services indicates non-custodial juvenile homicides decreased 9% compared to the prior year.

⁶ Source: Education Week's Quality Counts report, January 2009. Maryland's Public Schools ranked #1 in the nation overall. Additionally, the Milken Institute ranks Maryland as #1 in terms of the investments we make in our "human capital" – the skills and talents of our people. And our elementary and middle school students achieved the highest MSA scores ever recorded this year, with elementary math and reading scores each increasing by 29 percent compared to just five years ago.

- We measure our progress by the 28,000 additional Marylanders who, because of your hard work now have health care.⁷ And by the huge numbers of children from humble families who will be able to see a dentist when they get a toothache instead of risking death.⁸
- We measure our progress by the vision and plans we now have in place to build a statewide transportation system that strikes a better balance between roads and mass transit like the Purple Line, the Red Line, improved MARC service, transit oriented development, and the inter-county connector – which is now under construction. And perhaps best of all, we now have a new president who believes that America’s transportation future is worth the investment.
- We measure our progress by the strides we are taking – along with our newly revitalized Public Service Commission and Maryland Energy Administration – to reduce our energy consumption by 15% percent by 2015; by the strides we are making to increase our Renewable Energy Portfolio by 20% by 2022; and by the strides we are taking to reduce enough peak energy usage to total the production of more than five power plants.⁹
- We measure our progress for our environment by the nearly 21,000 ecologically valuable acres we have protected through Program Open Space – this represents already five times as many acres as our predecessors.¹⁰ And we measure our progress by the first successful auction of carbon credits through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative conducted this year, and by the nation-leading launch of BayStat and the Maryland GreenPrint.¹¹
- And we measure our progress in expanding opportunity to more and more Marylanders by the most important measures of all – by Mackenlov Dorival, Jessica Rindos and Tad Greenleaf who are with us in the Gallery this afternoon. Mackenlov is a senior at Bowie State and Jessica and Tad are seniors at the University of Maryland College Park.

⁷ Source: StateStat. 28,000 Marylanders are now receiving coverage under the Working Families and Small Business Health Coverage Act of 2007 (Special Session). This legislation has made more than 100,000 Marylanders eligible.

⁸ Source: DHMH. As an example of our dental initiatives, we are developing and expanding school-based dental programs, we increased reimbursements for dentists for providing Medicaid services, and we’ve removed bureaucratic roadblocks which had been preventing dental hygienists from providing a full array of legally permissible services at public health clinics.

⁹ Source: Maryland Energy Administration and Public Service Commission. Additionally, the new Maryland Clean Energy Center promises to expand our efforts to create and attract new clean energy jobs.

¹⁰ Source: Department of Natural Resources. In our first two years we protected 20,752 acres compared to the first two years of the prior administration where 3,968 were protected.

¹¹ Maryland participated in two RGGI auctions last year and because of these efforts we are able to invest \$34.3 million in programs to promote cleaner energy sources, energy efficiency and conservation, and provide rate relief for low and moderate income households-all of which will go a long way to fight climate change and lower our electricity bills.

Because of the strides we have made together, more and more young people in our State like Mackenlov, Jessica and Tad are able to afford college.¹²

Standing up for Working Families

But for all of our progress, I cannot sugarcoat the difficulty of these times.

I receive letters every day from fellow citizens throughout our State, hard-working and honest people, bravely searching for a way forward in this tough economy. I want to share a few words from a letter very much like the letters that I know each of you is receiving.

This one happens to be written by one of our citizens from Allegany County, to whom, out of respect for her privacy and dignity, I will refer to as, “Sandra.” She writes:

“I have been blessed in many ways living in Maryland,... [but] I’m at a loss as to how I can keep a warm home and the food in my refrigerator properly cool with the high cost of electricity. I’m sure this sounds like the ‘same ole song and dance.’ And I know you are working hard, but the situation is getting downright heart wrenching,... what can you do to prevent my son and I from becoming homeless due to electricity? I’ve been informed by the landlord if my electric is turned off,... I will be given a notice to move.”

We have neighbors like “Sandra” in every part of our State. Resilient Marylanders who have worked hard all their lives and played by the rules, only to have the rug pulled out from under them. Who continue to be driven by faith and hope and just want to be able to provide for themselves and their kids.

People like “Robert” from Baltimore County, a 53 year old college student one trimester away from graduating college. Robert wrote to me in December, and I want to share with you part of his letter as well:

“Unfortunately my funds and loans have been depleted at this point,... I’m a father of three and my oldest son recently had to move back home due to kidney failure and [congestive] heart disease. This has increased my [wife’s and my] financial struggles. It is my most humble request that your office or any part thereof assist me financially in paying for my final trimester in College. This has been a long journey for me and to graduate with honors would truly be a major blessing,... I’m six months away from a 35 year old dream.”

We have all “been blessed in many ways living in Maryland,” and it is because of “Robert,” and it is because of “Sandra,” that you and I get out of bed each morning and fight to turn our difficult days into better tomorrows. They, along with so many families across our State have shown a steadfast determination ever since this crisis hit. It is our job and our shared

¹² What’s more, four of our colleges are rated by the Princeton Review as being among America’s Top 50 Values in higher education. And Kiplinger’s rates the University of Maryland as America’s 9th best higher education value. Overall, in just three years, we have moved from the 6th highest tuition to the 16th – and we anticipate that we’ll move to 18th this year.

responsibility to stand up and fight for them.

It is up to us in Maryland to respond to the inaugural challenge of our new President, who called upon us *“to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.”*¹³

The year ahead will be difficult, but we’re fighting back and we’re moving forward:

1. As Maryland families sit at their kitchen tables this year to complete their income taxes, the vast majority will be eligible for greater State refunds this year in these difficult times. Why? Because we’ve raised the personal exemption for all but the wealthiest Marylanders.¹⁴
2. We are working to help Maryland families fight back against the threat of rising energy prices. Last year, through our Public Service Commission – fighting once again for the public interest – we secured \$2 billion in rate relief for Maryland energy consumers, the largest settlement, of its kind, in American history.¹⁵

What’s more, we won a major victory for consumers with federal regulators, ending unfair practices that added \$85 million a year in costs to our energy bills. We assembled a multi-State coalition to protect our citizens from being overcharged for electricity. And, we are now offering energy-saving audits to help every family in Maryland determine what they can do themselves, in their own homes, to save on their electricity bills.¹⁶

3. We are leading the nation in the fight against the rising tide of foreclosures.¹⁷ Thanks to Chief Judge Bell, we’ve assembled an army of more than 700 volunteer lawyers to aid at-risk homeowners. With our faith-based and non-profit partners we’ve invested

¹³ President Barack Obama’s Inaugural Address to the nation. January 23, 2009.

¹⁴ Source: Department of Budget and Management. In addition, families eligible for the earned income tax credit will receive important new resources to help them through these difficult times, because we’ve increased Maryland’s Earned Income Tax Credit by 25%.

¹⁵ Source: Public Service Commission.

¹⁶ Source: PSC and Maryland Energy Administration. We formed a coalition of four states, consumer advocates, industrial users, municipal power companies and co-ops in order to file a \$12 billion complaint with federal regulators against overcharges that the citizens of our State and others have been paying for generation incentives that are serving only to juice the profits of generation holding companies. In addition to these accomplishments, we moved forward toward making smart meters and smart pricing a reality in Maryland, so our families can save more on their utilities and avoid costs in the future. We also created tax incentives for homeowners and businesses to help them transition to green energy. What’s more, a \$40 audit fee will be waived for homeowners who agree to allow compact fluorescent light bulbs and low flow shower heads to be installed in their homes. We are also offering discounts for energy efficient retrofits, lighting and appliances that help our families decrease their utility bills.

¹⁷ We’ve passed what the Washington Post called “among the most sweeping [foreclosure reforms] in the country” to help our most vulnerable neighbors. In addition to enacting strong regulatory and legal reform, we’ve creating new financing products, launched an aggressive advertising campaign called “Mortgage Late? Don’t Wait,” and created a Foreclosure Prevention Assistance Network to get homeowners the help they need. Families should call the Maryland HOPE hotline at 1-877-462-7555 or visit www.problemsolver.maryland.gov for more information.

millions of dollars to provide the services of foreclosure prevention counselors to thousands of Maryland families. And we've negotiated agreements with half a dozen loan servicers to help borrowers and lenders find alternatives to foreclosure.¹⁸

Unfortunately, some companies like Wells Fargo continue to ignore this crisis, with no regard for the hardworking families of our State. Rather than stepping-up-to-the-plate (let alone even picking up the phone) for our most vulnerable neighbors, they choose short term profit over long-term homeownership. Rest assured, we're not going to let the self-interest of a few prevent us from making progress for the many.

4. With 33 One Stop Centers, which provide resume, computer training, and job search services, we are reaching out to neighbors who have lost their jobs.¹⁹ And what's more, we're dispatching rapid response teams to meet and assist our fellow citizens who are on the verge of being laid off.²⁰
5. We are now for the first time distributing unemployment assistance via debit cards and direct deposit, thus saving taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in mailing and printing costs while at the same time saving our struggling families from having to turn to unscrupulous, profiteering check cashing centers that gouge their modest assistance in tough times with outrageously high check-cashing fees.²¹
6. We are expanding opportunity to more women and minority business owners, increasing State awards to MBE firms by \$300 million between fiscal years 2006 and 2008.²²
7. Working together as One Maryland, we not only passed the nation's first living wage law, but under the leadership of Secretary Perez, we've now recovered \$1.2 million in unpaid wages owed to our workers.²³

With a state government that is working again, we are making progress for Maryland families, but there is much more work to be done. Our great challenge for this session is to

¹⁸ Source: Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. Participating servicers include Citi, Ocwen, HSBC, Litton Loan Servicing, GMAC ResCap and AmeriNational Community Service.

¹⁹ Source: Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. Additionally, in 2008 alone, we were able to reach 143,000 of our citizens through these important Centers.

²⁰ Source: DLLR. More than 3,000 employees who were laid off from more than 40 companies received information and services through the rapid response programs in 2008.

²¹ Source: DLLR.

²² Source: Office of Minority Business Enterprise. We awarded over \$1.3 billion to MBEs in FY 2008 as compared to \$1.0 billion in FY 2006. This represents a 30% growth in awards over the past 2 fiscal years. MBE participation for 10 StateStat reporting agencies collectively in FY 2008 was 27.2%, the highest in our State's history. MBE participation for all cabinet agencies was 22.5% and 20.3% for all agencies and departments statewide in FY 2008. And in just one example of our progress, yesterday our Public Service Commission announced that they successfully pressured a large and growing group of utilities to commit to a goal of 25% in MBE purchases.

²³ Source: DLLR.

redouble our efforts; doing all that we can to stand up for Maryland families and to power through the other side of this recession ahead of every other state.

- I need your help -- to provide a record \$132 million in energy assistance for more than 125,000 Marylanders who are struggling to pay their heating bills this cold winter.²⁴
- I need your help -- to expand health care coverage to more of our families. Together we can make a real difference by investing \$15 million to assist small businesses with obtaining health care coverage for their employees. And together we can keep 700,000 Marylanders insured by investing \$5.5 billion in Medicaid and the Maryland Children's Health Program.
- Many of our neighbors rely on part time jobs in order to feed their families. This year, I need your help -- to make them eligible to receive unemployment benefits for the first time in our State.²⁵
- I need your help -- to crack down on the shameful practice of cheating workers out of rights and benefits by fraudulently "misclassifying" employees as independent contractors when clearly they are not.²⁶
- I also need your help to guarantee a prevailing wage to workers on 118 more state-sponsored construction projects.²⁷
- And I need your help to give State workers the right to organize themselves, if they should so chose, by passing Fair Share enabling legislation.

A Lean Budget that Protects Our People

In Maryland, we are in a better position than other states to climb out of this national recession, but until that day comes, as every family in our State is forced to do more with less, so too must we.

During the past two years, we've made some very difficult and painful decisions to attack an inherited structural deficit by reducing \$2.2 billion in spending, and by eliminating 1,500

²⁴ Senator Barbara Mikulski, Senator Ben Cardin, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, as well as Congressmen Elijah Cummings, Dutch Ruppersberger, Chris Van Hollen, Jon Sarbanes, Roscoe Bartlett, Congresswoman Donna Edwards, (and former Congressmen Al Wynn and Wayne Gilchrest), have successfully secured an increase in our federal energy assistance allocation, which will allow us to assist as many as 10,000 additional Marylanders.

²⁵ Governor's Legislative Package. Employers pay unemployment taxes for part-time workers, but the workers themselves are ineligible for unemployment benefits.

²⁶ Governor's Legislative Package. Our Workplace Fraud bill would impose strict penalties on employers who engage in this practice.

²⁷ Governor's Legislative Package. At present we have a \$500,000 threshold for the prevailing wage on State-sponsored -- one of the highest thresholds in America. Our legislation would lower this threshold to \$100,000.

state government jobs as they became vacant. In fact, right now our State ranks 43rd out of 50 states in per capita state and local government employment – 43rd out of 50.²⁸

Were it not for these choices, our fiscal outlook would be far worse.

But because of the downturn in the national economy, and even after all of the spending reductions already made, today we face a \$2 billion shortfall in revenues for Fiscal Year 2010.²⁹

It is my hope, and it is my belief, and it is my expectation that the balanced budget we were required by law to submit to you this month, will be a better budget by the time it's up for final consideration in April. Why? Two reasons. Barack,... Obama.³⁰

I am hopeful and I am optimistic, but because of these challenging times, the balanced budget -- as it currently stands before -- you is very painfully lean.

Currently, there are more cuts in this budget than in any prior budget in our State's history; and we've proposed for the first time ever in Maryland, a negative spending affordability rate of -1.57%.³¹ On many worthy initiatives, the best that we have been able to do in this budget, is to protect them by funding them at the same level at which they were funded last year.

But despite these challenges, we can and must protect our core priorities.

- We are, therefore, proposing the largest investment our State has ever made in our public schools of \$5.4 billion,... even in these tough times.³²
- We are also investing more in college affordability,... even in these tough times.
- We are investing more in public safety,... even in these tough times.
- And because of these tough times, we are increasing funding to provide a stronger safety net to support our hardest hit families,...

Let's talk about the betters, stronger future we prefer.

²⁸ Source: Department of Budget and Management.

²⁹ Source: DBM.

³⁰ We drafted this FY 2010 budget with the very conservative assumption that we will receive \$350 million in federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. However, we have received encouraging news in recent days, and we have reason to hope and believe we'll be receiving significantly more assistance from a federal government which, under new leadership, is working again. But make no mistake about it, we need to do all we can to support President Obama and our Congressional delegation as they work to urgently pass the stimulus. It's up to us in Maryland to use these funds responsibly,... To put our children first and protect our priorities in this fiscal year, and to plan ahead for the next year as our country continues to weather this economic downturn.

³¹ Source: Department of Budget and Management. Overall general fund expenditures in this budget will decrease by 1.3%.

³² Source: DBM. FY 2010 Proposal includes a record K-12 investment of \$5.4 billion. FY 2009 was a record at \$5.3 billion.

The Better, Stronger Future We Prefer

Education and Our Economy

In Maryland, we have the nation's best public schools and therefore one of the best and most highly skilled workforces in the United States.³³

Under Lt. Governor Brown's dedicated leadership, we are working to harness the vast potential of the BRAC process to bring 40,000 to 60,000 jobs to Maryland.³⁴

At the center of our job-creation strategy is Maryland's greatest asset: the skills, creativity, talents and ingenuity of our people.³⁵ Now that we have the best public schools in America, we must strive through our first-ever statewide Teacher Survey,³⁶ and with expanded Career and Technical Education, and renewed emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (or STEM) to make Maryland public schools the best in the world.³⁷

The road is steep, but our legs are strong.

And there is no single investment we can make that expands opportunity to more Marylanders like the investments we make to put the dreams of a college education within the grasp of more hard-working Maryland families.

This isn't merely about trying to move up in some ranking, or generating another clip for a scrap book; this is about investing in our future. This is about doing for our children's generation, what the GI Bill did for my father's generation.

Is the fight for affordable college about politics??? You're darn right it's about politics. It's about the politics of inclusion. It's about the politics of prosperity. It's about the politics of opportunity. It's about the politics of posterity. It's about the politics of my kids and yours. It's about the politics of the hardworking people we serve. You're darn right it's about politics.

³³ Source: The Milken Institute report on Technology Economy Preparedness ranked Maryland one of two States best positioned to take advantage of the 21st century technology economy.

³⁴ Source: Office of the Lt. Governor

³⁵ To prepare our workforce for the demands of the 21st century economy – and to make sure we have the services in place to protect our families who are hardest hit by this recession – we've instated a Workforce Creation and Job Security Cabinet, which has been meeting regularly for a year. Much of our future economic competitiveness rests in our growing life sciences sector. The strength of our bioscience sector's rating for potential job creation rose in the last year from #4 to #2 in America, according to the Milken Institute, and – like our public schools -- we want to be #1. This year we announced Bio2020: an initiative which represents the largest investment into the future that any State has ever made in its biosciences sector. Why? Because the life-sciences create jobs for Maryland families.

³⁶ Starting next month, we will begin surveying every teacher and principal in Maryland to get their input on the teaching conditions in their schools; to find out where the challenges and opportunities lie; and to guide our efforts to recruit and retain the best teachers and principals in America.

³⁷ We've made STEM education a priority, and it is one of the issues for which our P-20 Council is working to bring together stakeholders from the educational and business communities in common cause.

Public Safety

The road is steep, but our legs are strong, and last year, with a government that works, we saved a lot of lives by partnering like never before with our local jurisdictions and the District of Columbia, -- by cracking down on repeat violent offenders through our Violence Prevention Initiative; by ramping up our efforts to use DNA and digitally enhanced fingerprint evidence to solve crimes; and by supporting our courageous police officers, fire fighters, and first responders.³⁸

We can build upon this progress with better technology, better law enforcement coordination, and better re-entry programs. We can build upon this progress with your support of our Child Safety Net legislation, and your support to take firearms out of the hands of domestic abusers.

And we could have even more resources to accomplish all of these important life-saving goals, if you would follow me in abolishing an outdated, expensive, and utterly ineffective death penalty in Maryland.

I'd like to publicly thank former Attorney General Civiletti who is with us in the Gallery today, and everyone who served on the Maryland Commission on Capital Punishment for your hard work, dedication, fairness, and your respect for differences of opinion.

Decent people can disagree on this issue, but as your Governor – I ask that you give this important moral question of repeal of the death penalty a fair up-or-down vote in both houses of this legislature.

The Health of Our Children and Our Environment

As I conclude today, I would like to talk with you briefly about two closely related and inextricably connected challenges – the health of our environment and the health of our children.

There are many things we do not know about the future, but there are many things we surely know about the present.

We know for example that a child who goes to bed hungry, wakes up hungry, and goes to school hungry is a child that is not likely to reach his or her full potential in God's eyes or ours. We also know that if the climate continues to rise, and we continue to treat the land, the air and the water with the same disregard that we have for the last 30 years, then the natural soul of our State, the Chesapeake Bay, will live no more.

³⁸ Source: Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention. There is no reason why one of the smartest and most compassionate states in the union should content itself with being one of the most violent states in the union.

There is a Native American proverb that holds, “*the way we treat the earth is a reflection of how we treat one another,...*” “*The way we treat the earth is a reflection of how we treat one another.*” Sadly do I see this truth. But I also have faith and belief in its corollary – that how we treat one another, might just usher forth a new era in how we treat the earth.

So let this year be the year that our great State becomes the first in the nation to humbly acknowledge this important duality, not only by pledging to redouble our efforts on land, water, and air to save the Chesapeake Bay, but let this also be the year, that we come together as the first State in the union to commit ourselves to eradicating childhood hunger by 2015. It is a matter of choosing and doing; and, we serve a people who want to help.

The road is steep, but our legs are strong.

This better future is ours, if we are willing to fight, and sacrifice, and work for it.

Conclusion

We have some very important choices to make in the months ahead, choices which will help determine who we are as a people and what kind of future we will leave to our children.

As we make these choices, the very good news is that we actually have a President and a Congress who -- rather than looking at government as the enemy – are committed to moving us forward again as a nation.

For there is a truth that thundered across the Mall in Washington, DC last week, and we hear it rumbling still – a growing and renewed sense of hope and optimism, based on the values of our community and our sense of personal responsibility. A reaffirmation that we are all in this together, and that tough times don’t last but tough people do.

And just as our challenges cannot be underestimated, neither can our strengths. One Maryland: twelve stars in a circle, and one star still at the center.³⁹

Thank you.

³⁹ When Washington’s Army was outnumbered and surrounded on Brooklyn Heights in August of 1776, 400 Marylanders threw themselves at the overwhelming British force so that the Continental Army and The United States, could live to fight another day. 256 of these Maryland patriots lie buried in Brooklyn, NY near where they fought and fell. They fought under a flag with twelve stars in a circle, and one at the center.