

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Councilmember Valerie Ervin Votes to Approve Fiscal Year 2010 Montgomery Operating Budget That Maintains Core Services During Difficult Economic Times



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ROCKVILLE, Md., May 21, 2009—Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin, who represents District 5, which includes Kensington, Silver Spring, Takoma Park and Wheaton, voted today to approve the County Fiscal Year 2010 operating budget. The Council's action maintains property taxes at the Charter limit, spreads the property tax burden equitably among residents, preserves essential services for residents and eliminates planned cost of living increases for employees.

"The Council kept its commitment to fund core services that residents rely on each day," said Councilmember Ervin. "Education, public safety and safety net services were at the top of my list of priorities because these are issues that I hear about most in District 5.

"As a single mother, putting a son through college, I know that working families are struggling to make ends meet in the County. I am satisfied that we were able to maintain core services without exacerbating the tax burden on our residents."

Councilmember Ervin believes that working families drive the economic engine of Montgomery County and are the County's most valuable resource. However, the employee contracts, as originally negotiated by the Executive Branch, were not affordable in this current fiscal crisis.

"The Council was forced to defer several elements of negotiated agreements with employee unions," said Councilmember Ervin. "It is up to the Executive Branch to send us contracts which are sustainable; otherwise, we jeopardize the essential services that residents rely on."

As chairwoman of the Council's Education Committee, Councilmember Ervin fought to maintain essential funding for Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College. However, the State Board of Education's decision not to grant the County a waiver of \$79 million from the state-mandated Maintenance of Effort requirements left the Council with a tremendous hole to fill late in the budget process. The Council worked together to continue to support the Montgomery County School System.

"My goal is always to put our county's children first, and I have consistently fought to preserve robust education funding both on the Montgomery County School Board and the Council," said Councilmember Ervin. "The eleventh hour decision by the State Board of Education certainly exacerbated the budget challenges we faced this year.

"With school enrollment numbers increasing, the County again has to step up to the plate to help close the gap for education, so that our students can continue to get the quality education that they deserve and that our residents expect. We have to do more with less, but still ensure that our children continue to receive a top-notch education."

The Council restored essential public safety resources by increasing the number of police recruits, maintaining police station hours and keeping open a satellite police station in Piney Branch. "County funding for public safety is essential, and the Council acted quickly to restore services in this area," said

Councilmember Ervin. “We all are committed to keeping our communities safe and know that we must be even more vigilant during this economic downturn.”

The Council also maintained services for its neediest residents and maintained access to transportation. Councilmember Ervin fought to maintain funding for pre-kindergarten services for low-income families and to restore critical health and human services programs. Some examples include health clinic operating support, mental health care for children, and health screening for the county’s neediest residents. Councilmember Ervin also voted to maintain much needed bus routes and Ride On funding for children and seniors.

Councilmember Ervin secured funding to maintain and expand other services to District 5. For example, she worked with her Council colleagues to secure funding to make much needed bridge repairs in Takoma Park; keep the Piney Branch Pool open; expand the Department of Health and Human Services sobering team to the Wheaton Central Business District; maintain emerging community services like trash pick up and beautification projects; and restore a portion of staffed hours at the Kensington Volunteer Fire Department and the Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad.

“This budget process has been extremely challenging because of our limited resources and the increasing needs of our residents during these difficult economic times,” said Councilmember Ervin. “I believe that this budget strikes the right balance.”

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