

[Join The Conversation!](#) Talk about the news of the day with public radio fans on WAMU 88.5's [The Conversation](#).



Home Support WAMU News Programs About Calendar Contact Help Search

Monday, January 4, 2010

LISTEN LIVE | Schedules

Now on WAMU 88.5

[Fresh Air](#)

Now on WAMU's Bluegrass Country

[The Ray Davis Show](#)

Now on WAMU-3

[The World](#)

WAMU 88.5 News

[Art Beat](#)

[Commentaries](#)

Special Topics

[H1N1 Pandemic](#)

[Virginia Elections](#)

News archives

[2009](#)

[2008](#)

[2007](#)

[2006](#)

[2005](#)

[2004](#)

[WAMU Special Reports](#)

[Regional Resources](#)

Your Amazon.com purchases support WAMU 88.5

Search Amazon.com:

Keywords:

**Search New and Used
amazon.com.**

[What's this?](#)

Your purchases from the NPR Store support WAMU 88.5

Art Beat Wednesday, December 30th

December 30, 2009 - (December 30th) TOO MUCH LIGHT Too Much Light Makes the Baby go Blind: it's a play - actually 30 very short plays - at [Woolly Mammoth Theater](#) near Chinatown in DC. It's like a collection of short stories and has been roundly described as shocking, witty, dirty, political and really funny. Performances start at 8 each night up through Saturday.

(December 30th) IRISH SONG Irish song and dance come to the [Kennedy Center's Millennium](#) stage tonight at six, in Foggy Bottom. Billy McComiskey and Zan McLeod perform traditional Irish music on the button accordion, flute, fiddle, guitar, and bodhran - a type of Irish drum. They'll be accompanied by stepdancing students from the Culin School of Traditional Irish Dance.

(December 31st) SINGING IN THE NEW YEAR If you're still looking for something to do for New Year's Eve, there's Seldom Scene at the [Birchmere](#) in Alexandria Virginia at 8. Homegrown Bluegrass bands [Dead Men's Hollow](#) and [Darren Beachley and the Legends of the Potomac](#) will sing in the new year with old-time country blues, southern Gospel and some pretty contemporary bluegrass interpretations as well.

Traffic Artery In Southeast D.C. Gets Upgrade

December 30, 2009 - By David Schultz

When he crosses the Anacostia River, Dan Bell uses the 11th Street Bridge, but he doesn't enjoy it.

"The weave patterns on the bridges are opposite of what they should be," he says. "So you have a lot of local and interstate traffic trying to mix it up on a short span," says Bell.

Bell should know. He's one of the many consultants working on the new 11th Street Bridge. Construction on the \$300 million project begins this week.

Bell says the new bridge will be similar to the recently-remodeled Woodrow Wilson Bridge, because it will feature two separate spans: one for interstate traffic and another for local neighborhood traffic.

He says this should put an end to the cluster of cars that forms regularly on the bridge. "That's what causes a lot of the traffic."

The span for local traffic will also feature a pedestrian sidewalk and tracks for future streetcar use. The 11th Street Bridge project is slated for completion in 2013.

Listen to this feature

[Real Audio](#)

[Windows Media](#)

[Share this](#)





[What's this?](#)

Northern Va. Democrat Urges McDonnell To Be Cautious On Offshore Drilling

December 30, 2009 - By Jonathan Wilson

Virginia's Governor-Elect -- Bob McDonnell -- has written a letter to the country's Secretary of the Interior urging no further delay in allowing offshore drilling in Atlantic Coast waters.

Some democrats, are urging further caution, though. The Republican Governor-Elect's letter says by allowing the state to lease offshore rights to energy companies, the federal government will help Virginia create more than 2500 new jobs in a 10-year period. That comes from a forecast from Old Dominion University in 2005. McDonnell also says it could potentially generate \$7.8 billion dollars in capital investments.

He says it appears the federal government has not made any progress toward opening the bidding since the public comment period ended a year ago. McDonnell also says he knows of several companies that are interested in placing bids.

Virginia Delegate Bob Brink, a Democrat from Arlington, hopes McDonnell reconsiders his stance.

"It's not an immediate quick fix to either our fiscal problems or our energy problems, and we need to look at it very carefully," says Brink.

Brink says the area in questions is valuable for tourism and fishing industries, and allowing drilling could hamper both.

[Real Audio](#)

[Windows Media](#)

[Share this](#)

[npr](#) [BBC](#)

[AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA](#)

[Public Radio International](#)

[privacy policy](#) - [terms of use](#) - [contact](#) - [sitemap](#) - [directions](#) - [rss](#) - [podcasts](#) - [jobs](#) - [community](#)

Copyright WAMU 88.5
[American University](#)
Radio | 4000
Brandywine Street NW
| Washington, DC
20016-8082 |
(202)885-1200



The Environmental Protection Agency Promises To Be Tough on Pollution

December 30, 2009 - By Jonathan Wilson

The Environmental Protection Agency says Chesapeake Bay watershed states and D.C. could face stiffer pollution reduction requirements and other consequences for not meeting bay restoration goals.

But a leading environmental group isn't satisfied.

EPA Mid-Atlantic regional administrator Shawn Garvin is sending the letter to the District as well as six states -- including Maryland and Virginia.

Garvin says he's hopeful the consequences outlined in the letter won't be necessary.

"We have confidence in the states to meet each of these deadlines, and this provides a backstop if they don't," says Garvin.

The head of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation -- Will Baker -- says he's disappointed the stricter rules will not be applied to restoration commitments announced this past May. The EPA says it will apply the conditions to strategies still being developed.

"The EPA made announcements of what they intend to do -- we want them to show us with action," says Baker. "Show us that they are willing to stand up to reduce pollution today, and not tomorrow."

The EPA will also provide more than \$11 million to states in the coming year to help with bay restoration - more than double the amount provided a year ago.

[Listen to this feature](#)

[Real Audio](#)

[Windows Media](#)

[Share this](#)

Smart Meters May Speed Pepco Response Time

December 30, 2009 - By Rebecca Blatt

Utility companies have restored power to thousands of customers, after high winds whipped across the region this week, but new technology may expedite that process in the

[Listen to this feature](#)

[Real Audio](#)

[Windows Media](#)

[Share this](#)

future.

The technology is called advanced metering infrastructure -- also known as a "smart meter" program. D.C. utility regulators gave Pepco the go-ahead this month to offer them to customers.

Clay Anderson, a Pepco spokesman, says the meters will alert the company when individual customers lose power. Right now, Pepco relies on customer phone calls to pinpoint who is affected.

"We will have that information and we will be able to restore that power to your home, without you having to go home, realize the power's out, make a call," says Anderson.

The smart meters will also provide customers with more information -- how much power they use at different times of the day, for instance. And they allow customers to make changes remotely, including using blackberries to adjust thermostats.

Anderson says the company will begin implementing the program in early 2010. Federal stimulus funds will help reduce the cost to customers.

Rev. Jesse Jackson Visits Prince George's County

December 30, 2009 - By Elliott Francis

Housing foreclosures remain at record levels in Prince George's County, Maryland. The Reverend Jesse Jackson visited the county to offer some help.

The severity of housing foreclosure in Prince George's County is clear. Just listen to the Mayor of Seat Pleasant, Maryland, Eugene Grant.

"We need to understand, that Prince George's County represents only 10 percent of the state's housing market. Yet...33 percent of the housing foreclosures in this state are IN Prince George's county...the devil is alive," says Grant.

The Mayor was joined by Jackson, members of his Rainbow-Push coalition and local residents at a church in Fort Washington to discuss solutions to the housing crisis in the county.

Many folks here are facing foreclosure and claim they've been treated poorly by the banks, so Jackson offered to approach the banks on their behalf.

"We need to submit these imminent crisis cases right now! we need to do this so we can fight right now. We need to be able to call your lender and confront and submit this to the government, right now, says Jackson."

Jackson and his associates gathered information from approximately 50 residents and pledged to use his influence to help modify their home loans.

He also promised to return in February to initiate an organized action against local banks.

[Listen to this feature](#)



[Windows Media](#)



[Share this](#)

Man Arrested For Home Improvement Scam in Maryland and Virginia

December 30, 2009 - By Kate Sheehy

Montgomery County Police have arrested a man they say posed as a home improvement contractor, swindling Maryland and Virginia residents of more than half a million dollars.

25-year-old Mario Ramirez-Cadenas is suspected of working with one other person, pulling the scam at least three times in Northern Virginia and Maryland. Authorities say one woman put \$90 thousand down on a new house that was never built. The 55-year-old from Wheaton, Maryland became suspicious when construction on her home never

[Listen to this feature](#)



[Windows Media](#)



[Share this](#)

began and she could no longer contact Ramirez construction company. Ramirez was arrested December 23rd in Wichita, Kansas for domestic violence, an arrest warrant is still open for his partner, Leslie Alberto Irias. Police advise anyone looking to hire a contractor to contact the Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection.

D.C. Residents Will Be Paying For Shopping And Parking

December 30, 2009 - By Kate Sheehy Come Friday...people in the District will have to pay for disposable shopping bags, followed by an increase in fees for parking on the city's streets. Charging more for shopping bags and parking is part of a year-long trend around the Washington region to help close the budget gap and pay for programs. According to The Washington Post, unless customers bring their own bags, they will have to pay five cents for every plastic or paper bag at grocery, drug and liquor stores. On a positive note...the President of the Anacostia Watershed Society tells the Post that the "bag tax" will help the environment by encouraging people to re-use bags. As for parking, by mid-January there will be few places to park for less than 2 dollars an hour and meters will be active longer. D.C.'s potential budget deficit next year is \$104 million, Maryland and Virginia are also trying to raise money with fee increases.

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)

Virginia Unemployment Rate Remains Lowest in Region

December 30, 2009 - Virginia's jobless rate remains the lowest in the region and held steady in November. At 6.6%, the seasonally adjusted rate in November was the same as it had been for the three previous months. That's despite an annual holiday hiring rush of temporary workers. Virginia's unemployment rate is well below the national average of 9.4%, and some areas of the state - Fairfax County, Loudoun County, and Alexandria are at full employment. Maryland is not doing quite as well, unemployment there was at 7.4% for November, it's been rising over the past few months. And DC's rate remains near alltime record high levels at 11.8%. Sabri Ben-Achour reports...

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)

Two Deputies Injured in Shooting at Fauquier County Courthouse

December 30, 2009 - A spokesman for the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office says two deputies were injured in a shooting at the County courthouse in Warrenton, Virginia. Lt. James Hartman says the deputies were transporting an inmate facing bank robbery charges. He was awaiting a hearing at the circuit court building, when there was an altercation in the holding cell. Hartman says one deputy was shot in the leg and one was stabbed in the face. They have been taken to hospitals. The Deputy County Administrator says they are in stable condition. Hartman says the inmate is being held at the Fauquier Adult Detention Center. Rebecca Blatt reports...

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)

Group Pushing For Tighter Regulations To Stop Pollution Of The Chesapeake Bay

December 30, 2009 - A group of scientists and former politicians say the Environmental Protection Agency's new plans to clean up the Chesapeake Bay don't go far enough. The group has several of its own proposals. Many call for regulating the way

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)

animals are fed and how much fertilizer is used on farms. Both are blamed for the high nutrient levels in the Bay. Will Baker, the president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, says the federal EPA must also get tougher on polluters. Among the politicians in the group are former Maryland governors Harry Hughes and Parris Glendening. Matt Bush reports...

Road Crews Hit the Streets Ahead of Nasty Weather

December 30, 2009 - Snow teams in the Washington Metro area are gearing up for a forecast of sleet and snow. Joan Morris is with Virginia's Department of Transportation "We are pre-treating the roads today - the troubled spots on Interstate 66, 395, 495" She says they're applying salt brine and magnesium chloride to main roads to prevent ice build up. Only sand will be applied to roads in subdivisions. Crews across the area will be working early tomorrow morning - Randy Paugh is with Maryland's Department of transportation. "We're gonna bring in our full staff at 3am - a couple hours prior to rush hour - so as the storm rolls in we'll be well prepared." Metro will begin de-icing its aboveground rails, but bus and metro access service may be affected. Angela Gates is a spokesperson for Metro. "Buses might be detoured through certain areas if that's an area that has a lot of ice." There's a chance ice may melt and re-freeze Thursday night, road crews will still be out. Sabri Ben-Achour reports..

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)

St. Elizabeth's Found Wanting

December 30, 2009 - It's been two years since the District's sole public psychiatric facility agreed to improve safety, staffing and other aspects of patient care. But the US Justice Department says St. Elizabeth's Hospital still has a ways to go.

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)

The Justice Department began investigating the hospital in 2005, after a wave of violence among patients. In 2007, a settlement agreement gave St. Elizabeth's three years to address a list of more than 200 recommendations...

"...as it relates to treatment planning, quality of care, seclusion and restraints."


St. Elizabeth's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Patrick Canavan, says they're making progress.

"Our rates of seclusion and restraint are well below the national average."

But the Hospital still lacks 24-7 oversight by a registered nurse. Nor does it have a follow-up system to ensure discharged individuals are receiving the prescribed care.

The District says St. Elizabeth's has complied with more than 80% of the requirements. If they're not at 100% a year from now, a federal court could order the District to hand the hospital over to someone else.





The U.S. Justice Department says D.C.'s sole public psychiatric facility needs to improve patient care.

Courtesy of: Rebecca Sheirt

Foreclosure Crisis Hasn't Helped Affordability

December 30, 2009 - The foreclosure crisis has caused an historic drop in home prices across much of the country but a new report shows housing has actually become less affordable, in D.C. and Northern Virginia.

The report comes from the Center for Housing Policy Keith Wardrip is a Senior Research Associate there.

He says though home prices have dropped a relatively small number of people have been in positions to take advantage.

Even though home prices have fallen only about 22 percent of owners moved and bought a home between 2005 and 2008.

In that same period, monthly mortgage payments for many people, went up, and average utility costs increased 23 percent.

Wardrip says that explains a jump in the number of households in D.C., Arlington and Alexandria spending more than half their income on housing. It went from 18 percent in 2005 to 22 percent in 2008.

Karen Serfis, works for AHOME, a non-profit offering foreclosure prevention services in Arlington. She says her organization has been busier than ever.

"I think its going to bad for at least the next year," Serfis says. "I dont see it getting better until 2011, maybe 2012."

Wardrip says CHP couldnt consider data from 2009 in its report, because the data isnt available yetbut he says its likely to show affordability problems getting worse, since unemployment was up in 2009.

Listen to this feature

 [Real Audio](#)

 [Windows Media](#)

 [Share this](#)