



GRIT & GLAM

Jada Pinkett Smith's Hollywood image belies a sense for everyday people, problems **SCENE**

\$981

of savings in today's Sun

Year-to-date savings total: **\$32,480**

OBAMACARE REFORM TO REALITY

Md. exchange lagging behind some states

Kentucky, New York and California sites find success

By **MEREDITH COHN**
The Baltimore Sun

As the nation prepared for the launch of federal health reforms, Maryland was lauded as a leader in adopting the president's signature program. President Barack Obama used a community college in Maryland as a backdrop to promote his plan — and to praise Maryland as a model.

But nearly two weeks after Maryland's online marketplace opened to the uninsured, the state program remains plagued by technical problems, and officials say it could be six weeks before the

system is running smoothly. The Maryland Health Connection enrolled 1,121 people in the first 10 days — compared with more than 9,000 in Kentucky, which has fewer uninsured, and tens of thousands in California and New York.

Other states have had similar problems, and the federal site, which serves 36 states, has been bogged down. But Maryland is now being targeted for criticism by conservatives on Capitol Hill and publications such as the Weekly Standard, which highlighted the fact that consumers could not search Maryland Health Connection to see if their **See HEALTH EXCHANGE, page 21**

Exchange enrollment

Maryland officials said 1,121 people have enrolled for insurance through the state's health exchange. Here are samples from other states:
Kentucky: 9,000-plus
New York: nearly 80,000
California: 28,000-plus
Oregon: zero
Federal system, serving 36 states, including Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia: Statistics not available

SUN INVESTIGATES

Toxic metal in wells and air

Answers sought on chromium near site of Harbor Point project

By **TIMOTHY B. WHEELER**
The Baltimore Sun

Even as some Fells Point residents worry that building over a capped toxic site at Harbor Point could endanger their health, records show elevated levels of cancer-causing chromium in groundwater just beyond the area targeted for an upscale development.

Some experts have expressed concern about the pollution — especially in light of a developer's plan to disturb the protective cap over land that once held a chromium processing plant. They're also worried that uncontrolled chromium in groundwater beyond Harbor Point could seep into the harbor or pose risks for development of neighboring properties.

Beatty Development Group plans to temporarily expose contaminated soil while driving pilings for a 22-story office tower to be occupied by Exelon Corp. — the beginnings of a billion-dollar waterfront development between Harbor East and Fells Point. But groundbreaking has been delayed as the developer, area residents and government officials wait to meet to discuss environmental safeguards.

Edward C. Bouwer, professor and chair of environmental engineering at the Johns Hopkins University, considers chromium levels alarming in some off-site monitoring wells, including one at the Living Classrooms Foundation campus just north of Harbor Point. Those levels raise questions about whether measures meant to contain the pollution are working, said Bouwer, an expert on groundwater contamination.

"If those levels were found in the harbor, we'd be shutting it down," he said. **See CHROMIUM, page 20**

BALTIMORE RUNNING FESTIVAL

For first time, a Baltimore-area winner



KENNETH K. LAM/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

The first local men's division winner in the 13-year history of the Baltimore Running Festival marathon, David Berdan of Owings Mills, breaks the finish line tape held by Erika Brannock of Towson, who was injured in the bombing at the Boston Marathon in April. **ARTICLES ON NEWS PG 2, IN SPORTS AND AT BALTIMORESUN.COM**

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

MARYLAND

FOOD STAMPS SNARL: A technical glitch left shoppers who rely on food stamps to buy groceries unable to pay at many supermarkets for much of the day Saturday. **NEWS PG 12**

NATION & WORLD

SHUTDOWN: Talks over how to end the government shutdown and avert a default on the debt went nowhere Saturday. **NEWS PG 14**

TODAY'S WEATHER

CLOUDY WITH SOME RAIN

65 HIGH | **51** LOW

Partly sunny Monday **SPORTS PG 10**

MARYLAND VOTES 2014

GOP's Craig tacks right in the governor's race

Conservative positions are correct, Harford executive says

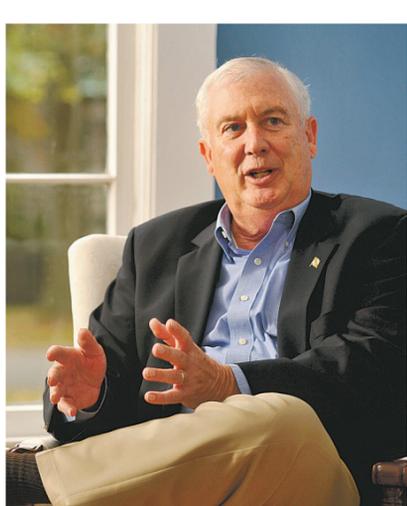
By **MICHAEL DRESSER**
The Baltimore Sun

HAVRE DE GRACE — Harford County Executive David R. Craig describes himself as a moderate by temperament, but he is staking out positions that seem certain to appeal to the Republican party's hard-core conservative base as he seeks the 2014 nomination for governor.

In recent weeks, Craig has articulated policy stands that put him well to the conservative side of Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. in his 2002 race for governor — the only

gubernatorial election the Maryland GOP has won in four decades. On the environment, social services and other issues, Craig has virtually dared his Republican rivals — Anne Arundel County Del. Ron George and Charles County business executive Charles Lollar — to try to outflank him on the right.

Among other things, Craig wants to scale back Maryland's role in the Chesapeake Bay cleanup, give the state's business department a greater voice in environmental and health regulations, and impose limits on how long low-income people can collect **See CRAIG, page 22**



AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN PHOTO

"It's not like we're trying to move to the right or left. It's being correct," said David R. Craig, who says his positions represent the experiences of a lifetime as an educator and public official.

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Chromium found in wells and air

CHROMIUM, From page 1

Other records indicate that chromium particles are in the air downtown. Levels detected at Harbor Point and as far away as the Inner Harbor are generally minute, though some are high enough to trigger regulatory action because they would slightly increase a long-term resident's chances of getting lung cancer. State officials say that Harbor Point is not a likely source of the airborne chromium but further investigation is needed to determine its origins.

City Councilman James B. Kraft, whose Southeast Baltimore district includes Harbor Point, said more information is needed. He said he wants answers, including details about the history of contaminated groundwater beneath the Living Classrooms campus, before he'll be comfortable with developing the Exelon building.

"We need to know where the levels have increased, why they're increasing. Even if the increase is minuscule, we need to know why," Kraft said. The contamination outside the containment area might have no impact on Harbor Point's development, he said, but "we need to ... have that answer before we start development."

State and federal regulators defend their oversight of contamination beneath Harbor Point and surrounding land, saying there is no evidence that the public or the environment is at risk.

The officials say the tainted groundwater — detailed in reports to regulators that were posted online after The Baltimore Sun asked to review them — is not coming from Harbor Point. They describe it as "historic" contamination that spread before the site of the former Allied Signal plant was capped, and say it is no threat to public health because no one drinks from wells in Baltimore.

Contamination left behind by the factory, which ceased operations in 1985, has been contained, the officials say, by a 5-foot-thick covering of clean soil, plastic and gravel, and by an underground wall around the peninsula. They note that sampling over the years has not picked up evidence of chromium leaking into the Northwest Branch of the Patapsco River.

Edward M. Dexter, an administrator with the Maryland Department of the Environment, said he thinks regulators decades ago were focused on capturing the worst contamination at the plant site and saw no need to remove "every single molecule of chromium."

"The fact there's some chromium in the groundwater there doesn't imply some threat," he added.

Groundwater readings are sent to the MDE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Officials at both agencies say they have been monitoring the readings and see no cause for concern. They have given preliminary approval to Beatty's plan for constructing the building, which could include apartments as well as offices.

Still, state and federal regulators say the remediation of the factory site occurred so long ago that they're not sure what their predecessors knew about the contamination beneath the Living Classrooms campus. Neither have they offered any explanation for why chromium levels in groundwater 30 feet below the surface there have been trending upward.

Living Classrooms President James Piper Bond, whose nonprofit foundation leases the property from the city and until this fall has operated charter middle school on its Caroline Street campus, said he is confident that regulators will ensure that the public is not exposed to chromium. But he expressed concern about how the public might react to reports of contamination beyond Harbor Point.

"We don't want to unnecessarily frighten people," he said.

Harbor Point lies just west of Fells Point, and is separated by water and a strip of land from bustling Harbor East. Its development plan has divided area residents — over concerns that include city-backed financial incentives and the environment — and some anxious neighbors are demanding an independent review of the project's safety.

The presence of chromium in nearby groundwater and Baltimore's air is "more to worry about," said Stelios Spiliadis, who runs The Inn at the Black Olive on Caroline Street. "The more you disturb that ground, it's already in the air."

A public meeting was scheduled last Monday at Kraft's behest to review environmental safeguards at Harbor Point. The session was called off because EPA officials could not attend during the federal government shutdown, but Kraft hopes to reschedule it.

Kraft has called on Beatty to delay groundbreaking until residents get their questions answered.

Beatty Vice President Marco Greenberg, who had previously aimed to start construction Oct. 15, said last week that the company would wait until the EPA resumes operation and would address any comments from state and federal regulators about the construction plan.

"We will comply with all health and safety requirements as set by the U.S. EPA and MDE to protect human health and the environment," Jonathan Fleisher, senior development officer for Beatty, said in an email.

A toxic legacy

Contaminated ground, water and maybe air, too, are the toxic legacy of Baltimore's role as the cradle of the nation's chrome industry. For 140 years, chromite ore was processed at the site now known as Harbor Point for use in paints, in tanning leather and in coating metal. Millions of tons of slag from the processing plant were spread around the city as construction fill.

Contamination near Harbor Point

Groundwater monitoring outside Harbor Point site shows several wells with chromium levels above the EPA drinking-water standard of .1 milligrams per liter. Regulators say there is no health risk because drinking water is not drawn from the wells. Below are results since 2011 shown on a map of the planned development. Readings are in milligrams per liter.

OP-9 well
April 2013 1900
Oct. 2012 1870
April 2012 1950
Oct. 2011 2110
June 2011 2200

OP-11 well
Readings at .869 and below

Well at Living Classrooms
April 2013 2450
Oct. 2012 1910
April 2012 2150
Oct. 2011 2310
June 2011 1910

OP-2 well
Readings at 5.82 and below

OP-7 well
Readings at .012 and below

OP-5 well
Readings at 4.61 and below

OP-3 well
April 2013 137
Oct. 2012 140
April 2012 126
Oct. 2011 142
June 2011 144

OP-4 well
April 2013 3
Oct. 2012 323
April 2012 17
Oct. 2011 457
June 2011 504

SOURCE: Honeywell International Inc.

JAY JUDGE/BALTIMORE SUN GRAPHIC



An architect's rendering shows what the new Exelon headquarters at Harbor Point could look like.

By the time the Baltimore Chrome Works closed, the soil beneath it was laced with chromium and the groundwater so tainted that officials estimated that 62 pounds of chromium compounds were oozing into the Patapsco every day. Allied spent \$110 million through the 1990s removing the old plant and encapsulating the chromium-tainted soil and groundwater there.

The site is regularly monitored by Honeywell International Inc., which took over Allied and assumed responsibility for the contamination. Chromium has practically disappeared from water samples taken off Harbor Point since the containment was completed more than a decade ago, regulators say, though it is still in sediment.

Four of the eight monitoring wells sunk near Harbor Point show little chromium in groundwater; the others have levels well above the EPA standard for drinking water of 0.1 milligrams per liter.

For example, a sample from beneath the Living Classrooms campus showed 2,450 milligrams of chromium per liter in April, according to Honeywell's most recent report to regulators. A decade ago, the readings were about 600 milligrams per liter.

A well on the western shore of Harbor Point contained 1,900 milligrams per liter in April; levels there were nearly 30 percent higher a decade ago.

The levels measured this spring in those two wells are about 20,000 times what is deemed safe in drinking water and roughly 20 times the threshold the EPA has set in fresh water to protect fish and shellfish.

"That's very alarming to me," said Bouwer, the Hopkins groundwater expert, "because that shows the containment [around Harbor Point] is not working, or it's outside the containment."

Russell Fish, the EPA's project manager for the Harbor Point site, said elevated chromium levels in monitoring wells outside the containment likely represent contamination that was already there when the factory was dismantled 20 years ago.

State environmental officials said they believe the monitoring well at the Living Classrooms site predated the plant's closing, though results reported by Honeywell date back only to the late 1990s.

Federal and state regulators say there is

no indication that chromium is seeping into the harbor. They note that Honeywell has been pumping tainted water from the ground inside the containment barrier, which keeps the water table lower than it is outside it, so water would flow into any break in the underground wall.

"The mayor is confident that the [Maryland Department of the Environment] is monitoring all environmental issues surrounding the project," said Kevin Harris, a spokesman for Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, referring questions to the state agency.

The high chromium levels in wells "does not represent leakage through the wall," said Victoria Streitfeld, a spokeswoman for Honeywell International Inc., which conducts the periodic monitoring. Contamination levels in the wells can be affected by rainfall, drought and other natural conditions, she said in an email.

The chromium concentration in groundwater beneath Living Classrooms is about the same as it was in the late 1990s, Streitfeld said. Reports filed by Honeywell show levels in the late 1990s ranged from 610 milligrams per liter to 2,300 milligrams per liter in the span of a couple years.

She said the Living Classrooms property was checked when authorities investigated the extent of contamination at the processing plant around the time it shut down. State-supervised testing found no evidence of chromium in the soil on the neighboring property, she said.

"Groundwater contamination was identified and has been monitored since 1997," Streitfeld said, adding that the contamination at Living Classrooms "is known to be associated with" the old chrome plant site.

Not everyone is satisfied with those assurances.

"It just doesn't sit well with me, that the cleanup allows contamination of the aquifer," said Jennifer Sass, a senior scientist with the Natural Resources Defense Council, a nonprofit environmental advocacy group. "Water is connected; it moves and it mixes. Why would it be OK to contaminate any underground water source, especially so close to the bay?"

Questions persist

Bouwer and other researchers say the chromium particles detected in Baltimore's air — from samples taken this year by Harbor Point's developer and by Honeywell — also deserve scrutiny, because the hexavalent form of chromium detected is a potent carcinogen. Beatty hired a consultant to sample the air at Harbor Point and elsewhere in the area to develop a monitoring baseline for dust and chromium before starting construction.

"When you have hexavalent chromium in the air, that's not something you take lightly," said Amir Sapkota, a public health specialist at the University of Maryland, College Park.

State officials say they've never sampled the Inner Harbor's air for chromium before and suggest that the levels detected in recent testing could be from power plants, incinerators, motor vehicles or even metal plating businesses in the area. An EPA spokeswoman said the developer's air

sampling data is being reviewed.

George S. "Tad" Auburn, the chief air pollution regulator for the Maryland Department of the Environment, said even if the developer's air samples are confirmed, more testing is needed to get a handle on the levels and where the chromium is coming from.

Chromium is widely used in industry. It is often detected, generally at trace levels, in urban air, according to EPA reports. Levels detected by Beatty's consultant and by Honeywell range from below one nanogram per cubic meter to 23 nanograms per cubic meter.

"Compared to our air, that's at high levels," said Jean Ospital, health effects officer for the South Coast Air Quality Management District in Southern California.

Average airborne chromium levels there have dropped in recent years to hundredths of a nanogram per cubic meter, he said. When a nanogram or more per cubic meter is detected, he added, authorities move to identify the source and require action to reduce emissions.

According to the EPA, a person inhaling 8.3 nanograms of hexavalent chromium per cubic meter of air over a 70-year lifetime has a 1 in 10,000 chance of getting lung cancer.

Auburn said such a lifetime cancer risk from an air pollutant means "you ought to be looking at it harder and doing things."

Councilman Kraft said he wants to know more about the air readings as well, and whether there is any relation to the Harbor Point site. "We need to know where they're coming from, and we need to know if they've been there for some time," he said.

Thomas Burke, a professor at the Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health who dealt with chromium years ago while an environmental regulator in New Jersey, said it's important for people to put pollutants, even carcinogenic ones, in perspective.

"The challenge is to keep the environment safe and the public protected from incremental risk," he said.

Burke suggested that the Living Classrooms Foundation ought to be careful about digging or building on its Caroline Street campus until experts better understand the nature and extent of the contamination below.

Bond said classes have been shifted this fall to an empty school building five blocks away — not out of concern over contamination but to spare students and teachers from the noise of construction next door.

Meanwhile, some Fells Point residents say their initial anxiety over the proposed Harbor Point project has eased as they have learned more about planned safeguards. For example, the developer has proposed to monitor dust levels during construction and to shut down work within an hour if they increase significantly.

David Johnson, a member of Baltimoreans for Intelligent Development — a group formed to voice concerns over the project, but which has splintered over the level of members' concerns — said, "We still have questions, but it's not like 'Katy bar the door.'"

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