

*Engaging Your Elected  
Officials in the Fair Health  
Movement*

**Experiences of a State Senator**

Senator David Harrington  
Maryland General Assembly



Wednesday  
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1:30 pm EST



# Background

- Senator Harrington is a proud graduate of Howard University and did Master's work at Miami University of Ohio and received graduate credits from Harvard University
- In February 2008, David Harrington was appointed to complete the term of the late Senator Gwendolyn Britt, to Maryland State Senate. Senator Harrington serves on the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee, a member of the Maryland State Black Caucus and has served as Chair of the Task Force on Physical Education. Senator Harrington has introduced several bills, five of which were eventually signed into law.
- Senator Harrington has received numerous awards and acknowledgements including: the Hurston Wright Foundation's Ella Baker Award for community and literary service and the Phyllis Campbell Newsome Public Policy Leadership Award from the Washington Council of Agencies

# Deciding to Become An Elected Official

- As a constituent of the city of Bladensburg, with two young children, there was notice of inadequate playing conditions for children.
- Once numerous concerns were ignored, the decision was made to get more involved in the decision making process
- In the 1993 Mayor Election of the City of Bladensburg, the seat was won by the previous presiding Council person which left the City Council person seat open; unfortunately, the position was lost to the opponent
- Not to be discouraged, the Mayor Election of 1995 was successful; the first African American was elected as the Mayor of Bladensburg
- Even with no political experience, the mission as Mayor of Bladensburg and as an elected official overall is to serve the people and to be visible



# The work of an Elected Official: Social Determinants of Health

- There is always concern for the “voices” of the community
- In regards to health, it is about creating better and enough employment, better schools, and better playgrounds in communities as well as improving the lives of working people

# Influence of Constituents

- There is the hope that constituents are aware of an elected official's open mindedness; *“Community First”*, which are meetings held to inform constituents of what’s happening legislatively, empowers citizens to make comments and allow them to understand the process of government that then gives them the willingness to make changes





# Community Experiences

- There has been and will be times when community members disagree with their elected official's policies
- There is no category for best or worst experiences with community members
- Constituents should always be intelligent followers
- The dissatisfaction of community members shows that they are concerned about their community
- Encountering constituents who agree or disagree with your policies as an elected official is apart of the leadership process
- leaders should develop relationships with community members in order to gain their trust



# Tips

- Know who your elected officials are; you lose out on being aware of the processes of how you live if you don't know who determines issues
- Understand the policy making process; this process is foreign to people even though it drives agenda
- Politics is about numbers; you must make connections and have support as an elected official