

"Federation Corner" column  
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### **News you can use from the Civic Federation**

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#### **May 12 MCCF program will focus on report on county public high schools**

The topic of the program for the upcoming meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation on Monday, May 12 is "With Eyes Open: the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Report on Montgomery County's Public High Schools." The format for the Federation program will consist of an overview and discussion of the OLO report by a panel of speakers, followed by a question and answer period during which audience members can request any needed clarifications or additional information from the panelists.

The OLO report released on April 8 is an update of their 2009 report, and in it the performance in the consortia schools is compared with the non-consortia schools. The current report found that since 2011 the economic, racial, and ethnic stratification of students among Montgomery County Public Schools high schools has increased. The research found that there is an achievement gap within MCPS when comparing the two different school types.

Using seven measures, the achievement gap was found to have widened over the past three to four years for most of the measures, including SAT/ACT Performance, Academic Eligibility, and Out-of-school Suspension. The gap either narrowed or stayed the same for some measures, such as Algebra II by Grade 11, Graduation Rates, and Dropout Rates.

The authors of the recently released OLO report recommend that the County Council discuss with the Board of Education and MCPS leadership their goals for improving student integration and narrowing the achievement gap.

The report's authors also recommend that the Council improve their oversight of MCPS appropriations aimed at narrowing this 'achievement gap.' And they also recommend a review of MCPS' total \$2.3 billion budget.

The OLO report can be accessed on the county government website, from a webpage listing OLO reports at the following URL: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/olo/reports/2008.html](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/olo/reports/2008.html)

The panel of speakers for the Civic Federation program include: Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, author of the OLO report; Richard D. Kahlenberg, Senior Fellow at the Century Foundation; and, County Council member Hans Riemer (D.-At Large). We are hoping that a representative from MCPS will participate, although we had not yet received any confirmation by the time this column went to press.

The May 12 Civic Federation meeting will be held in the first floor auditorium of the County Council Building in Rockville, starting at 7:45 p.m. Please plan on attending this MCCF meeting for what surely be an interesting and thought provoking discussion on an important topic. As always, the public is invited and encouraged to attend.

#### **Primary Elections reminder**

Primary election day is June 24 for state and county elected offices (e.g., Governor, State Attorney General, State Senators and Delegates, County Executive, and all nine of our County Council

members). The early voting period is June 12 to 19, and the voter request deadline for electronic absentee ballots is June 15.

Other election information, such as the registered candidates for each office and polling locations, is available at: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections).

Primary elections may not receive as much attention and have as large a voter turnout as general elections. However, since many offices are only being contested by members of the same political party or are in areas with an overwhelming number of residents affiliated with one party, the primary election can be critical for determining the final winners in many instances.

### **Emergency Alerts**

Have you signed up for your automatic "Alert" notifications yet? Snow season may be past, but you never know when we will be hit by a thunderstorm, or--even scarier--a "derecho" or tornado. In the event of an ongoing or imminent threat a system administered by the county Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security will automatically alert you regarding the possible danger, either on your cell phone or via email.

You can sign up online to receive emergency alerts from the county by going to the system's webpage at <http://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov>, and then clicking on "New User" to begin your registration.

Of course, those who do not frequently check their text messages or live at their computers day and night may not get the warnings in a timely fashion. So, do our old civil defense warning sirens still work? If so, when and under what conditions to they function as a system to alert the public of emergency situations? Perhaps our Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security could check in with the Civic Federation and advise us of the full range of possibilities.

*The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to [montgomerycivic@yahoo.com](mailto:montgomerycivic@yahoo.com)*