



**County Executive Steuart Pittman's
State of the County Address
December 9, 2025**

"A Way Forward"

People across America are losing faith in government.

We feel some of that locally, and it's a threat to the state of our county. But it's real.

I came to this job pretty skeptical about government.

I spent my first decade after college as a community organizer bringing people together in low income neighborhoods to fight local governments - for services and investments.

And then I was a frustrated south county farmer who fought against dumb regulations.

I came of age in the eighties, when the country pivoted away from the fifty-year run that created our middle class, to an experiment in trickle down economics, where politicians blamed government for everything, and much of the country's wealth got transferred from the pockets of our people to the portfolios of our billionaires. That left me, and much of America, pretty angry.

Becoming County Executive and serving for the last seven years hasn't changed my views, but it has changed my strategy.

My work with an extraordinary group of public servants and a 600-thousand-person community that is a microcosm of America, has shown me a way forward.

We can heal - from our anger and even from our trauma - by doing two things.

One, we must demonstrate, over and over again, that government is capable of delivering solutions - that it's efficient and it is effective.

And two, we must engage our residents in our work. We must be inclusive.

The state of our county depends on our progress on these fronts, and I believe that the state of our county is strong.

DELIVERING SERVICES

We knew when I took office that it would take money to deliver the quality of government that we'd need.

Politicians who had led our county in recent decades got elected by promising tax cuts over and over again, so our property and income tax rates were the lowest in the region by far.

The Budget Office showed us what those rates would pay for, and it wasn't enough to do what we'd promised, so we did community engagement. We invited our residents to seven Budget Town Halls, one in each Council District, and we included their Councilmember. Residents demanded very expensive things, like raises for their teachers, police, and firefighters.

When we raised our income and property tax rates that year, nobody was surprised. We kept them the lowest in the region, but we created enough revenue to pay for the things that people had asked for.

State law wouldn't let us target those increases to high income earners or to protect the folks earning less, so we went to the General Assembly, got the law changed, and made our taxes more progressive. Today, only our highest earners pay the income tax rates of our neighbors. The rest of us pay less.

Our county's newfound fiscal strength earned us three Triple A bond ratings for the first time in our history, a trusted sign that our government is efficient and our economy is strong.

We'd asked a lot from our residents, and we needed to show them results, so we created OpenArundel, a system whereby the public can monitor progress on every agency's performance metrics.

We also expanded constituent services to include a community engagement function, and we moved our land use permitting to an online platform so that residents, builders, and regulators can hold one another accountable.

As we worked to create efficiencies in the delivery of government services, we engaged the people who know how the systems actually work.

Too often newly elected politicians fire those very people, and replace them with politically loyal rookies. That only works if your goal is to destroy the agencies.

The key to the efficiency and effectiveness of Anne Arundel County government today is the fact that we have been able to hire, train, and keep good people.

That was made possible by a combination of competitive pay and benefits and a sense of mission in the workplace. Good people stick around because public service in the company of other good people is fulfilling.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

But that's not enough. Regardless of how efficient a local government becomes, its operations will always be under attack at election time.

So we ask our public servants not only to do their work more efficiently, but to take the time to engage with residents, even when those residents are not trained in the subject matter.

And they do it, because they know that they work for the people.

It's town halls, public hearings, educational programming, social media, tabling at events, and regular meetings with advocacy groups.

We've got [EngageArundel](#), the [Nonprofit Center](#), [Arundel TV](#), the [Budget BUDDE](#), [OpenArundel](#), 70 advisory committees, and a completely reworked [aacounty.org](#) with entry portals to match every issue and concern that we can think of.

All we need to make it succeed, and to ensure that it continues beyond my time in office, is for you and your neighbors to participate.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Let's get back now to the essential government functions, starting with public safety.

Folks want an ambulance to arrive in an emergency and a police officer to arrive when there is violence. They want laws enforced and dangerous lawbreakers kept in custody.

We've invested heavily in Anne Arundel County, increasing our overall budget for police, fire, sheriff, and detention by 69% since I took office, and we have professionally trained and well managed agencies doing the work.

We've improved facilities, we have better compensation, more personnel, and new technologies that allow us to deliver more protection for our residents than ever before.

But the politics of our times, the politics of division, instills fear - deliberately.

Even when crime rates are dropping, as they are now, people feel less safe and demand more protection.

Demand for more of our tax dollars to be spent on public safety will continue to grow unless we effectively address the social determinants of violence - things like poverty, hate, and mental health.

I believe that our new violence interruption programs, our efforts to house and employ residents returning from incarceration, our addiction prevention and recovery work, and our youth engagement work are the key to long-term public safety. And those will only work with economic policies that grow our economy and leave no one behind.

EDUCATION

Another essential function is education.

When I ran for office in 2018, the Anne Arundel County Council was chaired by a man who believed that public education was a communist plot, so he refused to vote for any budget that funded our schools.

But the people of our county, particularly our teachers, parents, grandparents, and students saw things differently.

They mobilized to remove elected leaders who had neglected our schools, and we all got to work - our County Council, our Board of Education, and our advocates.

We made good on unpaid back step increases and expedited a minimum starting teacher salary of \$60,000. Today our teacher vacancies are below pre-pandemic levels and among the lowest in our state.

We built or renovated three high schools, one middle school, and eleven elementary schools. We've also completed major additions on eleven more schools, and the final three in our Old Mill Master Plan are funded and in design.

We fully embraced the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and now have 47 community schools, a robust career coaching program, and a top national educator as our superintendent.

Student achievement is up in our highest poverty schools and across the board, more students are enrolled in AP classes, and AP scores are up.

We're state leaders in the upranking of schools this year, and Anne Arundel public schools were voted "most envied" in the DMV region by Test Prep Insight.

That's a big reason why businesses want to operate and people want to live in Anne Arundel County these days.

FINISHING WHAT WE STARTED

I'm running out of time. One year left, and they're telling me to wrap up this speech. Time for "Finishing what we started - rapid fire." You ready?

Affordable housing is finally happening, with the new Housing Trust Fund, a half-dozen major bills to incentivize production, and quadrupling the pipeline of affordable units. But it's not enough.

Gotta get the state to modernize septic capacity standards to allow more accessory dwelling units, gotta get housing into the Meyer Building at Crownsville, gotta get our deals done at Odenton MARC Station and Cromwell Station, and gotta get started at Laurel Park and Belle Grove landfill.

Progress is underway on all aspects of our MOVE Anne Arundel multimodal transportation plan - in fact, we just set a transit ridership record in October - but we gotta get the Broadneck, South Shore, and Annapolis connection trails done; gotta get shovels in the ground on Route 2, 3, 214, 170, and I-97; and we gotta grow our transit offerings.

We've accelerated land preservation and park improvement projects, but we've got to close on the Saltworks property north of Annapolis Mall and Glebe Heights on the South River. And we need to break ground on the Edgewater Rec Center, Brooklyn Park Community Center, Millersville Park, Odenton Park, and South Shore Park.

We've created the best Resilience Authority in the country and secured a lot of outside funding, but we must be laser-focused on projects like Annapolis City Dock and Welcome Center, and implementing our Crownsville Master Plan.

It's thrilling that we're doing so much to improve our environment and quality of life, but none of it happens without community engagement and the efficient operation of government itself.

That's why we've got to confront the excessive regulatory requirements that have piled up from decades of legislative action. We've removed some of that red tape and have bills coming to cut more of it, but like I said, I'm running out of time.

ECONOMY

And I haven't yet talked about the biggest threat we face.

Even if government is efficient and people are engaged, all of us will suffer if our economy falters.

People need incomes that allow them to afford housing, healthcare, food, and transportation at the very least. The economy that supports those things is knitted together by government programs, global trade, research, immigration, manufacturing, essential services, and taxes.

The federal government has initiated policies that many economists believe will unravel the strong economy that we have enjoyed in recent years. And they say that the first impacts will be on our most vulnerable residents.

Unemployment, foreclosure, eviction, hunger, deportation, and denial of health services are already on the rise. When the harshest cuts in Congress's One Big Beautiful Bill Act take effect after the 2026 midterm elections, those things will accelerate.

Our Office of Emergency Management has launched what I believe is the first-in-the-nation Federal Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Workgroup, an interagency effort to monitor impacts and protect residents, just as we did during COVID.

That effort has ten million dollars to invest this year, and its first funds were released to supplement food distribution during the suspension of SNAP benefits.

As we gather our residents for Budget Town Halls during January and February, I expect to hear more about the hardship being faced by our neighbors, and suspect that our next budget will reflect those pleas for help.

CONCLUSION

That is ultimately why local governments exist - to protect our people, to improve the health and wellness of our communities, and to ensure that opportunity is available to all.

So, despite all the angry rhetoric encouraging us to blame our public institutions for the challenges we face, we in local government persist.

We persist because our values demand it of us. We serve our neighbors. And that will never change.

And that is why I am able to say on this day, that the state of our county is strong.