



**Office of the County Executive  
Steuart Pittman**

***A House In Good Order***  
*Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Address*  
*May 1, 2026*

I want to begin by thanking the County Council for the invitation to present in person my FY27 Budget Proposal.

I also want to thank all of the residents and public servants who are here in the Council Chambers, or are listening online, for your engagement in this process.

I will start with what I said at each of our eight Budget Town Halls in January and February.

“Budgets are a statement of values and strategy. The seven that came before this one demonstrate a belief that government matters. Our schools, our public safety, our environment, our health, and the people who live here all benefit when we invest in effective government.”

I will note that I was deliberate in describing government spending, and by extension the taxes that we pay, as investments.

The value, therefore, is not in the act of spending, but in the return delivered, the return on the health and the wellness of our residents.

I and the leaders of the departments and institutions that this budget funds are prepared to assist the County Council in its evaluation of those returns.

“This is the last budget that I will present as County Executive, and my commitment is to remain fiscally disciplined, to continue seeking the wisdom of our residents, and to prioritize opportunities for those among us who have too often been left behind.

“We enter this process with the highest bond ratings, the highest reserves, the greatest infrastructure investments, and the strongest workforce this county has ever had. This final budget must leave for the next administration a house in good order.”

That’s a pledge I take seriously. I don’t know who will be at the helm of the administration that presents the next four county budgets, but I want whoever it is to succeed.

Our budgeting and fiscal discipline over the last seven-and-a-half years has impressed our bond rating agencies. S&P, Moody’s, and Fitch all notified us recently that for the fourth year in a row we have accomplished what only 1.5% of the 3,143 counties in the United States have done - three triple A ratings.

We didn’t do that by reducing services to our residents. We expanded them. We grew our economy, and we pursued diversity, equity, inclusion, environmental justice, and opportunity for all.

This budget projects an impressive two and a half billion dollars in revenues and two and a half billion dollars in the kind of spending that delivers a return.

I will not pretend, however, that it delivers the economic justice that our families deserve. That will be possible only when the leaders we elect at the federal level find the courage to disobey their political donors, to fairly tax the excessive wealth that has accumulated in the hands of our oligarchy, and invest that money in our people and their infrastructure.

If they look to this microcosm of America, they will see a model worth studying. A place where communities chose to engage, leaders chose to listen, and progress was launched.

I am proud of what we’ve achieved, and I am proud of what this budget delivers.

It’s all right here in this 436-page operating budget, this 564-page capital budget, and in a searchable format at [aacounty.org/budget](http://aacounty.org/budget).

My job today is to identify highlights, things that have been part of our public discourse and that impact our future. I’ll sort them as best I can in the essential buckets of Health and Human Services, Public Safety, Land Use and Government Operations, Education, and Capital Improvements.

Health and Human Services is what I have recently referred to as Protecting Our People, a category where the federal government led in the past, but where President Trump has pledged to push responsibility down to local governments, so that he can spend more on his wars.

For us, food comes first. We need it to meet the needs of a growing number of families, so this budget delivers on a request by our Food Bank and its network of pantries to increase support from \$1.5 to \$2 million dollars. Thank you to Leah Paley, her Food Bank team, and all of their allies in the battle against hunger for identifying the need and demanding that it be met.

Next is the defense of our families. This budget doubles the funding for our Office of Multicultural Affairs' Family Protection Initiative, to assist households that are victims of the ICE mass deportation campaign, with legal assistance and crisis support services. Thank you to OMA Director Alison Flores and the advocates and service providers for making this work happen.

If these dollar amounts for food and family defense are not enough, we will, with Council approval, add to it from the \$5 million in unallocated funds that this budget holds back for our Office of Emergency Management Federal Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Program.

For Medicaid recipients who, after the midterm elections, will be desperately attempting to hold onto their health coverage in the face of that Big Beautiful Bill's assault by red tape, this budget proposes five new Medicaid navigator positions in the Department of Health. I want to thank Dr. Tonii Gedin and her team for planning in advance for what we know is coming.

And for those whose benefits are cut, we propose two new case managers to work in the Department of Health REACH program. Their job is to connect volunteer and discounted medical providers with what will be a growing number of uninsured patients.

The most promising antipoverty initiative in our county this year has been Brooklyn Park's launch of ENOUGH. It's the Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Government, and Households model launched by Governor Moore to end child poverty where it's most concentrated. The initial funds are coming from the state, but it is attracting private investment and will produce measurable results that support our economy.

Our program has outpaced others across the state because our extraordinary Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families under the leadership of Dr. Pam Brown has been setting the stage for years in the four parts of our county with the highest concentrations of poverty, calling it Communities of Hope.

To ensure that the Partnership continues this work, we propose funding with county dollars the five grant-funded positions that oversee the 49-person agency's programs.

A key to the transition that Brooklyn Park residents seek is the interruption of local violence. Our Health Department work with Cure Violence Global is delivering that interruption in Eastport and Severn, so we are proposing to expand the program to Brooklyn Park. That investment will not only save lives, but it will deliver economic activity where it's needed most.

For our seniors, this budget adds funds to the Nutrition Assistance Program. For homeless youth, it funds the Hip Hop House. For our neighbors returning from incarceration, it funds Turnaround Thursday. And while this does not fit into the category of human services, we have proposed funding a new adoption coordinator position at Animal Services.

These health and human service investments create opportunity where before it was lacking, but none of that works if our communities are not safe.

We have done important work to grow our public safety agencies, but have been motivated not so much by studies from industry consultants telling us how big our agencies should be, but by achievable proposals from our chiefs and directors that directly address the needs of our residents. This budget does exactly that, once again.

For police, we propose nine new positions: a new forensics examiner, a new middle school SRO to backfill a transfer to Severn Run High School, a new position to keep up with growing demand at Central Records, and most importantly, six new positions to fully staff the third daily shift at the place where crime scenes are watched, officers are informed in real time, and safety is delivered to our officers and our residents - Chief Awad and her team's state-of-the-art Real Time Information Center.

For our Fire Department, we propose 21, yes 21, new firefighter positions to fully staff Chief Wolford's top priority, complete staffing for a new Fire Truck on the Annapolis Neck and South County. It's the largest single-year staffing increase we've made without federal support.

We are also working with the City of Annapolis to jointly fund a new EMS Peak Medic Post that serves both our jurisdictions.

I want to commend both our Sheriff, Everett Sesker, and our Detention Superintendent, Chris Klein, for outstanding work in filling vacant positions over the last two years, and for their creative staffing solutions to address the needs of their departments.

And to our State's Attorney, Anne Colt Leitess, thank you for not only operating all of these last seven-and-a-half years in the fiscally disciplined manner that you promised, but also for securing millions in outside grant funds and providing your attorneys the training and supervision that delivers your winning record in the courtroom.

And finally, I must recognize the professionalization and trusted coordination that keeps coming from our Office of Emergency Management and Director Preeti Emrick, as they coordinate our responses and lead the planning for our Joint 911 Call Center. This budget for the first time fully funds the cabinet-level OEM Director position from county general funds.

Public safety is a team effort in Anne Arundel County, and it's a team we can all be proud of.

The same is true in land use and government operations. The work of our planners, public works, recreation and parks, libraries, central services, permitting, IT, and all of our basic government operations are and must be integrated. They are the stewards of our land and the managers of our place.

We are protecting the natural spaces that nurture us, with recent acquisitions at Glebe Heights by the South River, Saltworks Creek near the Severn, the Looper Property on the Magothy, and with an accelerated pace of agricultural and woodland preservation contracts.

This budget proposal adds Rec and Parks staffing for management of these properties, as well as for the new Edgewater Community Center and Lake Waterford Indoor Tennis Facility. We should all thank Director Jessica Leys and her Department of Fun for their outstanding stewardship of these facilities and lands.

To facilitate efficiency in the regulation of both private and public development, where we said in Plan2040 that we want it to take place, this budget funds our new Capital Program Optimization Initiative - with four positions at DPW, contractual assistance at Inspections and Permits, and a new position at Central Services.

We've all been frustrated by the time it takes to build things in our county, and because this program was designed by the people who do the work, it directly addresses the bottlenecks in the process.

Thank you to DPW Director Karen Henry and all the people around her for building and maintaining this infrastructure.

We had a pretty deep freeze this winter, and when it thawed, well, we got a heavy dose of potholes. That's why you'll notice a one-time boost of \$458,000 in our road repair fund. Just call 311, and they'll get to it as quickly as they can.

In the interest of protecting and remembering our historic structures and lands, we have proposed the conversion of two cultural resources contractual positions at Planning and Zoning to merit PINs.

Among their tasks will be overseeing a contract that is in this budget to prepare our application to the National Register of Historic Places for Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park.

Like many members of this County Council, and like many of our county residents, I believe that our public schools are the best investment that we can make in our future.

I support these investments because I read Dr. Bedell's impact reports. They show that we paid teachers more and we filled our vacancies. We complied with the Blueprint mandate to invest in Community Schools, the ones with the highest concentrations of poverty, and those are the schools where test scores are rising the fastest.

Our schools encouraged more of our kids to take PSATs, SATs, and AP classes, and our PSAT, SAT and AP scores went up. We build new facilities, and students thrive in them. We offer bus drivers higher pay and bonuses, and they get our kids to school.

It's not just money that makes the difference. It's the wise investment of the money in the people who produce the results.

Before telling you what we will deliver this year for the half of our budget that goes to AACPS, I will share the story of how we got there.

I was warned by the Budget Office that state formulas would work against us this year, and that the Board of Education would be making a request far outside what projected resources could deliver.

I said that I understood, but that under no circumstances would I return to the years before my term in office, when teachers were denied step increases and given cost of living adjustments consistently below those of other county bargaining units.

County support for AACPS during the four years before I took office grew an average of only \$17 million annually.

During the last three years, the increase was \$46.7, \$47.8, and \$52 million dollars. That's when we started to see a return on our investment.

About a month ago, I met with a group of teachers in my office. Most were from elementary schools and some were special ed. They described life in their classrooms and the difficult personal choices they had made to keep showing up for our students.

Their message was consistent with what I had heard from Dr. Bedell, from Board members, and at Budget Town Halls, but it was more detailed. More real. It solidified my commitment to deliver all that I could, not just in compensation, but also in staff support.

A week or two later, I got what we call a strawman - spreadsheets to consider - with a 2% COLA for teachers and none of the special ed positions that AACPS had requested. It wasn't enough.

We had already agreed to two-and-a-quarter percent COLAs with some other county bargaining units, so we needed some revenue to fund educators. That's where it gets interesting.

During the tax revolts of the early 1990s, Anne Arundel County voters passed a charter amendment that imposed on us a property tax cap. Its formula actually requires us to lower our tax rate in some years, even when the cost of providing services goes up.

I'm not alone in believing that it's wrong for voters in one generation to mandate for a future generation that they can't choose to pay for their own government services. Former County Executives from both political parties have privately shared this view with me, and the Maryland General Assembly created an exemption allowing counties to tax above locally imposed property tax caps, as long as the funds generated support education.

Allowing the cap to set our rates this year would reduce our revenues by about \$15 million. Instead, we're striking a balance that delivers more of what our educators need, while still lowering taxes.

This budget proposal keeps our progressive income tax rates exactly where they are, and lowers our property tax rate to 96.8 cents per \$100. That is .6 cents over the cap

but .9 cents below the rate that we pay today. As always, I'm open to working with the Council to get this balance right.

This budget may well be the only one in the state of Maryland this year that cuts taxes, but it increases our investment in Anne Arundel County Public Schools by \$20.8 million more than last year's \$52 million record, for a total year-over-year increase of \$72.8 million.

That investment gets all of our AACPS bargaining units their step increase plus a 2.25% COLA to match what the rest of our county public servants are getting. And it funds all Blueprint requirements, all contract and charter school commitments, a \$13 million additional contribution to the health care fund, and it creates 26 new desperately needed special education positions.

We know that Anne Arundel County Public Schools will continue to deliver the return that our county residents are looking for, because they employ the best damn educators on the planet.

For homeowners whose state-issued assessments exploded in recent years, please note that this budget keeps our 2% homestead exemption in place. Any annual increase in value over 2% on the home you live in will not be taxed by the county.

Finally, let's talk about the Capital Budget, our investments in the infrastructure that will serve us for many years, the investments that we often borrow to pay for, by selling bonds.

In my very first meeting with the Budget Office as a new County Executive, I learned about the enormous backlog of unfunded infrastructure projects - things like new schools, roads, libraries, community college buildings, parks, fire and police stations, and basic public works.

My predecessor recognized the problem, so he grew the capital program by extending our borrowing terms from twenty to thirty years, and in his last capital budget exceeded spending affordability.

I was given a choice of either scaling back our investments or creating a dedicated revenue source to grow the program. We and four members of the County Council chose the revenue option. We created the Permanent Public Improvements program, our PPI, funded with a one-tenth of one percent increase in our income tax rate.

You all know about all of the incredibly impactful facilities that moved forward as a result of that decision, because you approved each and every one of them, sometimes with unanimous votes.

But the other part of the story is that we managed to deliver all of those things while never exceeding affordability. That's important. And it's fundamental to my promise of leaving a house in good order.

But it's not an easy feat. Doing it this year meant some good projects didn't get funded, or got postponed, but I am thrilled to announce that we were able to:

- Keep all of our *major* projects in the plan
- Move up funding by 3 years for the Arundel Fire Station
- Add funding for volunteer fire station repairs and improvements
- Fund the concept design for a new Animal Shelter
- Fund the new Northern Police Station
- Add funding for Crofton Skate Park
- Get design underway for recreation facilities and housing with supportive services at Crownsville Hospital Memorial Park
- Fund the next phase of planning for the Regional Agricultural Center at the Lothian Grain Elevator Site
- Put funding in place for new College Parkway safety improvements
- Fund Anne Arundel Community College Science and Math Building Renovations
- Transfer close to \$60 million within the DPW utility fund to divert wastewater flow from the Patapsco Treatment Plant to our own county facilities to the south in the interest of lifting a devastating moratorium on new allocations and protecting the Patapsco River.
- And last but definitely not least, in addition to keeping pace with the School Construction Master Plan, we have added funding for the first of two much-needed Field Houses at Arundel and Chesapeake High Schools.

I will close with gratitude. Working with each of you over the last seven and a half years, we have improved services, created opportunity, engaged residents in democracy, and confronted threats. Our budgets have been the foundation of that work.

We have not always agreed with one another, and on some matters we probably never will.

But we work with respect - respect for the rules that were established by those who came before us, respect for the institution we serve, and a desire to make it more effective, not weaker.

And when I say we, I mean myself, our County Council, our public servants, and our neighbors.

Our ability in this county to celebrate our common interests and navigate our disagreements sets an example, an example our nation needs in these troubled times.

Our County Council will take this budget proposal, conduct its own public hearings, and make improvements, just as it has in each of the last seven budgets.

But this eighth budget is for me the most important. It is with this budget that I am able to leave for my successor and for our residents what I promised - a house in good order, a foundation from which we can truly make Anne Arundel County The Best Place - For All.