

# Ehrlich pleases some attendees, disappoints others at gathering



Len Lazarick, The Examiner  
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## **RANDALLSTOWN, Md. -**

A group of black business leaders gathered at a Randallstown nightclub Monday to pepper Gov. Robert Ehrlich with tough questions about issues.

(Kristine Buls/Examiner)  
Gov. Robert Ehrlich.

Ehrlich gave as good as he got, pleasing some with his frank approach and disappointing others.

No, he “will not honor the old tradition” of bowing to the wishes of local senators on liquor board appointments, Ehrlich told 120 people at Sista’s Place, an event sponsored by a group of minority owners in the licensed beverage and hospitality industry.

Yes, he opposes a statewide smoking ban, a more popular position with the owners of bars and restaurants who applauded him.

Yes, he would support their campaign against underage drinking and smoking, Ehrlich said. “I can show up, and I can do a public service announcement” — another applause line.

But the governor got a more mixed response when he vehemently described his efforts to intervene in Baltimore schools, defended the work of the Public Service Commission and explained his opposition to the minimum wage. “It helps some people and hurts some people,” he said of the minimum wage.

“I had a little problem with that,” said Elaine Simon, president of the Caribbean Council and owner of a city beauty shop.

The governor said most Marylanders earn more than the minimum unless they’re unskilled, but Simon said, “Most people would like to know that it’s legislated.”

Sharon Williams of the 24-Hour Secretary agreed, and as the person who directed questions to Ehrlich for the group, Williams said he didn’t fully explain how setting up more charter schools in the city would not take money from other public schools.

“It still negatively impacts the school system,” Williams said.

Alfonso Coley, owner of Windsor Limousine Service, said, “The kids are suffering. I would like to see a plan put in place that’s going to change” the schools. He recently took his two younger children out of city schools in favor of private education.

Funeral director Carlton Douglass, who supported Ehrlich in 2002 and is “very seriously” considering it this time, said, “the governor has tried to do what he can, but he was shut down by the legislators and the mayor.”

Louise Williams, president of the Maryland Unified Licensed Beverage Association, said Mayor Martin O'Malley was invited. "It's unfortunate the mayor did not come," Coley said.

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