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For Immediate Release....

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**HOGAN CONCLUDES EXPLORATORY EFFORT
CALLS ON EHRlich TO ENTER RACE**

A Statement by Secretary Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.

Six months ago, it seemed Maryland Republicans had very little chance of capturing the governor's seat. Democrats were still flying high from the big wins of 2008 and looked pretty invincible. Heavily in debt, and with Governor Ehrlich on the sidelines, our State Party appeared to have little hope leading into 2010. In that environment, I decided to step up to the plate and form an exploratory committee to consider running for Governor of Maryland.

I believed very strongly that the incumbent governor's failed record of lost jobs, higher spending, record tax increases and broken promises was unacceptable. We just could not afford another four years of Martin O'Malley. I felt that we needed to stand up and fight back for struggling families and small businesses, and believed that the people of Maryland deserved to have a strong clear choice for a change. As I traveled across the State I found that a lot of people felt the same way and that they were fed up with politics as usual in Washington and in Annapolis.

Our exploratory effort succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. Our message has been resonating and our movement has been growing. We have thousands of committed supporters and volunteers across the entire State of Maryland. We earned the support of state and national party leaders, have been receiving media attention and are being taken seriously as a viable and credible challenger to O'Malley. We invested the initial money necessary to get started, have a winning campaign plan and have built an organization second to none. It has been such a rewarding and humbling experience to gain the enthusiastic support of so many wonderful people.

The environment for challenging the status quo and taking on the monopoly has become much better since we started our effort. The energy and enthusiasm has continued to grow and the wins in Virginia, New Jersey, and Scott Brown's win in Massachusetts have energized even more people. The winds of change are blowing and Maryland is not immune to that change. I am now absolutely convinced that we could put together a winning campaign that would send a loud and clear message to Annapolis that they would hear all the way in Washington.

This effort has never been about me. From the beginning, it has always been about all of us, and about Maryland's future. Maryland Republicans certainly cannot afford a bruising and expensive primary. If we are to be successful here in Maryland, we simply must all get behind one candidate. While I am convinced I could win this race, I also know that there is another candidate with more name recognition, and the ability to raise more money, who will allow us to put our best team on the field.

From day one, I said that if I were needed, I would step up to the challenge on behalf of the party and the State, but that I had no intention of running against my friend Governor Bob Ehrlich. Bob Ehrlich and I have been close friends for 30 years, since back when I was Chairman of Youth for Reagan and President of the Young Republicans. His involvement in politics started as a volunteer in my dad's race for U.S. Senate, and he worked hard for me in my race against Steny Hoyer. I supported him in all his races, and had the honor of serving as a Cabinet Secretary in his Administration.

Today I am officially concluding my exploratory committee and calling on my friend Bob Ehrlich to enter this race for governor. Not only do I believe that Bob Ehrlich should run, but I am convinced he will run and that we should all push in the same direction to elect him as Maryland's next governor. He not only has my endorsement, but he will have my enthusiastic support, as he always has, and nobody will work harder to make sure we win in November. It is my sincere hope that all my many great friends and supporters will join me in getting behind Governor Ehrlich and helping us take back our State in November.

I am honored and privileged to have received so much support during this exploratory effort. And, while today marks the end of my exploratory effort, I will still be standing on the frontlines continuing the fight to change Maryland.