

Armed with lobbyist, 10-year-old Md. boy rocks on – Maryland Daily Record

Bryan P. Sears

David Shore wants lawmakers to make chromite Md.'s official mineral March 10, 2017

David Shore was by far the smallest person in the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee Tuesday.



David Shore, 10, confers with Ashlie T. Bagwell, a well-known Annapolis lobbyist, before his testimony before the Senate Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee. Shore is seeking to have the General Assembly designate chromite as the official state mineral.

Bagwell is representing the youth pro bono.

But if anyone underestimated the boy from Bethesda they soon had their mistaken impression corrected.

This was not the first time before a committee in Annapolis for Shore, who is asking the General Assembly to designate an official state mineral. This time the 10-year-old brought a lobbyist.

“There are 26 other states that have a state mineral,” said Shore. “I think Maryland should have one, too. Chromite is not claimed by any other state and truly represents Maryland’s heritage and state history and environment.”

The idea for designating chromite as the state mineral is not a new idea. The last time it was attempted was in 2000.

The State Archives has guidelines for designating state symbols, including considering the historical significance, uniqueness, relevance to state history and universal acceptance of the item.

Officials with the state Department of Natural Resources didn't take an official position on the bill, but State Geologist Richar Ortt Jr. testified alongside Shore, confirming the boy's accounts of the importance of the mineral to the state.

Chromite's connections to Maryland run deep. The mineral was first discovered in the United States in 1808 by Isaac Tyson Jr. in the Bare Hills area of Baltimore County. It was later found in other areas of the county as well as Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery counties.

Tyson later went on to found the Baltimore Chrome Works, the nation's first chromium chemicals plant. Until the 1850s, the region produced most of the mineral, which is used in chrome, stainless and other high-grade steels, airplanes and even paints and dyes.

One of its earliest uses was made popular by Princess Charlotte, daughter of British monarch George IV, who had her carriage painted in a yellow color that contained the mineral. The story is believed to be the origin of yellow taxi cabs.



David Shore, 10, of Bethesda, holds a large chromite sample. Shore wants the General Assembly to designate chromite, which was first discovered in Maryland in 1808, as the official state mineral. (The Daily Record / Bryan P. Sears)

"This is one of my favorite facts," said Shore, adding that he could "talk for two hours about chromite."

The mineral was exported out of Fells Point via Baltimore Clipper ships. Currently, the United States keeps a stockpile of the mineral for defense purposes.

"If you just look around your own neighborhoods, I know in my district we have Chrome Road and other things that are named after chromite in the state that we pass every day and might not understand the significance and historical perspective and benefits that it's done for the state of Maryland," said Sen. Craig Zucker, D-Montgomery and sponsor of the Senate bill.

Shore's appearance in the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee actually started several years earlier, when he was 7 and came to Annapolis to testify

in opposition to a bill that would have made the sale of animal parts, such as tusks and Rhinoceros horns, illegal in the state.

Shore wanted an exemption for the sale of fossilized teeth.

While waiting to testify, the boy was introduced to Del. William C. “Bill” Frick, D-Montgomery.

Frick ended up sharing some Girl Scout Cookies and other snacks with Shore. Last year, the youngster emailed Frick and reminded him of the snack-sharing and gauged his interest in sponsoring a bill on chromite.

Frick acknowledged that Shore’s charm and enthusiasm for the subject can be irresistible.

“I’ve been there 10 years, and I’ve never put in a state symbol bill — but for David, absolutely,” Frick said.

It was Frick who recommended that Ashlie T. Bagwell, a lobbyist with Baltimore-based Harris Jones Malone, meet with Shore to give the youth some advice. That meeting led to Bagwell representing him on a pro bono basis.

“What started as advice giving turned into an offer to help with his bill because he’s so excited and enthusiastic about it,” said Bagwell.

Currently, there are 23 officially recognized state symbols, from the official state song (“Maryland, My Maryland,” obviously) to official state dogs and cats (the Chesapeake Bay Retriever — again obviously — and the Calico), and even an official state butterfly, cake and dinosaur.

But the legislature does not pass bills on official designations easily. Many times proposals meet with some snickering and derision from lawmakers. Efforts to make the Canvasback Duck the state waterfowl failed last year (the bill is back this year).

A multi-year effort to designate the soft shell crab sandwich the official state sandwich also failed — some would say because sponsors never brought samples to the committee.

Competing for attention this year with chromite and the Canvasback Duck is an effort to designate the National Day of the Cowboy. Supporters of that effort brought along a yodeling cowboy.

Shore’s enthusiasm on the subject caught the attention of at least one senator on the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee.

“I hate these kinds of bills but you gave us some really good facts,” said Sen. Cheryl Kagan, D-Montgomery, noting that more than two dozen other states also have official minerals, “and we don’t and the fact that no one else has chromite — those are really good arguments.”

THE DAILY RECORD

Monday, March 13, 2017

Volume 128 | Number 109

TheDailyRecord.com

Maryland's trusted source of business, legal and government news



Md.'s 10-year-old 'Kid Rock'

Backed by lobbyist, he fights to make chromite state's official mineral

By **BRYAN P. SEARS**

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Above, David Shore, 10, confers with lobbyist Ashlie T. Bagwell during his testimony before a Senate committee. At left, Shore holds a large chromite sample.

BRYAN P. SEARS

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Chromite >> 10-year-old pushes lawmakers to declare it Md.'s official mineral

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Not a rookie

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Shore's competition

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