

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/harford/bal-ha.speakout24jul24,1,5767436.story?coll=bal-local-harford>

**Speak Out!**

## Could Harford deal with APG influx?

July 24, 2005

Last week's question: Harford County would see a net increase of nearly 2,200 jobs under the Pentagon's proposed military base relocation plan, which calls for thousands of civilian workers to be reassigned from Fort Monmouth, N.J., to Aberdeen Proving Ground. Local leaders say they have worked hard to make the county an attractive home for the kind of high-tech research conducted at the installation. But the relocations, if they go forward, would present challenges for a county required to house, transport and educate those new workers and their families.

**QUESTION:** How prepared do you think Harford County is for a wave of new defense industry employees, and what steps should local officials and communities take to ensure any large-scale relocation goes smoothly?

If anyone is really questioning whether Harford County can accommodate the families of 2,200 scientists and high-tech researchers who may move here as a result of military realignment, I would suggest that they take a drive through our lovely county and see the trailer parks surrounding the schools that are considered the most successful.

Harford County schools are bulging at the seams now. As I understand it, this problem is partially caused by the way schools are funded in Maryland: They have to be overcrowded before the state will pay for new ones.

People will say that new funding methods are being investigated, but for people like me whose children are in the schools now, it does no good. Although the county school Web site reports class sizes in the low 20s, my children have been mostly in classes of between 28 and 38 students.

Additionally, the Harford County Public School system does not have Gifted and Talented education in K-8. It offers Honors and Advanced Placement at the high school level (again in classes of 30+ students), but its lack of anything for our best and brightest in the lower grades should be a concern for anyone moving here.

New Jersey officials would lead us to believe that the fine scientists from Fort Monmouth will not move. However, if they do, Harford County must immediately address and fix the problem of overcrowded schools to keep them.

*Judy Kinshaw-Ellis Bel Air*

If, as your article reads, "thousands of civilian workers" and their families relocate to Harford County, we, as a county, have some definite work to do before that happens. Our housing market is booming, but our "Adequate Public Facilities" are definitely inadequate for an influx of this nature.

Our roads are pitiful. They are not equipped to handle day-to-day traffic at any time. So how will we handle traffic from all those workers at APG?

Our schools ... well we have ... trailers to house our students, and there will probably be more needed.

Could Harford deal with APG influx?

It would probably behoove APG to look around on its "campus" and see if it can house some of these people. Maybe some of the unused buildings could even be converted into schools to educate the children of the new employees. The buildings, of course, would have to be checked for safety conditions, and not made into Taj Mahals to accomplish this.

We need to do this in a short amount of time without a lot of bureaucratic or governmental red tape or bungling.

*Carolyn Hicks Joppa*

Copyright © 2005, *The Baltimore Sun* | [Get Sun home delivery](#)