

Open warrant? No refund for you

By **HEATHER RAWLYK**
Staff Writer

County Sheriff Ron Bateman has a new plan to lure in scofflaws: withhold their tax refund.

State lawmakers considered a bill yesterday that would bar Anne Arundel County residents with unresolved traffic and criminal warrants from collecting their state tax refund until they turn themselves in.

Those with open criminal warrants would receive a letter explaining the hold up, Bateman said. The wanted person would have to take the letter to the county Sheriff's Office or a police station. Once the warrant is served, the person would be given documentation to hand to the Comptroller's Office — where the tax refund check would be held in an interest-bearing account.

"We're hoping the power of greed will lure people in," Bateman told members of the county's legislative delegation. "... If they want their money, they'll come to us."

The proposed law is a one-year pilot program. If passed, it would take effect Oct. 1.

The program could be considered statewide if it's successful in the county.

The bill already has some bipartisan and powerful support.

Dels. Steve Schuh, R-Gibson Island, and Mary Ann Love, D-Glen Burnie, sponsored the measure. State

(See REFUND, Page A15)

REFUND

(Continued from Page A1)

Comptroller Peter Fran-
chot and Sen. John Astle, a
long-serving Democrat, have
publicly backed it.

Schuh called the bill a "no-
brainer" and said it is outra-
geous that wanted residents
can receive an income tax
refund.

The delegation delayed
voting until the Attorney
General's Office provides a
letter on the bill's legality.
The bill was put on the vot-
ing list for March 4.

Bateman, who's known
for his inventive tactics for
nabbing criminals, said he
got the idea for the program
while doing his own taxes.

"It got me thinking," he
said. "In 2009, 195,223 people
got tax refunds. Are you

telling me none of them have
warrants?"

Len N. Foxwell, the comp-
troller's chief of staff, said
similar programs exist and
have proven successful.

The Comptroller's Office
now intercepts refunds for
anyone delinquent on child
support, Foxwell said. There
is also the Motor Vehicle
Administration's license sus-
pension program.

After a warrant is open for
31 days, the Sheriff's Office
sends a notice to the MVA.
The administration then no-
tifies motorists they have 15
days to resolve the matter or
their driver's license will be
suspended.

Bateman said about 1,000
warrants are cleared an-
nually through the MVA
program.

hrawlyk@capitalgazette.com