

This text is from an article originally published on March 14, 2025 by *Maryland Matters*, a nonprofit news site and affiliate of *State News*

Mineral bill heads toward a ‘chrometastic’ finish

by Bryan Sears

David Shore’s efforts to enshrine chromite on the list of state symbols passes a key procedural vote, after his seven-year journey

David Shore is a little obsessed with chromite.

It’s infectious.

Spend any amount of time with him and you will likely come away with an appreciation of a mineral you probably did not know existed. He’s happy to correct that oversight.

“Chromite is in everything,” Shore says with a smile. He makes note of a reporter’s phone.

“It’s everywhere. In everything that’s cool, there’s a little bit of chromite, I would say,” Shore explains. “If you look at your phone, the computer chip, your car, your plane, you will see that there is stainless steel in all of them.

Chromium ... is in all of those. And chromite was first discovered in America.”

Thousands of pounds of it are recycled each year. The U.S. government keeps a stockpile because of its strategic value, he explains.

Shore has been on a seven-year journey to move the unremarkable looking mineral onto a list of official state symbols. He even signs his emails “chrometastically yours” or in other variations that play off the name of the mineral.

On Friday, a series of committee and preliminary legislative votes moved chromite closer to official recognition.

State symbol bills are not easy to pass. They are also not always popular. They are frequently seen as silly or derided as wastes of time.

If the chromite bill is approved and signed into law, Maryland would join more than two dozen states that have designated an official state mineral.

Maryland has 24 official state symbols. The list includes a state sport and team sport, dinosaur, dog and cat, and crustacean.

The last state symbol added was rye whiskey in 2023. It was the first time in 15 years that a new state symbol made the list. In 2008, the legislature approved an official state exercise (walking) and official dessert (Smith Island cake).

The bills come almost every year. They almost always die in committee.

In addition to chromite, lawmakers this year will consider other candidates for state symbols, including a state [carnivorous plant](#), a state [fruit](#) and an official state [cocktail](#).

The State Archives created a set of standards to guide the adoption of new symbols. Included on that list is a proposed symbol's historical significance, uniqueness, relevance to state history and universal acceptance.

“Maryland’s varying geology yields many minerals within the state,” said Stephen Van Ryswick, director of the Maryland Geological Survey. “However, no other mineral has such a unique instrumental history postcolonial Maryland, industrialization.” Van Ryswick testified Thursday on a panel in favor of official recognition for the mineral.

Chromite was first discovered in the Bare Hills area of Baltimore County in 1808 by Isaac Tyson Jr. Deposits were also found in Baltimore City and in Carroll, Cecil, Harford, Howard and Montgomery counties.

Tyson founded Baltimore Chrome Works. The plant was the first in the nation to manufacture chromium chemicals. The products were used in paints and in metal alloys including stainless steel.

The mineral was exported out of Fells Point. Deposits in the region produced most of the world supply of the mineral until the 1850s.

Chromite continues to be mined, though no longer in Maryland. But evidence of its importance to the region remains.

Many thoroughfares in Maryland carry names like Chrome Road in Cecil County and Chrome Mine Road in Montgomery County. Abandoned mines can be found in some state parks.

Shore is no stranger to the halls of Annapolis. When he was 7, Shore appeared before the House Judiciary Committee, testifying in opposition to a bill prohibiting the sale of tusks and rhinoceros horns.

“There was a bill to abolish the sale of any kind of animal, bone or ivory product in Maryland,” Shore said during an interview. “I wanted to get the bill amended due to a portion of it that would have accidentally, I assume, included the sale of rocks and fossils for animals that have been dead for millions of years.” The bill died in committee.

It was while waiting to testify that Shore met then Del. William C. “Bill” Frick (D-Montgomery). The two bonded over Girl Scout Cookies.

Shore used that connection — politics is all about relationships, after all — a year later when he asked Frick in an email to sponsor a state symbol bill for chromite.

Frick, who is now a lobbyist, said Shore’s enthusiasm for the mineral resulted in the delegate’s first-ever state symbol bill.

It also led to an unlikely meeting with a well-known lobbyist from a well known firm.

Ashlie Bagwell, a lobbyist with Harris Jones & Malone, said her initial meeting with Shore in a Montgomery County library was meant to be informational. She agreed, at Frick’s request, to pass on some tips for presenting the bill to lawmakers.

She left with a new client whom she represented pro bono.

“He’s just so enthusiastic,” Bagwell said.

Shore testified passionately about the chromite bill that year. Included in his comments was a story about one of its earliest known uses: The mineral was used in yellow paint on the carriage used by the daughter of a British monarch.

Shore declared it one of his favorite facts, adding he could go on for hours about the mineral.

But the bill failed that year.

Shore was not disheartened.

“I would say that I because I came with the bill from a place of just loving the history of chromite and the history of Maryland ... it was still, overall, a very positive experience,” Shore said.

Shore’s unsuccessful 2017 attempt is included in an activity book provided to children touring the State House.

The bill sat dormant until last year with Sen. Craig Zucker, who sponsored the effort in the Senate when Shore was 10, wanted to give it another shot.

“I was pretty new to the Senate,” said Zucker, speaking of the 2017 effort. “David was just something special, so energetic, and so I put in the bill on chromite.”

Zucker, who has only sponsored the one state symbol bill, said the issue faded away until last year.

“This past ... year, I’m going to a school and handing out the packet, which is basically a coloring book of all the state symbols and everything that represents the state of Maryland to children,” Zucker said. “On one of the pages, it talks about pieces of legislation that have been thought of by children, and they had a section on those that were introduced by children that didn’t pass, and it had chromite. And I thought: we have to figure this out.”

That’s when Zucker said he thought about a do-over with Shore.

“I said it’s already in the book. It’s you. It was first found in Maryland, let’s see about giving it another shot,” he said.

This time around Shore has even more support.

Zucker is the chair of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee Capital Budget Subcommittee. The House sponsor is Del. Marc Korman, chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee.

“We have actual history with chromite in Maryland,” said Korman, who represents the district where Shore lives. “It was discovered here and it’s a really useful metal. We had mines here. So there’s a real state connection, unlike some of the other things we sometimes have bills about.”

Korman said he understands many will pooh-pooh the idea of a state mineral. He said there can be a value to state symbols.

“If you look through the little book that they give kids when they come to this building for tours, it has a bunch of the state symbols in it,” he said. “That’s a chance for those kids to learn about the history and heritage of their state. Having a state mineral, a state bird, a state flower, a state sport like jousting, or team sport like lacrosse — those things resonate with people and let them learn more about the state where they call home.”

Bagwell is back helping lobby the bill. She brought with her Caitlin McDonough, another lobbyist with Harris Jones & Malone, who also happens to be the wife of House Appropriations

Chair Del. Ben Barnes (D-Prince George's and Anne Arundel). The couple's son, Jack, a fourth grade student, testified on behalf of the bill Thursday, ending his comments with a reminder that passing the bill would come at no cost to the state – an important fact in a tight budget year. Similarly, in the Senate, Zucker's son Sam, 11, testified on behalf of his dad's bill.

On Friday, the Senate became the first chamber to move the bill. Passage next week would send it to the House where that chamber's version has already moved out of committee.

“This legislation is a great example of Marylanders bringing ideas for legislation,” Zucker said after the vote. “In this case, it happened to be an idea from a 10-year-old. It's on its way to a ‘chrometastic’ finish.”

Maryland Matters is part of States Newsroom, a network of news bureaus supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501(c)(3) public charity. Maryland Matters maintains editorial independence. Contact Editor Steve Crane for questions: scrane@marylandmatters.org. Follow Maryland Matters on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).