

# Mrs. Ehrlich seamlessly blends pregnancy with looking chic

By WENDI WINTERS

For The Capital

**M**aryland's first lady Kendel Ehrlich bounds into the sunlit sitting room on the second floor of the Governor's Mansion in Annapolis.

She is wearing a lipstick red wool twill jacket in a cut reminiscent of an 18th-century British officer's jacket. A parade of gold buttons marches down the front and more edge the flyaway vents in the back.

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Until she draws back the jacket to reveal a short jersey dress, it's hard to tell she's pregnant.

In her third trimester, she is still enviously slender and chic.

More than 73,876 babies will be born in Maryland this year, according to the Census Bureau. But Baby Ehrlich, due on March 16 — smack in the middle of this year's contentious legislative session — will probably inspire the most headlines.

Explaining her businesslike attire, Mrs. Ehrlich said: "I'm not the Demi (Moore) type. At a certain point I can't hide well."

New York fashion designer, Kenneth Bonavitacola, begs to differ. He rhapsodized: "She's a winning combination of beauty and brains. Words

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By J. Henson — The Capital

Maryland's first lady Kendel Ehrlich is due to give birth to the couple's second child in mid-March. She finds rearing 4-year-old Drew and performing her official duties require a lot of energy.

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## EHRlich

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such as 'classic' and 'regal' immediately came to mind when I saw her for the first time. Thoughts of an icon of '60s chic, Doris Day, combined with the regal quality of Princess Di. Add to this combination the dimension of the glow of being with child and you have a designer's dream come true."

Mrs. Ehrlich is delighted when she hears that.

She feels her second pregnancy is different from the first, which produced son Drew, now an active preschooler.

"My energy level is stretched. My obstetrician, Dr. Claire M. Weitz, said, 'Now you have a 4-year-old and an incredible schedule.'"

Another difference: During her first pregnancy her husband was in Congress. Several other congressmen's wives were pregnant at the same time. The informal group bonded and shared information. This time around, she's been too busy with her official duties to connect with any other pregnant political wives.

"My energy level is better in the a.m. My energy goes down as Drew's goes up," she noted, dramatically sketching a chart in the air with her hands.

Hearing his name, Drew slipped into the room wearing Spiderman pajamas.

His mom nuzzled him and went on.

Noting the Ehrlichs do not know the sex of their unborn child, the first lady announced: "Drew wants the name 'Anne' for a girl and 'Joshua' for a boy."

Do the Ehrlichs have a list of names? The response is a Mona Lisa smile.

## Emphasis on family

Wallpaper samples intended for the baby's nursery in the family's private third floor quarters are on a side table.

Two area decorators are helping the Ehrlichs renovate their living space.

The nursery's walls will be papered with an apple green watercolor gingham check print. A border print repeats the green in the background.

On a fragment of the border, cinnamon red elephants troop across the paper. "There's other animals on the border, but elephants are significant in this house," the first lady laughed.

Her itinerary that day included a media interview — a board meeting at Greater Baltimore Medical Center, the hospital where the baby will be born — a session videotaping public service announcements for hospice and a visit to her widowed father, who lives in a retirement community in Timonium.

When Drew was born, Mr. Ehrlich was in



By J. Henson — The Capital  
Maryland's first lady Kendel Ehrlich cuddles 4-year-old Drew. If Drew gets a baby sister he wants to name her Anne and a baby brother Joshua, according to Mrs. Ehrlich.

the middle of a radio interview.

"But he was in the room very quickly," grinned Mrs. Ehrlich. "The room was full of other family members."

This time around, "I'm not sure where he'll be. I just want to know where the doctor and anesthesiologist are."

Pause.

"He's not one to cut the umbilical cord," she said.

Looking back on a year that included her husband's inauguration as the first Republican governor since Spiro Agnew, and an international tut-tutting over her public remarks about Britney Spears, she said, "Generally speaking, this year has been great. It's an interesting lifestyle and the staff is great. I have a high threshold of tolerance to the comments. That's part of the role."

Looking forward to an expanding family, Mrs. Ehrlich hopes her recently retired mother-in-law will help her juggle home and official duties.

"Last year, we did tons of entertaining," she said wearily. "There was an average of 200 people per week in here. This year will be different. There'll be more emphasis on family activities."

## 'I love clothes'

Mrs. Ehrlich said she doesn't know where she'll be several years down the road.

"When Bob was running for governor, he'd been in politics for 16 years. It was a big decision and a big gamble. So, I won't

predict," she said.

"I have a lot of options open. At one time I would have thought that was frightening, but it's really wonderful. Living in this town and having this experience is really wonderful. Having a baby is really going to add to it."

When the conversation swings to her current wardrobe, she declared, "I'm cheap when it comes to maternity clothes."

To get her through this pregnancy in style, she's borrowed from friends.

"I love clothes! I buy clothes I wear for many years. I tend to be a classic dresser — a courtroom dresser," she observed.

For her maternity wardrobe, she purchased a black dress with a white collar. Her staff recently gave her a black dress for her 42nd birthday. She also indulged in a cranberry taffeta wrap blouse that she wore for the Holiday Open House in December, along with a pair of silk cargo pants.

She had maternity garments left over from her first pregnancy, but the season wasn't right. Mrs. Ehrlich assumes this is her final pregnancy, so all her maternity clothes will be given away when the baby arrives.

Perusing a "look book" sent by Pea in the Pod Maternity, a high-end fashion division of a company that also owns Mimi Maternity and Motherhood, she paused at a sunburst-pleated chiffon halter dress with a wavy Pucci print.

"I love that," she cooed.

She admired a shapely short cocktail dress with a wide hemline band of feathers.

"That's wild, if you can get away with it."

She grimaced at a photo of a woman wearing a '60s-inspired belted suit. But she liked the short silver brocade cocktail dress and the even shorter black-and-white plaid suit accented with a black notch lapel collar and elbow-length leather gloves.

"I have good legs, I can wear my skirts short," she said.

She loved photos of the red-carpet gowns worn by the very pregnant Sarah Jessica Parker and Catherine Zeta-Jones.

Still, she's looking forward to wearing her old size 8 clothing again.

"I'm at a stage when I'm looking forward to the birth," she said.

Wendi Winters is a freelance writer in Arnold.

## Fashion experts offer first lady tips on dressing

By WENDI WINTERS  
For The Capital

With the residents of the Governor's Mansion planning on adding to the family in mid-March, fashion gurus are looking to augment — and perhaps capitalize — on the glow of an expecting and high-profile mother.

EMME, full-sized supermodel, self-help author and former host of "E! Fashion Emergency" said, "I have two words for Kendel Ehrlich: Liz Lange."

When contacted, Liz Lange, who has been designing a luxury maternity collection since 1997, and recently began creating maternity clothes for Nike and Target, offered to take Mrs. Ehrlich shopping. She also sent her a "look book" that includes cashmere, silk, leather and sequined designs.

Pea in the Pod Maternity also sent Mrs. Ehrlich its current "look book" to peruse.

Through her spokesman, Patti Cohen, designer Donna Karan said she doesn't design maternity clothes, but many pregnant women like to buy her stretch jersey dresses.

"They want to flaunt what they have," Ms. Cohen said.

Fashion icon Norma Kamali suggested her regular-sized collection of stretch pieces for the first lady. Ms. Kamali also has a "Celebrity Service" that anyone with a credit card may use. A person selects styles by viewing the online catalog at [www.normakamalICollection.com](http://www.normakamalICollection.com). The items are quickly shipped out. The customer has 48 hours to try on the garments, select the ones she wants and arrange for the return of those she doesn't.

Ms. Kamali offers this advice to Mrs. Ehrlich: "People look best when they make

nonmaternity things work — like a husband's shirt or something stretchy. It depends upon the body. I'm thinking ballet slippers, sneakers and big shirts for everyday wear. For evening, pick a theme you like for yourself. If the shirt idea works, have them made up in taffeta or satin. Simple clothes work best.

"Make sure your hair and makeup look good. So much is dependent on the skin and twinkle in your eyes. That's what makes you beautiful."

Kenny Bonavitacola, formerly a designer with Bill Blass, and currently re-establishing his couture house in New York City, said he imagined Mrs. Ehrlich "in a midnight blue silk crepe tailored bolero jacket with a beaded and embroidered lace collar and cuff treatment over an empire-waist, sleeveless, draped sheath dress. The bodice echoes the jacket embellishment."

Gerard Dellova, a design director for Baltimore-based sportswear designer Barry Bricken advised: "Be yourself. If you are not normally a frilly, fussy dresser, why start now? Clean, simple sleek lines will look best and more importantly, look better on TV and in print. Soft, tailored shapes that fit closely through the shoulder, bust and sleeves, but flare a bit over the hips and tummy look best. Nothing too muumuu-like, though. Leave the ruffles, lace collars and tiny prints for the baby."

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