

sions and task forces at the discretion of the governor.

*General Assembly* is the legal designation of the Maryland legislature. The General Assembly is sometimes referred to as the "popular" branch of government, because its members are more directly representative of the electorate than are officials of either the executive or judiciary. Legislators are elected to both houses of the General Assembly from districts redrawn every ten years to ensure an equal representation based on the concept of "one person one vote." The geographical size of the districts varies according to population density, but in all cases are sufficiently small so that the electorate can be certain that their chosen representatives are familiar with the concerns and priorities of their specific area.

Like all states but Nebraska, Maryland has a bicameral legislature. The lower house is known as the House of Delegates and the upper house as the Senate. Representatives to both houses are elected in each gubernatorial election year for four-year terms. Candidates for the House of Delegates must be at least twenty-one years of age and those for the Senate at least twenty-five. The House of Delegates consists of 141 members, while the Senate has 47 members. Both houses convene annually on the second Wednesday in January for a 90-day session. Sessions may be extended by resolution of both houses, and special sessions may be called by the governor. The General Assembly is responsible for passing all laws necessary for the welfare of the state's citizens, for legislation dealing with the counties and special taxing districts, for determining how state funds are to be allocated, and for adopting amendments to the state Constitution. Bills may be introduced in either house, and when passed by both houses and signed by the governor they become law.

The General Assembly employs various committees—statutory, standing, and joint—to facilitate its work during and between sessions. The legislative branch also encompasses several state agencies. The State Department of Legislative Reference assists in the preparation of legislation and maintains a library of material essential for legislators. The Commission to Revise the Annotated Code is involved in a multi-year reorganization and recodification of the laws of Maryland. The Department of Fiscal Services prepares financial impact statements and provides fiscal monitoring functions for the General Assembly.

One of the single most important tasks of the General Assembly, and one that requires close coordination and consultation with the Executive

Department, is adoption of the annual state budget. The Constitution specifies that it is the responsibility of the governor to present the annual budget to the General Assembly within five days of the beginning of each legislative session. Unlike many other states, the budget of Maryland must not exceed anticipated revenues, thus preventing deficit spending and accounting in large part for the excellent bond rating enjoyed by the state. Reflecting the principle of separation of powers within state government, the governor must incorporate into the budget unchanged requests from the legislative and judicial departments, as well as the estimated expenses required for operating the public schools. Beyond these items and other obligations for certain state debts and the salaries of officials specified in the Constitution, the governor has considerable discretion in determining what programs and agencies to fund in the budget. The budget process is thus a major policy-shaping tool for the governor. Supplemental budgets may be submitted by the governor after adoption of the annual budget, but all requests for such funds must be matched by additional anticipated revenues. The importance and complexity of the state budget is indicated by the size of the annual request. In 1982 total budgeted expenditures amounted to \$5,770,189,149, or more than \$1,368 for every man, woman, and child resident in the state.

The *Judiciary* is responsible for the resolution of all matters involving civil and criminal law in the State of Maryland. Judges base their decisions on statutory law, common law, or equity. As the population of Maryland has grown and society has become more complex, the judiciary has been reshaped to more effectively and efficiently deal with litigation and other matters requiring judicial determination. What has evolved is a four-tiered court system consisting of the District Courts, Circuit Courts, the Court of Special Appeals, and the Court of Appeals.

The District Court of Maryland, implemented in 1971 on a statewide basis in every county in the state and Baltimore City, is a court of limited jurisdiction that replaced the earlier local justices of the peace and county trial magistrates. The District Courts have jurisdiction in minor civil and criminal matters and in virtually all violations of the state Motor Vehicle Law. District Court judges are appointed by the governor for ten-year terms.

Appeals from decisions in the District Court, as well as more serious criminal and civil cases, are heard in the Circuit Courts. Circuit Court judges are nominated by special judicial selection commissions and appointed by the governor with