

Both houses elect the State Treasurer by joint ballot. The General Assembly also elects the Governor or the Lieutenant Governor if the popular election results in a tie or the winning candidate or candidates are ineligible. If a vacancy occurs in the office of Lieutenant Governor, the Governor nominates a person to succeed to that office upon confirmation by a majority vote of all members of the General Assembly in joint session. If vacancies occur in both the offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor at the same time, the General Assembly must convene and elect a Governor by a majority vote of all members in joint session. The chosen Governor then nominates a Lieutenant Governor requiring the same confirmation.

The President of the Senate serves as acting Governor if the Lieutenant Governor is unable to do so. Should a vacancy occur in the office of President of the Senate while the President is authorized to serve as acting Governor, the Senate must convene and fill the vacancy (Const., Art. II, secs. 1A, 1B, 6, 7A).

**THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS:
HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW**

Current laws of the State are compiled in the *Annotated Code of Maryland*. The General Assembly changes, adds, and deletes those laws through the legislative process of introducing and passing bills. Ideas for bills come from many sources: constituents, the Governor, governmental agencies, study commissions, special interest groups, lobbyists, professional organizations, and legislative committees, for example. However, each bill must be sponsored by a legislator. The State Constitution mandates that bills be limited to one subject clearly described by the title of the bill and be drafted in the style and form of the *Annotated Code* (Const., Art. III, sec. 29). The one-subject limitation and the title requirement are safeguards against fraudulent legislation and allow legislators and constituents to monitor a bill's progress more easily. Omnibus bills, common in the U.S. Congress, are clearly forbidden under Maryland law.

At the request of legislators, bills are drafted to meet constitutional standards by the Department of Legislative Reference. The Department begins to receive bill-drafting requests for the next legislative session shortly after the previous session ends in mid-April, although bill drafting does not begin in earnest until July. In the interim between sessions, legislators meet in committees, task forces, and other groups to study and formulate bill proposals.

From 1985 through 1988, the number of bills introduced per session has averaged 976.5 in the Senate and 1,668.5 in the House. This volume of bills makes it difficult for each bill to get through the legislative process within the 90-day session. Therefore, legislators often try to introduce their bills as early as possible. A bill filed with the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Clerk of the House prior to the first day of a regular session is called a prefiled bill. Such a bill is introduced (i.e., read across the floor) and assigned to a standing committee on the opening day of a session, thus obtaining a head start advantage. In 1988, 156 Senate bills and 229 House bills were prefiled.

In addition to bills, legislators introduce joint resolutions. Substantive in nature, a joint resolution expresses the will, opinion, or public policy of the General Assembly (Senate Rule 25; House Rule 25). They are subject to the same legislative process as are bills, must be passed by both houses, but after passage are not codified in the *Annotated Code*. Joint resolutions that pass both houses are numbered and printed in the Session Laws for that year. The Governor does not veto joint resolutions and may or may not sign them.

Certain issues are required by law or the Constitution to be introduced in the form of a joint resolution and such joint resolutions have the force and effect of law. Examples include salary recommendations from the General Assembly Compensation Commission, the Governor's Salary Commission, and the Judicial Compensation Commission; reapportionment plans for General Assembly membership required after every decennial census; and amendments to the U.S. Constitution submitted for ratification.

After the Department of Legislative Reference drafts legislation in the form of a bill or a joint resolution, the sponsor files it, "drops it into the hopper", with the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Clerk of the House. A bill or resolution is numbered, stamped for approval and codification by the Department of Legislative Reference (Senate Rule 26; House Rule 26), and printed for first reading. Senate legislation appears on white paper and House legislation on blue paper.

The Constitution of Maryland requires that before any bill becomes law, it must be read on three different days in each house, for a total of six readings. A bill may not be read for the third time in its house of origin until it has been reprinted. The Constitution also specifies that a bill must be passed in each house by a majority vote of the total membership, and the final vote on third reading in each house must be recorded.

The Senate and the House of Delegates may adopt a "consent calendar" procedure if members of each house receive reasonable notice of the bills