
GOVERNOR

During the colonial period, Maryland's Proprietors — the Lords Baltimore — designated who would serve as governor on their behalf. From 1692 when Maryland briefly became a royal colony to 1715, the crown appointed the governor. Lord Baltimore regained control of Maryland in 1715 and continued to choose a governor for the colony until the time of the American Revolution. Under Maryland's first constitution of 1776, the Governor was chosen annually by joint ballot of both houses of the General Assembly (Const. 1776, sec. 25). In 1838, by constitutional amendment, voters began to elect the Governor every three years from one of three rotating gubernatorial districts (Chapter 197, Acts of 1836, ratified 1837). This meant that only voters from a single gubernatorial election district selected the governor at an election. By 1851, the Governor's term of office was lengthened to four years (Const. 1851, Art. 2, sec. 1). The Constitution of 1864 eliminated gubernatorial election districts. Thereafter, since the election of 1868, the Governor has been elected by vote of the State's entire electorate.

The Governor is chief executive officer of the State and commander-in-chief of its military forces. Elected by popular vote for a term of four years, the Governor's term of office begins on the third Wednesday of January following election. No person may serve as Governor for more than two consecutive terms. To be eligible for the office of Governor, a person must be at least thirty years of age and must have been a resident and registered voter of the State for five years immediately preceding election (Const., Art. II, secs. 1, 3, 5, 8, 21, 21A).

To each annual session of the General Assembly, the Governor must submit a budget of government for the next ensuing fiscal year. The Governor also may inform the General Assembly at any time of the condition of the State (Const., Art. II, sec. 19; Art. III, sec. 52(3)).

Every bill passed by the General Assembly, except the annual Budget Bill, must be presented to the Governor before it becomes law. If the Governor approves the bill he may sign it, and if he disapproves he may veto it. Any bill that the Governor vetoes may be passed without his signature by three-fifths vote of the total number of members of each house of the General Assembly, either at the current session or at the session following. If a bill is presented more than six days before the General Assembly adjourns and is not vetoed within six days, or if a bill is presented within six days prior to the adjournment of the General Assembly and is not vetoed within thirty days after its presentment, then the bill becomes law without the Governor's signature. The Governor has the power to veto any part of an appropriations bill, in the same manner as other bills, without vetoing it in its entirety (Const., Art. II, sec. 17; Art. III, sec. 52(6)).

The Governor is commander-in-chief of the military forces of the State—the National Guard—except when such forces are called into the national service. If the National Guard is thus called, the Governor may establish a State Guard.

The Governor appoints all military and civil officers of the State subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, except when the election or appointment of such officers is otherwise provided for. In addition to appointing the heads of major departments, boards, and commissions of the State government, the Governor appoints certain boards and commissions in each county and the City of Baltimore, as provided for by law. The Governor also commissions notaries public and appoints persons to fill vacancies in the offices of Attorney General, Comptroller, and seats in the General Assembly. Any officer appointed by the Governor, except a member of the General Assembly, is removable by him for cause.

The Governor may grant pardons to persons convicted of criminal acts against the State, commute the sentences of prisoners of the State, and remit fines and forfeitures for offenses against the State. The Governor may extradite prisoners or persons wanted by other states upon the presentation of a writ of extradition and may issue a warrant for the arrest of any person so wanted. The Governor also may ask for the return to this State of any prisoner or person of another state wanted for the violation of the laws of Maryland (Const., Art. II, sec. 20).
