

The legislative powers of the State of Maryland are vested in the General Assembly, which consists of two distinct branches, the Senate and the House of Delegates (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 1). The General Assembly consists of 188 members, with 47 Senators and 141 members of the House of Delegates. They are elected from 47 legislative districts.

Every Senator or Delegate must be a citizen of the State and a resident of it for at least one year preceding the date of his election. For six months prior to his election he must have resided in his legislative district. A Senator must be at least twenty-five years of age at the time of his election and a Delegate at least twenty-one. No member of Congress or any person holding a civil or military office under the United States Government is eligible for election to the General Assembly (Const. 1867, Art. III, secs. 9, 10, 11). The term of each Senator and Delegate is four years from the second Wednesday of January following the date of his election (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 6). The Governor is required to appoint to any vacancy that occurs in either House through death, resignation, or disqualification a person whose name is submitted to him in writing by the State Central Committee of the political party with which the Delegate or Senator, so vacating, had been affiliated in the county or district from which he or she was elected. All persons so appointed serve for the unexpired portion of the term (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 13). Each House elects its own officers, is judge of the qualifications and election of its own members, and establishes rules for the conduct of its business.

The General Assembly meets annually. Sessions begin the second Wednesday in January and last for a period not longer than ninety days. The General Assembly may extend its sessions beyond ninety days, but not to exceed an additional thirty days, by resolution concurred in by three-fifths vote of the membership in each House. The Governor may call special sessions at any time he deems it necessary (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 14), but no single special session may last longer than thirty days.

The General Assembly must pass at each regular session a budget bill that contains the budget for the State government for the next fiscal year. Upon the passage of the bill by both Houses, it becomes a law without further action (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 52). By Constitutional Amendment adopted by the people at the General Election held November 7, 1978, the General Assembly is authorized to enact laws (other than appropriation bills) that mandate the Governor, in the preparation of the annual budget, to pro-

vide for the funding of specific programs at specified levels (Const. 1867, Art. III, secs. 52(11) and (12)).

Under the provisions of a Constitutional Amendment ratified by the voters in 1972 (Chapter 369, Acts of 1972), the Senate and the House of Delegates may adopt a "consent calendar" procedure permitting bills to be read and voted upon as a single group on both second and third readings, affording members of each House reasonable notice of the bills so placed on each consent calendar (Const. 1867, Art. III, secs. 27, 28).

The General Assembly has power to pass such laws as are necessary for the welfare of the State. It also has the power to pass public local laws for counties not having home rule powers and for special taxing areas. The Home Rule Amendment of 1954 (Const. 1867, Art. XI-E) virtually prohibits the General Assembly from passing local legislation for incorporated cities and towns, although the Assembly retains its power to pass a general statewide law that affects them.

The General Assembly may establish such departments of State government as are necessary for its efficient operation and may establish special taxing districts or areas within the State for the purpose of administering a special function or functions. The General Assembly may establish such taxes as are in accordance with the Constitution of the State and of the United States. It may propose amendments to the State Constitution, which must be embodied in a regular legislative bill passed by three-fifths of the total membership of each House. All amendments to the Constitution must be submitted to the voters at the next general election after passage.

All bills passed by the General Assembly become law when signed by the Governor, or when passed over his veto by three-fifths of the membership of each House. Laws thus approved take effect on the first day of June after the session in which they were passed, except (1) when a later date is specified in the Act, or (2) when the bill is declared an emergency measure. Emergency bills must be passed by three-fifths of the total number of members of each House, and become law immediately upon their approval by the Governor.

The General Assembly may add a referendum provision to any local bill, but may not submit a statewide bill to referendum (with the exception of a proposed amendment to the Constitution or a Soldiers' Bonus Bill). Most statewide bills, except appropriation bills, and any local bill that concerns a county or Baltimore City, may be submitted to a referendum by petition. No bill sub-