

Montgomery	841-3001
Prince George's	841-3076
Queen Anne's	841-3410
St. Mary's	841-3314
Somerset	841-3433
Southern Maryland	841-3314
Talbot	841-3488
Washington	841-3349

Wicomico	841-3427
Worcester	841-3431

Note: Telephone numbers listed are local calls from Baltimore-Annapolis area. For toll-free calls from Montgomery and Prince George's counties and Washington, D.C., area, use an 858 prefix instead of the 841 prefix listed.

The legislative powers of the State 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 election. For six months prior to election, the legislator must have resided in his or her legislative district. A Senator must be at least twenty-five years of age at the time of 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 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 the Governor in writing by the State Central Committee of the political party with which the legislator, so vacating, had been affiliated in the county or district from which he or she was elected. The person so appointed must be of the same political party, if any, as was the legislator whose office is to be filled. 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 (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 19).

The General Assembly meets annually. Sessions begin the second Wednesday in January and last for a period not longer than ninety consecutive 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 the Governor deems it necessary (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 14), but no single special session may last longer than thirty days.

At each regular session, the General Assembly must pass a budget bill that contains the budget for State government for the next fiscal year. Upon passage of the bill by both Houses, it becomes 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 provide 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. While affording members of each House reasonable notice of the bills placed on each consent calendar, this procedure permits bills to be read and voted upon as a single group on both second and third readings (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