

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 the Governor's 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 subject to referendum is enforceable until approved by a majority of the voters at the election in which the referred bill is voted upon, except an emergency bill, which is effective immediately and remains effective thirty days following its rejection by the voters (Const. 1867, Art. XVI).

The House of Delegates has sole power of impeachment of any officer of the State. A majority of the whole number of members of the House must approve any bill of impeachment. The Senate tries all impeachment cases, and two-thirds of the total number of Senators must concur in a verdict of guilty (Const. 1867, Art. III, sec. 26).

Both Houses elect the State Treasurer by joint ballot. The General Assembly also elects the Governor or the Lieutenant Governor if the popular election has resulted in a tie or the winning candidate or candidates are ineligible. When a vacancy occurs in the office of Governor, the Lieutenant Governor succeeds to that office for the remainder of the term. 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 fill the office of Governor by a

majority vote of all the members in joint session. The chosen Governor then nominates a Lieutenant Governor with the same confirmation.

The President of the Senate serves as acting Governor if the Lieutenant Governor is not able to serve as acting Governor. If there is a vacancy in the office of President of the Senate when the President is authorized to serve as acting Governor, the Senate must convene and fill the vacancy (Const. 1867, Art. II, secs. 1A, 1B, 6, 7A).

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS: HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

Upon request of a legislator, the Department of Legislative Reference drafts legislation in the form of a bill or a joint resolution. As a "prefiled bill," a bill or joint resolution may be introduced before the regular General Assembly session convenes in January. A bill is filed ("goes into the hopper") with the Secretary of the Senate or the Clerk of the House, is given a number, and is readied for its first reading on the floor.

First Reading: The reading clerk, when the session has convened, first reads the title of the bill. This is the first of three readings given the bill in the house where it is introduced. Then, the presiding officer assigns the bill to a standing committee. Bills or joint resolutions introduced in either chamber during the last forty-five days of the session are referred to the rules committee of the respective house. Thereafter, they may not be required to be returned to the floor except upon the affirmative votes of at least two-thirds of all elected members of that house.

Reference to Committee: The standing committees meet regularly during the session to receive testimony and take action on bills assigned. Citizens are encouraged to present their views on proposed bills by mail or by personal appearance. The Department of Fiscal Services prepares a fiscal analysis for each bill and these fiscal notes are considered during the committee deliberations.

Second Reading and Floor Consideration: The bill is reported to the floor by the standing committee to which it was assigned. The report may be favorable, unfavorable, or without recommendation. If favorable, it may be with or without committee amendment. After consideration of committee amendments, the bill is then open to amendment from the floor. There, committee action may be reversed, although this happens infrequently.