

Garrett	841-3435
Harford	841-3289
Howard	841-3205
Montgomery	841-3010
Prince George's	841-3098
St. Mary's	841-3247
Washington	841-3451

Note: All General Assembly telephone numbers listed are local calls from the Baltimore-Annapolis area. For toll-free calls from the Montgomery and Prince George's counties and Washington, D.C., calling area, use an 858 prefix rather than the 841 prefix listed. Numbers listed are valid for MARCOM service with the 236 MARCOM prefix.

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 (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 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 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 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