

NEWS RELEASE ON LEGISLATION FOR  
PEOPLE'S ADVOCATE

February 27, 1967

The Agnew administration's proposal for a *People's Advocate*, to investigate complaints from the public against State agencies and officials, will be introduced in both houses of the Maryland General Assembly Monday night.

The legislation implements a major campaign proposal made by Governor Agnew in the 1966 election to give the people a more effective means of "cutting through bureaucratic red tape."

The People's Advocate would be a lawyer required to devote full time to the State position. He would have the qualifications of a judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals and would receive a salary commensurate with that position.

People with complaints against the government or an official or employee would lodge them with the Advocate, who would investigate the complaint and recommend any corrections he deemed advisable. He also would make studies of administrative practices in response to complaints.

The People's Advocate would have jurisdiction over "every act or omission of a public officer or employee of Maryland affecting a member of the public."

He could decline to investigate complaints where he felt there was an otherwise adequate remedy available to the citizen, or when he felt the complaint related to a policy of the General Assembly instead of a State execution of that policy, or when he felt the complaint was frivolous and not made in good faith, "or for any other good reason."

He would be required to afford an officer or employee of the government a hearing before making an adverse report to the Governor. The law would require that investigations resulting in an adverse recommendation would not be made public except with consent of the Governor. However, in a case involving misfeasance, malfeasance or nonfeasance of the person involved, the Governor would be required to make public the findings.

The People's Advocate would have subpoena powers and it would be unlawful to obstruct his investigations.