

### A HISTORY OF THE 1959 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly of Maryland met in approximately its 325th session on January 7, 1959. It adjourned on the evening of the 88th day, being April 4. At the very outset, the Legislature was faced by a situation almost without precedent. In both Houses, there was a total of only ten minority members. Elections of 1958 had returned to the House of Delegates 116 Democrats and 7 Republicans, and to the Senate, 26 Democrats and 3 Republicans. Early in the session, this situation was reflected in a law to reduce the minority representation in the Legislative Council.

A total of 1,511 bills was introduced of which 608 were Senate bills and 903 were House bills. Three hundred seventy-three Senate bills passed both Houses, and of these, the Governor signed 361 and vetoed 12. Four hundred eighty-eight House bills passed both Houses, and of these, the Governor signed 470 and vetoed 18.

Since the Governor made these 30 vetoes after the General Assembly had adjourned, these bills must be returned to the two Houses at the next meeting of the General Assembly for a vote on sustaining or overriding the vetoes.

Sixty-two joint resolutions were introduced, 26 in the Senate and 36 in the House. Fourteen Senate Joint Resolutions and 23 House Joint Resolutions passed both Houses.

Among the more important pieces of legislation enacted at the 1959 Session were a number of bills to reorganize departments and agencies of the State government. The State Roads Commission was reconstituted with seven members instead of three. The State Racing Commission and the Tidewater Fisheries Commission were each enlarged from three members to five, and underwent administrative and organizational changes.

Reorganizations of the State Tax Commission and the State Planning Commission accomplished fundamental changes. The State Tax Commission was renamed the State Tax Court, and in addition a Department of Assessments and Taxation was created; the main purpose was to separate the administrative and the quasi-judicial functions of the former agency. The State Planning Commission was transformed into an advisory body and a Department of State Planning was established. The Governor appoints the Director of the new department, who is responsible to him.

The General Assembly enacted and the Governor signed a proposed Compact of 1958 designed, after approval by the State of Virginia and by the Congress of the United States, to supersede the Compact of 1785 in controlling relationships between the two states concerning fisheries in the Potomac River. Following the session of the General Assembly, a petition signed by the required number of voters made this bill subject to a referendum on the State-wide ballot in 1960.

Another important Act created a Commission and Department of Economic Development for the general purpose of advancing the economic welfare of the people of Maryland through programs and activities to develop natural resources, economic possibilities, travel, touring, and recreation.

The Legislature in 1959 also proposed eleven amendments to the Constitution of Maryland, all to be submitted to the voters in 1960. One of the most important is designed to reorganize the lower municipal courts in Baltimore City.

The budget bill, as proposed by the Governor and finally enacted by the General Assembly, was the largest in the history of the State.