

(XVII). 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 County or Legislative District which the person holding the vacated seat represented and of the party to which he belonged. The person so appointed must be affiliated with that party. All persons so appointed serve for the unexpired portion of the term (III, 13, amended November 1936). Each House elects its own officers, is judge of its own members, and establishes rules for the conduct of its business.

The General Assembly meets annually. Sessions in odd-numbered years begin the first Wednesday in January and are limited to ninety calendar days; the sessions meeting in even-numbered years begin the first Wednesday of February and are limited to thirty calendar days. The sessions in even-numbered years are limited to the consideration of budgetary matters, matters in the general public welfare, and legislation of an emergency nature. The Governor may call special sessions at any time he deems it necessary (III, 14, amended).

The General Assembly must pass at each regular session a budget bill which contains the budget for the State government for the next fiscal year. Upon the passage of the bill by both Houses, it becomes law without further action (III, 52).

The General Assembly has power to pass such laws as are necessary for the welfare of the State, and, in addition, it has the power to pass public local laws for counties and special taxing areas. The Home Rule Amendment of 1954 (XI-E) almost entirely prohibits the General Assembly from passing local legislation for incorporated cities and towns, although the Assembly retains its power to pass a general state-wide law that affects them. The General Assembly may establish such departments of the 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 propose amendments to the State Constitution, which must be embodied in a regular legislative bill and 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 passed over his veto by three-fifths of the membership of each House, on the first day of June after the session in which the law was passed; except (1) when a later date is specified in the Act or (2) when the bill is declared an emergency measure and passed by three-fifths of the total number of members of each House, in which case the bill becomes law immediately upon its approval by the Governor.

The General Assembly may add a referendum provision to any local bill but may not submit a state-wide bill to referendum (with the exception of a Soldiers' Bonus Bill). Any state-wide bill, except an appropriation bill, and any local bill which concerns a county or Baltimore City may be submitted to a referendum by petition. No bill subject to a referendum shall be 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 shall be effective immediately and shall remain effective thirty days following its rejection by the voters (XVI).