

General Assembly (III, 9, 10, 11). The term of each Senator and Delegate shall be for four years from the date of his election (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): 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 begin the second Wednesday in January and are for a period not longer than ninety days. The General Assembly may extend its sessions beyond ninety days, but not 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 (III, 14), but no single special session may last longer than thirty days.

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).

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 (III, 27, 28).

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 not having home rule powers and for 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