

Licensing and Regulation, Economic and Community Development, Transportation, and Agriculture. The Department of Education was made a principal department in 1976, and in 1983 the Department of Employment and Training was created.

In 1987, a second major reorganization of government was enacted by the General Assembly. The Departments of Economic and Community Development, and Employment and Training were abolished. The Departments of Economic and Employment Development, the Environment, and Housing and Community Development were created.

Within the executive branch, there are now fifteen principal departments. Each, except for Education, is headed by a secretary, appointed by the governor with the consent of the Senate, who serves at the pleasure of the governor. Each secretary carries out the governor's policies regarding the particular department and is responsible for the department's operation. The Department of Education is headed by the State Board of Education, which appoints the state superintendent of schools to direct the department. Certain state agencies whose purpose or functions do not permit easy integration into one of the fifteen cabinet-level departments have remained independent, such as the State Department of Assessments and Taxation, the Public Service Commission, and the state universities and colleges. These permanent executive departments, agencies, and commissions are augmented by special study commissions and task forces at the discretion of the governor.

*The Legislative Branch* consists of the General Assembly and its supporting agencies. General Assembly is the legal name of the Maryland legislature. The General Assembly is sometimes referred to as the "popular" branch of government, because its members are more directly representative of the electorate than are officials of either the executive or judiciary. Legislators are elected to both houses of the General Assembly from districts redrawn after the federal census every ten years to ensure an equal representation based on the concept of "one person one vote." The geographical size of the districts varies according to population density.

Like all states but Nebraska, Maryland has a bicameral legislature. The lower house is known as the House of Delegates and the upper house as the Senate. Representatives to both houses are elected in each gubernatorial election year for four-year terms. Candidates for the House of Delegates must be at least twenty-one years of age

and those for the Senate at least twenty-five. The House of Delegates consists of 141 members, while the Senate has 47 members. Both houses convene annually on the second Wednesday in January for a 90-day session. Sessions may be extended by resolution of both houses, and special sessions may be called by the governor. The General Assembly is responsible for passing all laws necessary for the welfare of the state's citizens and certain laws dealing with the counties and special taxing districts, for determining how state funds are to be allocated, and for adopting amendments to the state Constitution. Bills may be introduced in either house, and when passed by both houses and signed by the governor they become law.

The General Assembly employs various committees—statutory, standing, and joint—to facilitate its work during and between sessions. The legislative branch also encompasses several state agencies. The Department of Legislative Reference assists in the preparation of legislation and maintains information services essential for legislators and the public. The Department of Fiscal Services prepares financial impact statements and provides fiscal monitoring functions for the General Assembly.

One of the single most important tasks of the General Assembly, and one that requires close coordination and consultation with the Executive Department, is adoption of the annual state budget. The Constitution specifies that it is the responsibility of the governor to present the annual budget to the General Assembly within five days of the beginning of each legislative session. Unlike many other states, the budget of Maryland must not exceed anticipated revenues, thus preventing deficit spending and accounting in large part for the excellent bond rating enjoyed by the state. Reflecting the principle of separation of powers within state government, the governor must incorporate into the budget unchanged requests from the legislative and judicial departments, as well as the estimated expenses required for operating the public schools. Beyond these items and other obligations for certain state debts and the salaries of officials specified in the Constitution, the governor has considerable discretion in determining what programs and agencies to fund in the budget. The budget process is thus a major policy-shaping tool for the governor. Supplemental budgets may be submitted by the governor after adoption of the annual budget, but all requests for such funds must be matched by additional anticipated revenues. The importance and complexity of the state