

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.

The General Assembly in 1989 considered proposals to create a new Department of Juvenile Services and reassign functions of the Department of State Planning to other agencies.

Within the executive branch now are fifteen principal departments. Each, except for Education, is headed by a secretary, who serves at the pleasure of the governor and is appointed by the governor with Senate consent. Each secretary carries out the governor's policies pertaining to that department and is responsible for the department's operation. The State 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 University of Maryland System. Executive departments and independent agencies are augmented by special study commissions and task forces at the discretion of the governor.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

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 every ten years after the federal census to ensure equal representation based on the concept of "one person, one vote." Geographical size of the districts varies according to population density.

Like all states but Nebraska, Maryland has a bicameral legislature. The lower house is the House of Delegates and the upper house is 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 passes all laws necessary for the welfare of the State's citizens and certain laws dealing with the counties and special taxing districts; determines how State funds are to be allocated; and adopts amendments to the State Constitution (subject to ratification by the voters). 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 monitors fiscal 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. The budget of Maryland must not exceed anticipated revenues. This requirement prevents deficit spending and accounts 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 thus is 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.

JUDICIAL BRANCH

The Judicial Branch is responsible for the resolution of all matters involving civil and criminal law in the State of Maryland. Judges base their decisions on statutory law, common law, or equity. Maryland has a four-tiered court system consisting of the