

The Constitution also provides for judicial review. Upon petition of any registered voter, the Court of Appeals may review the legislative districting of the State and may grant appropriate relief, if it finds that State districting does not conform to requirements of the federal or Maryland constitutions.

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*Division of Each County and Baltimore City into Legislative Districts.* Legislative districts first were used for elections in 1800. From 1777 to 1799, voters found only one polling place in each county and in Baltimore City. This proved a hardship to those who lived far away. Since it was considered "...desirable that the full, free and fair voice of the people should be expressed in their choice of the functionaries of government," for the 1800 election each county and Baltimore City was divided into several election districts to afford citizens a polling site nearer their place of residence (Chapter 115, Acts of 1798). The newly formed election districts did not extend beyond the boundaries of each county or Baltimore City. Indeed, subsequent redistricting was confined to these borders until 1965, when election districts began to cross boundary lines of the counties.

Prior to statewide apportionment, legislative districts were local geographic areas. They were defined within the boundaries of individual counties or Baltimore City—Maryland's units of local government. Geographic representation gave each county, rural or suburban, an equal vote regardless of population. Place, for the most part, determined representation, certainly in the Senate. From the first popular election for senators in 1838, each county was allotted one senator. Baltimore City was granted one senator for each of its legislative districts. With the exception of Baltimore City, population had no bearing on the number of senators until 1965. Apportionment for electing delegates, however, was influenced by population and population was to become the basis of representation. Yet, dividing each county and Baltimore City into legislative districts did not produce districts of equal population.

*Division of the State into Legislative Districts.* To attain legislative districts of comparable population size, it became necessary to apportion not individual counties and Baltimore City but the entire State. In 1965, when "senatorial districts" were drawn to bring Maryland's practice closer to the principle of "one man, one vote," some legislative districts for the first time encompassed two or more counties' voters.

Not until 1974 did voters elect all members of the General Assembly on the basis of equal representation by population. Legislative districts reflecting this change were formed by a statewide apportionment, instituted by a 1972 Constitutional amendment that allowed districts to encompass part of a county, parts of adjoining counties, an entire county, or more than one county. Ratified by the people on November 7, 1972, this amendment divided Maryland into 47 districts for the election of the 47 senators and 141 delegates who constitute the 188 members of the General Assembly (Chapter 363, Acts of 1972). This first statewide apportionment for the election of both houses of the General Assembly set standards which remain today. Voters in each legislative election district choose one senator to represent them in the Senate and three delegates to represent them in the House of Delegates. Each district may be divided into three delegate subdistricts or one multi-member delegate subdistrict. Each district must consist of adjoining territory, be compact in form, and of equal population (Const., Art. III, secs. 1-4). In districts that contain more than two counties or parts of more than two counties and where the delegates are elected at large by the voters of the entire district, no county or part of a county is allowed to have more than one resident delegate.

Pursuant to Article III, section 5, of the Constitution, the Governor presented the Legislative Reapportionment Plan of 1982 to the General Assembly on January 13, 1982, and it became law on February 26, 1982 (Joint Resolution no. 1, Acts of 1982). This second statewide apportionment retained 47 legislative districts but redefined their boundaries.

The following descriptions of boundaries for legislative election districts refer to election districts, wards, and precincts by geographical boundaries as they existed in October 1990. Precinct boundaries are dynamic. Changes occur to reflect population shifts and to ensure convenient polling places for all voters. Local boards of election supervisors can provide current information on precincts encompassed within each district.