

call a meeting of the General Assembly to elect a new chief executive for the remainder of the unexpired term.

*Council/Upper House.* The Council, officially promulgated as an executive body in 1637, consisted of those confidants upon whom the governor depended heavily for guidance on a wide variety of subjects. The proprietor technically commissioned councillors, but he usually accepted gubernatorial recommendations. The governor ensured the presence of these advisers by extending special writs commanding their attendance. After the mid-seventeenth century the governor issued such writs less frequently. Appointees to the Council, except those on special writ, served indefinitely, usually for life unless they were removed for disloyalty or they resigned for personal reasons. From 1650, when the Assembly officially became bicameral, until the American Revolution, the members of the Council performed separate and distinct legislative functions as the Upper House, whose membership also included others summoned on special writ for particular sessions, and, before 1675, the governor. The membership lists for the Upper House are in descending order according to seniority. They incorporate not only the individuals physically present as they appear in the journals but also the eligible, but nonattending, councillors, who are given the parenthetical designation DNS (“did not serve”). After 1776, the new constitution separated executive and legislative responsibilities and the Upper House was called the *Senate*. The reader should refer to the footnotes to the session of the General Assembly of 1777 for a discussion of the composition of the legislative and executive branches of government for the post-1776 period.

*Lower House.* The order in which county and city delegations appeared in the Lower House journals varied only slightly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the colonial period, the clerk recorded the delegations in chronological order of county formation. Figures 1–4 depict the changes in legislative districts (counties and towns) through 1789. After the revolution, the same rule of listing delegates applied, apart from the reversal in position on the membership roster of the Annapolis and Prince George’s County delegations. Only during the conventions of 1774 to 1776 was there a significant alteration made in the method of membership presentation. The proceedings of these extralegal conventions list delegations geographically rather than chronologically, beginning with St. Mary’s County at the southern end of the Western Shore and progressing clockwise to Worcester County at the southern end of the Eastern Shore. To be consistent and to facilitate comparison, the order of all session lists for the Lower House parallels the chronology of county erection. With the constitution of 1776 the Lower House became the House of Delegates.

*Committee Service.* Before 1692, the Assembly journals report occasional committee appointments, as noted. It was not until the royal period, however, that standing committees became a feature of legislative activity. A standing committee, as defined here, was a committee that was named in the series of appointments generally made at the beginning of a session and that existed for more than one assembly. The session lists include standing committees but exclude ad hoc committees and committees assigned only to investigate specific pieces of legislation, petitions, or issues.

A legislator’s committee service for a particular session of the Assembly stems either from the original appointment list or from an additional appointment resolution approved during a session. There are, however, two exceptions to these rules. First, the Lower House often voted to continue standing committees from the previous session by a blanket resolution, with no repeti-