

were: Health and Mental Hygiene, Budget and Fiscal Planning, Natural Resources, State Planning, Personnel, General Services, Human Resources, Public Safety and Correctional Services, Licensing and Regulation, Economic and Community Development, Transportation, and Agriculture. The State Department of Education became a principal department in 1976, and in 1983, the Department of Employment and Training was created.

A second major reorganization of government was enacted by the General Assembly in 1987. The Departments of Economic and Community Development and Employment and Training were abolished. Their functions were reorganized under the Department of Economic and Employment Development, and the Department of Housing and Community Development. At the same time, the Department of the Environment was created to assume those environmental responsibilities previously overseen by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Department of Natural Resources.

Over the last few years, governmental reorganization has continued. The General Assembly in 1989 reassigned duties of the Department of State Planning to other agencies and formed a new Department of Juvenile Services. In 1994, the Maryland State Police became the Department of Maryland State Police and, in 1995, the Department of State Police. In 1995, the Division of Employment and Training transferred from the Department of Economic and Employment Development to the Department of Licensing and Regulation. Restructured, the latter became the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. The same year, the Department of Economic and Employment Development reformed as the Department of Business and Economic Development, and the Department of Juvenile Services was renamed the Department of Juvenile Justice. In 1996, the Department of Personnel was abolished. Its functions were assigned to the Department of Budget and Fiscal Planning, which reorganized as the Department of Budget and Management. In 1998, the Office on Aging reformed as the Department of Aging; in 1999, the Department of Veterans Affairs was created; and, in 2000, the Office of Planning reorganized as the Department of Planning.

Within the executive branch now are eighteen 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 eighteen cabinet-level departments have remained independent. Examples

of such independent agencies include the State Department of Assessments and Taxation, the State Board of Elections, the Public Service Commission, and the University System of Maryland.

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 Maryland General Assembly and its supporting agencies. The General Assembly is the Maryland legislature. Sometimes, the General Assembly is considered the "popular" branch of government, because its members more directly represent the electorate than do 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. It also 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. Current laws are compiled in the *Annotated Code of Maryland*.

To facilitate its work during and between sessions, the General Assembly refers work to various committees - statutory, standing (or continuing), and joint. The legislative branch also encompasses the Department of Legislative Services. The Department assists in the preparation of legislation and maintains information services essential for legislators and the public. Additionally, the Department 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 Branch, is adoption of