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ORIGIN & FUNCTIONS

17th Century. The Senate of Maryland originated as the Upper House of the General Assembly, formally distinguished from the Lower House in 1650. This division provided "for the more convenient dispatch of the business therein to be consulted of" (Chapter 1, Acts of 1650). Since the Upper House consisted of the Governor and his Council, all of whom held close personal and political ties with the Lord Proprietary, the separation of the two Houses gave Lord Baltimore control of the legislature. The political interests of the Upper House regularly came in conflict with those of the Lower House, which advocated a popular government and more legislative influence.

In the decade following its creation, the bicameral system faced several major challenges. Many were rooted in colonial politics, but some grew out of religious conflicts and the English Civil War. Puritan governors, appointed by the Parliamentary Commissioners in England, twice convened unicameral legislatures in Maryland, first in 1654, and again in 1657. Catholic Lord Baltimore regained control of the colony in 1658 with the aid of several loyal Protestants, including Josias Fendall. To show his appreciation, Baltimore appointed Fendall governor of Maryland. In 1660 though, Fendall turned traitor, conspiring with the Lower House to abolish the Upper House and establish a commonwealth system of government (*Archives of Maryland* I: 388-391). "Fendall's Rebellion" was short-lived, as Proprietary forces quickly regained control of the government. Once restored, the Upper House kept the same composition for the next century. The only major change was the removal of the governor's position from the Upper House in 1675.

18th Century. The Constitution of 1776 officially established the Senate and severed all ties between the Senate and the Governor's Council. An electoral college was created to choose fifteen senators. Voters in each county selected two electors, while Baltimore and Annapolis each sent one elector to represent their interests. Although each elector represented a specific county or city, the senators were not required to represent jurisdictions. The only stipulation provided in the Constitution was that nine senators should be residents of the Western Shore, and the other six of the Eastern Shore. Each senator served a five-year term. The first elections under this system took place in 1781 (Const. 1776, secs. 14-18).

19th Century. The elections of 1838 effected the first major reform of the Senate. Voters ratified numerous Constitutional amendments regulating the geographic distribution of Senate seats, a process which had been overrun by economic, social and political biases. The electoral college was abolished, and voters for the first time chose their senators. Twenty-one senators were elected; one from each county and Baltimore City. Senatorial terms expanded to six years, and a rotational election system was established so that only a third of the senators stood for election every two years. The amendments also abolished the Governor's Council (Chapter 197, Acts of 1836, secs. 2, 3, 13). To this day though, the Senate