

# The State of Maryland's Legislative Process

**Understanding the process:** The Maryland General Assembly or MGA is composed of 188 people who are elected every 4 years to serve in the State's legislative branch to enact laws that protect the interest of Marylanders. For 2023, the political breakdown of the MGA are as follows:

- Out of 47 Senators: 34 are Democrats and 12 are Republicans (8 new)
- Out of 141 Delegates: 102 are Democrats and 39 are Republicans (38 new)

An idea or concept must pass through many processes before it becomes a law. Citizens and advocates generally approach legislators to introduce a bill. If the legislator agrees, the information is shared with the Department of Legislative Services which will work up a bill draft. The draft will be reviewed by the legislator and whomever else the legislator consults to perfect the language and prepare for introduction. A bill is introduced when the Reading Clerk reads the number and title during a floor session of the entire House or Senate (**First Reader**). The committee to which the bill is assigned will also be noted.

**Committees** meet almost daily during the session to receive testimony and take action on bills referred to the committee. Citizens are encouraged to present their views on the proposed bills by written testimony, oral testimony, and/or personal appearance. Lobbyists representing organized interest groups, officials from State agencies, local government representatives, and other interested citizens speak at these

hearings to oppose or support the proposed legislation.

The committee will meet again after the hearing to decide whether to take action on the bill. They report back to the Floor for **Second Reading** and Floor Consideration with favorable, unfavorable, favorable with amendment, or the bill will stall without action. If the committee reports back with favorable or favorable with amendments, the bill goes back to the Floor where members can then offer amendments. After all amendments are considered, the presiding officer orders the bill to be printed for its Third and final reading.

**Third Reading:** The bill must be printed in its final version with all amendments included for third reading. A vote is held and the bill passes with a majority vote.

**Second Chamber:** The procedure follows a pattern identical to that of the chamber in which the bill originated, except amendments may be proposed during Third reading, as well as during second.

**Presentation of Bill to Governor:** Bills must be presented to the Governor within 20 days after adjournment of a session, and the Governor may veto within 30 days after presentation. If the Governor does not veto a bill, it becomes law.

**Veto Power:** The power to override a veto rests with the legislature. A three-fifths vote of the elected membership in each house is necessary to override a veto.

