



# The LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

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## [Budget and Fiscal Matters](#)

### **BUDGET AND FISCAL MATTERS**

## [Civil Rights](#)

The \$2.2 billion Capital Budget for fiscal 2000, "bricks and mortar" money, contains appropriations for construction and renovation of public schools, State office buildings, State universities and colleges, correctional facilities, State hospitals, parks, farmland, and transportation facilities. Money is also included for projects of local governments and nonprofit organizations.

## [Consumer Affairs](#)

Among the highlights of this year's capital improvement program are:

## [Insurance](#)

- \$250 million for public school construction;
- \$172.2 million for the Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund;
- \$24.5 million for additions to the Annapolis State Government complex;
- \$24.6 for Rural Legacy programs;
- \$29.6 million for construction of a science facility at Salisbury State University; and
- \$23.9 million for the University of Maryland School of Law and the Marshall Law Library.

## [Legislative Matters](#)

Funds for the Capital Budget come from:

## [Sports and Gaming](#)

- general obligation bonds in the Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 1999 of \$426 million (**HB 143/SB 162**) and separate bond legislation, bringing the total to \$445 million;
- general funds of \$239.4 million in the operating Budget Bill (**SB 130/HB 120**);
- special funds of \$657.9 million, also in the Budget Bill;
- federal funds of \$544.6 million, and
- academic and transportation revenue bonds of \$271 million.

## [State Government](#)

Unlike the Budget Bill, the General Assembly may increase or add items to the Capital Budget, as well as decrease or eliminate items. Traditionally, the chamber that moves the Budget Bill first also acts on the Capital Budget bill, so the House will move the bill first this year.

## [Transportation](#)

The much-discussed cigarette tax increase bill was introduced this week. If **SB 143** becomes law, the State tax on a pack of cigarettes will rise to 86 cents on July 1, 1999 and to \$1.36 on July 1, 2000. The current tax is 36 cents per pack. The bill also proposes to add a tax to the wholesale price of other tobacco products such as cigars, snuff, and chewing tobacco. Increased revenues from **SB 143** are to be earmarked for school construction beginning with the fiscal 2001 budget.

## [Next Week](#)

### **CIVIL RIGHTS**

Part of the legislative package introduced on behalf of the Governor included **SB 138** which would add sexual orientation to the State's anti-discrimination statutes in the areas of public accommodations, housing, and employment. Currently, it is unlawful to discriminate because of race, creed, sex, age, color, national origin, marital status, or physical or mental handicap.

### **CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

**SB 64**, introduced at the request of State regulators with the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR), has been heard in committee. Generally, the bill would authorize the State Board of Heating, Ventilation, Air-Conditioning, and Refrigeration Contractors (HVACR) to regulate firms providing such services. The bill would also require those firms to obtain a certificate that authorizes them to provide services through individuals who hold a master, master restricted, or limited license. The bill would also increase penalties for unlicensed work from \$50 for each day that the violation occurs to a fine of \$2,000, imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

**SB 53**, also requested by DLLR, would increase from \$50,000 to \$100,000 the maximum amount that the Home Improvement Commission's Guaranty Fund may award when multiple claims are lodged against a single home improvement contractor. The bill has received a favorable preliminary vote on the Senate floor. Technical amendments were added.

## **INSURANCE**

The Patients' Bill of Rights Act of 1999 (**SB 135**) seeks to address several health care issues. Under the Act, the Maryland Insurance Administration would be designated as the primary coordinator for consumer access to health insurance information. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) would be required to provide out-of-network referrals when a needed health care provider is not available in-network, to permit specialists to serve as primary care providers, and to cover prescriptions not normally covered if determined medically necessary by a doctor. The legislation also establishes requirements for standing referrals to specialists and coverage for 48-hour hospital stays following mastectomy or testicular cancer surgery. A committee hearing is scheduled for next week.

## **LEGISLATIVE MATTERS**

Four ethics bills, **SB 1/HB 1** and **SB 25/HB 2**, will be discussed in a joint committee hearing of Senate and House committees on February 2. These bills address the reforms proposed by the Special Study Commission on the Maryland Public Ethics Law that met during this past interim.

## **SPORTS AND GAMING**

**SB 104** would eliminate the current requirement that 2 to 4 sports-related lotteries be conducted each fiscal year to benefit the Maryland Stadium Authority. Under this bill, the State Lottery Agency could designate any type of lottery game, any number of times each year, to benefit the stadiums. Games conducted for this purpose would be so indicated on the lottery ticket.

## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

In 1996 Governor Glendening issued an executive order granting many executive branch employees non-binding collective bargaining rights. This session, **SB 129** has been introduced to give executive branch employees statutory authority to engage in non-binding collective bargaining. The bill would expand this privilege to non-faculty university employees and would create a State Labor Relations Board with the authority to oversee the process and establish bargaining units. The measure would prohibit strikes by employees and lockouts by the State in addition to providing a procedure for dealing with an impasse. Employees may collectively bargain wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment. Additionally, the employee organization would have the right to receive membership dues and service fees through payroll deduction. No agreement would be valid until ratified by the Governor.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

A measure slated for a committee hearing next week would prohibit a driver from using a telephone in a motor vehicle that is in motion. Under **HB 37**, a violation would result in a misdemeanor charge and a fine of not more than \$500.

## **NEXT WEEK**

Friday, February 5 is the Senate Bill Introduction Date. As required by Senate Rule 32(b), bills introduced after this date will be referred to the Senate Rules Committee.