



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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The General Assembly of Maryland convened at noon on Wednesday, January 9, 2002, marking the 416th meeting of the State legislature. The 2002 session is scheduled to conclude in 90 calendar days on April 8 and is the last regular session of the four-year term.

Opening Day

According to rule and tradition, opening day commenced with the organization of each chamber. Senator Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. was reelected for a sixteenth year of service as President of the Senate of Maryland. President Miller is the longest serving President in the history of the body. President Pro-Tem Ida G. Ruben was reelected to serve for a third year in that office. Speaker Casper R. Taylor, Jr. will continue to preside over the House of Delegates for a ninth year, having first been tapped to lead the chamber in 1994. Speaker Taylor is the longest serving Speaker of the General Assembly since Maryland gained statehood. Delegate Thomas E. Dewberry was sworn in for a sixth year as Speaker Pro-Tem. Maryland's United States Senators Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski, as well as Governor Parris N. Glendening and Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend also attended the opening day ceremonies.

New Legislators

Recently appointed legislators attending their first session on opening day were Senator Sandra B. Schrader and Delegates James G. Crouse, Tawanna P. Gaines, and Melissa J. Kelly. Senator Robert H. Kittleman, who was sworn in on Friday, January 11, had formerly been a member of the House of Delegates since 1983. Senator Kittleman served as Minority Leader of the House from 1995 through 2001.

Security Procedures

Under new security procedures in the legislative complex, buildings are now accessible by only one entrance. The State House, however, has two entrances. Members of the public wishing to enter a building must pass through a metal detector located at each entrance and present photo identification such as a driver's

license to gain entry. Security officers search bags and other personal effects, and temporary color-coded badges are issued. Additional law enforcement officers have been assigned to the complex for the 2002 session, and security personnel monitor pedestrian traffic at building access points. Legislators and legislative staff must wear photo badges at all times that, when passed through decoding machines, allow entry to designated areas within buildings in the complex.

The tragic events of September 11 also prompted the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House to appoint an Anti-Terrorism Workgroup to reevaluate state preparedness to prevent terrorist activity and to respond to the impact of a terrorist attack or major disaster. The workgroup has focused on several issues. Public health concerns related to preparedness for a major biological or chemical attack are being addressed. A Maryland Survivors Scholarship for children of the victims of September 11 has been created, to be funded with private money. Members of the National Guard called to active duty will have reemployment options, a death benefit, and other protections. Several other areas under review include emergency communication, insurance, and price gouging issues.

Redistricting

Redistricting is the process of drawing new districts for election of members of the General Assembly and of the U.S. Congress. As with all states, Maryland redistricts after the decennial census is completed and new population data is available to accurately distribute the population among districts. The Maryland Constitution (Article III, Section 5) requires the Governor to prepare a **legislative districting plan** following the decennial census and present the plan to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates. The presiding officers introduced the plan as a joint resolution ([SJ 3/HJ 3](#)) on the first day of the regular session in the second year following the decennial census (January 9, 2002), as required. If the General Assembly has not adopted another redistricting plan by the 45th day of the session (Friday, February 22), the Governor's plan as presented becomes law. The

Maryland congressional plan will be introduced as a regular bill in the General Assembly; it must be passed by both houses and signed by the Governor, who has veto power over the plan. Complete information including district maps is available on the General Assembly's home page under Redistricting Information.

Other Major Issues

To date, 272 bills and resolutions have been introduced and assigned to committees. In the coming weeks as public hearings will be scheduled for each bill, notice of the time and location of the hearings will be provided in the General Assembly's *Committee Meetings and Hearing Schedules* posted on the home page. Among the many issues to be considered during the 2002 session, **budget matters** will be in the forefront, as legislators address balancing the FY2003 State budget in light of projected revenue shortfalls, large Medicaid deficits, and continuing State funding needs. The State Budget will be introduced on Wednesday, January 16. Other fiscal issues that will be heavily debated include **funding for education**, especially in light of the State's Thornton Commission recommendations for increased funding for Maryland's public schools and changes in the formula for distribution of aid to local school districts. A briefing on the Commission's recommendations is scheduled for Thursday, January 17.

Anti-terrorism legislation will seek to strengthen the State's ability to prevent and respond to threats, but funding in this area will be of concern. Several bills have already been introduced to eliminate fees related to the estates of victims of the September 11 attacks, and to provide an exemption for State inheritance taxes for the estates. Governor Glendening's **environmental initiatives** will propose to afford protection for the State's coastal bay system, similar to the protection afforded the Chesapeake Bay under the Critical Areas law. Other measures slated for consideration include adding language to enhance the Critical Areas program in light of recent federal Supreme Court decisions that seem to weaken Bay watershed protections. **Drunk driving** initiatives will be spearheaded by legislation prohibiting open containers of alcoholic beverages in motor vehicles and increasing penalties for repeat offenders.

Upcoming

Bill introductions and committee hearings and meetings will continue in Annapolis as the 2002 session of the General Assembly gets underway. Governor Glendening will address the legislature with his annual State of the State address, the final one of his second term, on Wednesday, January 16 at noon in the chamber of the House of Delegates. The Fiscal 2003 State budget will also be introduced on that day.