



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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The General Assembly of Maryland convened at noon on Wednesday, January 14, 2004, marking the 418th meeting of the State legislature. The 2004 session is scheduled to conclude in 90 calendar days on April 12 and is the second regular session of the four-year term that began last year.

regarded as an exceptional legislator, was one of the Assembly's leading fiscal experts and one of its most vigorous supporters of public education. Former Vice Chairman of Appropriations, Norman H. Conway, District 38B, was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by Delegate Rawling's untimely death.

Opening Day

According to rule and tradition, opening day began with the organization of each chamber. Senator Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. was reelected for an eighteenth 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 fifth year in that office. Speaker Michael E. Busch will continue to preside over the House of Delegates for a second year, having been tapped to lead the chamber just last year. Delegate Adrienne A. Jones was sworn in for a second year as Speaker Pro-Tem. Maryland's United States Senator Barbara Mikulski, Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and a number of other dignitaries, as well as family and friends also attended opening day ceremonies.

Major Issues

To date, 217 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 General Assembly's website. Among the many issues to be considered during the 2004 session, budget matters will be in the forefront, as legislators address balancing the FY2005 State budget in light of a \$700 million shortfall, large Medicaid deficits, and continuing State funding needs. The State Budget will be introduced on Wednesday, January 21. Other fiscal issues that will be heavily debated include funding for education in light of the 2002 Bridge to Excellence Act based on the Thornton Commission plan for increased funding for Maryland's public K-12 schools. Additionally, rising tuition costs at Maryland's colleges and universities will be under scrutiny.

New Legislators

Four delegates who took office during the interim attended their first session on opening day: John W.E. Cluster, Jr., District 8; Terrill (Terry) R. Gilleland, Jr., District 32; Marshall T. Goodwin, District 40; and Jeannie Haddaway, District 37B.

Other expected hot topics for 2004 will include consideration of slots or expanded gambling activities in Maryland, banning assault weapons, reforming medical malpractice statutes, and protecting the environment through measures such as a "flush tax" per household to pay for upgrading sewage plants.

In Memoriam

On opening day, the House of Delegates paid tribute to Howard "Pete" Rawlings, District 40, who died November 14, 2003. Delegate Rawlings, the first African-American to serve as the chairman of a budget committee, served as the House Appropriations Committee Chairman beginning in 1992 and earlier, beginning in 1987, as Vice Chairman. Rawlings, widely

Veto and Overrides

The Senate voted to override the Governor's veto of three Senate bills: SB 78, dealing with retirement and pensions for Baltimore City child support enforcement employees; [SB 394](#), establishing minimum energy efficiency standards for nine household and commercial products sold in Maryland after March 1, 2005, or

installed in Maryland after January 1, 2006; and [SB 532](#), dealing with alcoholic beverages in Baltimore City. The bills are now in the House for their consideration. Additionally, the Senate placed [SB 588](#), related to the membership of the State Board of Examiners for Audiologists, Hearing Aid Dispensers, and Speech-Language Pathologists, on special order for January 20.

The House special ordered four bills vetoed by the Governor for consideration later in the session. They are, with consideration dates noted:

- [HB 563](#), related to Montgomery County Local Vehicle Surcharge (February 27);
- [HB 747](#), the companion bill to [SB 394](#), establishing minimum energy efficiency standards (January 20);
- [HB 753](#), the tax and revenues measure, raises \$135.6 million for fiscal 2004 by assessing a 2% insurance premium tax on health maintenance organizations and managed care organizations, imposing a 10% corporate income tax surcharge for 2003 through 2005, and changing corporate tax law to enhance Maryland revenue. The provision concerning a tobacco tax increase was deleted (April 5); and
- [HB 812](#), the companion bill to [SB 78](#), dealing with retirement and pensions for certain Baltimore City employees (January 20).

All other 2003 vetoes by the Governor were sustained.

The Maryland Constitution (Article II, Section 17) gives the Governor of Maryland veto power, with the exception of the Budget Bill which cannot be vetoed. The Constitution requires the Governor to return a vetoed bill to the General Assembly with a statement of objections. Most vetoes are made because a bill duplicates the effect of another bill the Governor has signed or because the bill lacks legal sufficiency in the judgment of the Office of the Attorney General. Relatively few bills are vetoed for policy reasons.

Vetoed bills are returned to the house of origin immediately after that house has organized at the next regular or special session of the General Assembly. The General Assembly may override the Governor's veto with a vote of three-fifths of the members of each house. However, when a new General Assembly is elected and sworn, bills vetoed from the previous session are not returned. These vetoed bills are not subject to any further legislative action. A bill enacted over a veto, or a bill

becoming law as a result of the Governor's failure to act within the prescribed time, takes effect 30 days after the veto is overridden or on the date specified in the bill, whichever is later. An emergency bill passed over the Governor's veto, however, takes effect immediately.

Roster and List of Committees

The General Assembly's *Roster and List of Committees* is now on the main menu of the legislature's website. The document is updated as necessary. For more information call Library and Information Services.

Upcoming

Bill introductions and committee hearings and meetings will continue in Annapolis as the 2004 session of the General Assembly gets underway. Governor Ehrlich will address the legislature with his annual State of the State address on Thursday, January 29 at noon in the chamber of the House of Delegates.

