



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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Opening Week

The 423rd session of the General Assembly of Maryland convened at noon on Wednesday, January 10, marking the first year of the four-year 2007-2010 legislative term. *Sine die* for this year is scheduled for April 9, ninety calendar days following January 10. Opening day was filled with ceremony and symbolism as each chamber commenced with the organization of its body. Surrounded by a larger than usual crowd of friends and family, the 11 new Senators and 34 new Delegates, some of whom have served during earlier terms, joined their colleagues as all 188 legislators were sworn-in to officially begin their service to the people of Maryland.

In opening day activities, Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. was elected to his 21st year as President of the Maryland Senate. He is the longest serving Senate President in the history of the State and the longest serving presiding officer of any Senate chamber in the United States. Senator Nathaniel J. McFadden, in previous years the Majority Leader, began his first session as President Pro Tem. Other Senate floor leaders include Majority Leader Edward J. Kasemeyer and Majority Whip Lisa A. Gladden.

The House of Delegates elected Michael E. Busch for a fifth year as Speaker. Speaker Pro Tem Adrienne A. Jones, elected by the House, will also be serving for a fifth year. She was joined by Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve and Majority Whip Talmadge Branch, two other members of the House leadership team.

Legislative activity was light during this first week of session as committee assignments were made official, and new and returning members alike opened their Annapolis offices and prepared for the committee and floor work ahead.

Major Issues

Early voting, as well as establishing a paper trail for Maryland's voting machines will be addressed this session. The topic of health care will encompass Medicaid expansion, employer and individual mandates, restraining costs, and helping small businesses to offer health insurance to their employees. As well, a coalition of members will continue to push for a statewide smoking ban.

With the use of the death penalty in limbo due to a recent court ruling, legislators will examine the ramifications of changing Maryland law to reinstitute or eliminate the practice. Consideration of funding K-12 with regard to the Thornton initiatives, providing for public school construction, and restraining college tuition increases will continue. Momentum is also gaining for passage of strict car emission standards. Other measures will address the health of the Chesapeake Bay and protection of open space. Additionally, with a coming budget shortfall, the General Assembly may consider an overhaul of the State's tax structure.

Next Week

Bill introductions, floor sessions, and committee briefings and hearings will continue in Annapolis as the 2007 General Assembly session gets underway.

The inauguration of Governor Martin O'Malley and Lt. Governor Anthony Brown will begin on Wednesday, January 17, at noon in the Senate chamber with ceremonies to continue on Lawyer's Mall. The Governor's State of the State address will take place on January 31 at noon in the House chamber.