



The Legislative Wrap-Up

Library and Information Services, Department of Legislative Services

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OPENING DAY

The 426th session of the General Assembly of Maryland convened at noon on Wednesday, January 14, marking the official beginning of the 2009 session, the third regular session of the four-year term. The 2009 session is scheduled to conclude in 90 calendar days on April 13.

According to rule and tradition, opening day commenced with the organization of each chamber. Senator Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. was reelected for his 23rd year as President. Senator Miller is the longest-serving Senate President in the history of the body and the longest-serving Senate President in the United States. Senator Nathaniel J. McFadden, in previous years the Senate Majority Leader, began his third year of service as Senate President Pro Tem. In the House of Delegates, Michael E. Busch was reelected for a seventh year as Speaker. Delegate Adrienne A. Jones was also reelected for a seventh year as Speaker Pro Tem.

MAJOR ISSUES

To date, 201 bills have been introduced and assigned to one of the principal standing committees in the Senate or in the House. Senators may introduce legislation until February 6, after which the bills are sent to the Senate Rules Committee. The House bill introduction date is February 13, after which House bills are referred to the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. Legislation may not continue through the process unless voted out of the Rules Committees. Over 2,000 bills and resolutions will be introduced or “dropped in the hoppers” before the deadlines pass.

Issues to be considered during the 2009 session address:

The Budget - the \$400 million gap in the current year and an estimated nearly \$2 billion gap in fiscal 2010;

Transportation - shrinking funds for improvements and maintenance due to sagging gas tax, titling tax, and toll revenues, REAL ID, and drunk driving;

Education – compulsory school attendance age level, preschool education, school readiness assessments, and funding guidelines for higher education, tuition freeze for a fourth year, and rising cost of textbooks;

Health – Prince George’s County Health Care System and health insurance coverage and costs;

Public Safety and Courts – Medevac operation and restructuring, registration and supervision of sex offenders, death penalty repeal, domestic violence and guns, and State Police surveillance;

Environment – examination and enforcement of the State’s Smart Growth policies, greenhouse gas emission reduction, and Chesapeake Bay restoration;

State Government – early voting implementation, video lottery terminal (slots) implementation, and “pay or play” ethics laws.

PASSAGE OF EMERGENCY MEASURE

At the request of legislators representing the City of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, on Friday, January 16, the General Assembly passed and sent to the Governor [SB 107](#), an emergency measure, that allows an establishment in Anne Arundel County or the City of Annapolis that holds an alcoholic beverages license with an on-sale privilege to remain open on the night of January 20, 2009, Inauguration Day, for up to one hour past its normal closing time on payment of a \$200 fee.

UPCOMING

Wednesday, January 21, is the last day for Governor Martin O’Malley to submit his proposed fiscal 2010 budget for the Executive Branch. On Thursday, January 29, Governor O’Malley will deliver his third State of the State address at noon. Senators and Delegates assemble in the chamber of the House of Delegates to hear the Governor’s remarks.