



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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OPENING WEEK

The 428th session of the General Assembly of Maryland convened at noon on Wednesday, January 12, marking the first year of the four-year 2011-2014 legislative term. *Sine die* for this year is scheduled for April 12, ninety calendar days following January 12. 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 10 new Senators, 8 of whom were former members of the House and 30 new Delegates, some of whom had 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. (D-District 27) was elected to his 25th 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. The Senate President Pro Tem, Nathaniel J. McFadden, is beginning his fifth year of service in this position. Other Senate floor leaders include Majority Leader Rob Garagiola and Deputy Majority Leader Catherine E. Pugh. Senator Allan Kittleman is the Senate Minority Leader and Senator David Brinkley serves as Minority Whip.

The House of Delegates elected Michael E. Busch (D-District 30) for a ninth year as Speaker. Speaker Pro Tem Adrienne A. Jones will also be serving for a ninth year. She was joined by Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve and Majority Whip Talmadge Branch, two other members of the House majority leadership team. Delegate Anthony J. O'Donnell is the Minority Leader and Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio serves as Minority Whip.

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

Budget issues are expected to dominate the legislative landscape during the 2011 session. A projected deficit of \$1.6 billion must be closed in order to balance expected revenues with expenditures. The Governor's budget for fiscal 2012, which begins July 1, 2011, will be introduced on January 21 (Friday), the 10th day of the session, as required by the Maryland Constitution. The General Assembly will then begin consideration of the budget, with the House of Delegates taking the lead this year.

Among the other many issues that are expected to gain a lot of attention during the session are:

- civil unions and same sex marriages;
- federal health care reform implementation;
- in-state college tuition for immigrants;
- renewable energy requirements for utility companies;
- slots expansion;
- alcohol and gas tax increases, and
- pension reform.

Other legislation will be introduced to address pollutants and runoff in the Chesapeake Bay, changing Maryland's campaign finance laws, as well as strong drunk driving restrictions, and shipping wine to Maryland by mail.

NEXT WEEK AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Bill introductions, floor sessions, and committee briefings and hearings will continue in Annapolis as the 2011 General Assembly session gets underway.

The inauguration of Governor Martin O'Malley and Lt. Governor Anthony Brown will begin on Wednesday, January 19, 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 February 3 at noon in the House chamber.