



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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OPENING DAY

The 2012 session of the Maryland legislature convened at noon on Wednesday, January 11, marking the 430th session of the General Assembly of Maryland. This year is the second year of the legislative four-year term that began in January 2011 and will end when a newly elected Senate and House take office in January 2015. *Sine die* for the 2012 session is scheduled for April 9, ninety calendar days following January 11.

Opening day was filled with ceremony and symbolism as each chamber commenced with the organization of its body. Surrounded by friends and family, as well as numerous officials including U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, Congressman Steny Hoyer, Governor Martin O'Malley, and Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, Maryland's 188 legislators were sworn in to officially begin their service to the people of Maryland for 2012.

SENATE LEADERSHIP

Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr. (D-District 27) was elected to his 26th 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 (D-District 45), is beginning his sixth year of service in this position. Other Senate floor leaders include Majority Leader Rob Garagiola (D-District 15) and Deputy Majority Leader Catherine E. Pugh (D-District 40). Senator E.J. Pipkin (R-District 36) is the Senate Minority Leader and Senator Edward R. Reilly (R-District 33) serves as Minority Whip.

HOUSE LEADERSHIP

Michael E. Busch (D-District 30) was elected for a tenth year as Speaker of the House of Delegates.

Speaker Busch is now the longest-serving Speaker in the history of the House of Delegates. Speaker Pro Tem Adrienne A. Jones (D-District 10) will also be serving for a tenth year, and she is now the longest-serving Speaker Pro Tem in the history of the House. She was joined by Majority Leader Kumar P. Barve (D-District 17) and Majority Whip Talmadge Branch (D-District 45), two other members of the House majority leadership team. Delegate Anthony J. O'Donnell (R-District 29C) is the Minority Leader, and Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio (R-District 37B) serves as Minority Whip.

LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING

The Maryland Constitution (Art. III, Section 5) requires the Governor to present a legislative districting plan to the General Assembly in the form of a joint resolution by the first day of the session in the second year following the decennial census. Based on the 2010 census, Governor O'Malley's resolution was introduced on the first day of this session as [SJ 1/HJ 1](#). The Senate resolution has been assigned to the Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee. The House resolution's assignment is House Rules and Executive Nominations.

Unless the General Assembly can agree on an alternative plan, the Governor's plan becomes law on the session's 45th day (February 24). Other resolutions with differing boundaries will be before the General Assembly in the coming days. Legislators will run for office in the new districts in 2014.

THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS

The Women's Caucus of the Maryland General Assembly, now named the Women Legislators of Maryland, celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2012. In

February 1972, acting on a resolution by Senator Rosalie Abrams that the women in the Maryland General Assembly “form a women’s Caucus to meet regularly” to “push for the recognition of women and their abilities,” eight women delegates and four women senators created the Women’s Caucus.

The founding members were Senators Rosalie Silber Abrams, Mary L. Nock, Margaret C. Schweinhaut, and Verda Welcome. The founding Delegates were Hildagardeis Boswell, Ann R. Hull, Helen L. Koss, Lena K. Lee, Lucille S. Maurer, Pauline H. Menes, Margaret A. Murphy, and Loretta Nimmerrichter.

The 1974 elections increased the number of women legislators from 13 to 19. In 2012, there are 58 women serving, or 31% of the membership. The current President is Delegate Susan C. Lee and President-elect is Delegate Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio.

MAJOR ISSUES

This session, the General Assembly will consider further reduction of the approximately \$1.1 billion remaining budget shortfall. The legislature’s Spending Affordability Committee recently recommended elimination of half of the ongoing deficit as a goal for this session. The General Assembly reduced the projected fiscal 2012 general fund deficit by \$721 million, or 36.9%.

Also under consideration will be increasing revenue through measures such as raising the gas tax and the “flush tax,” and moving some of the cost of teacher pensions to local governments. Issues on the environmental forefront include offshore wind production and septic systems regulation. The legalization of same sex marriage will also be revisited, as will the expansion of gaming to include table games and the reduction of the estate tax on inherited family farms.

NEXT WEEK AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Bill introductions, floor sessions, and committee briefings and hearings will continue in Annapolis as the 2012 General Assembly session gets underway. The Governor’s operating budget bill will be introduced next week. The State of the State address will take place on February 1 at noon in the House chamber.