



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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(Click on Issue above for previous Wrap-Ups)

THIS WEEK

The bill count in the Senate has reached 338. The number of House bills is 300. Deadlines for the regular submission of legislation for 2012 take effect for the Senate on February 3 and for the House on February 10.

ADMINISTRATION BILLS

Sponsorship of legislation requires one or more legislators. By custom and courtesy, the President and the Speaker introduce Administration bills (i.e. those proposed by the Governor). In addition to the Governor's budget bill package, a number of other Administration proposals will be considered this session. One of these bills that will draw a great deal of attention and testimony is [SB 241](#), The Civil Marriage Protection Act, which is also known as the "same sex marriage" bill. That measure will have a public hearing early next week on the Senate side. Other Administration bills propose adding to Maryland law by:

- establishing Health Enterprise Zones in underserved communities, [SB 234](#) (Maryland Health Improvement and Disparities Reduction Act of 2012);
- preventing Maryland businesses from doing business with Iran, [SB 235](#) (Procurement – Investment Activities in Iran);
- regulating the use of septic systems in the State, [SB 236](#) (Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012);
- generating offshore wind energy, [SB 237](#) (Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act of 2012);
- continuing to implement the Health Benefit Exchange required by federal law, [SB 238](#) (Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Act of 2012);
- creating an initiative to establish a joint venture between Maryland and its leading academic research institutions to accelerate commercialization of technology, [SB 239](#) (Economic Development – Maryland Technology Development Corporation – Maryland Innovation Initiative); and

- increasing the "flush tax," [SB 240](#) (Bay Restoration Fund – Fees).

SENATE BIPARTISAN POLICY AGENDA

On January 26, Maryland Senate Democratic and Republican Caucus leaders announced their bipartisan policy agenda. The bills focus on establishing:

- a child identity lock for Social Security numbers of children to prevent fraudulent use of these numbers;
- accountability for learning in core content area such as social studies and civics;
- family farm protection through an exemption of up to \$5 million from the State estate tax if certain conditions are met;
- an income tax credit for Maryland citizens to offset the cost of a federal security clearance to stimulate jobs; and
- an extension of the Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship to 2020.

COMMITTEE BRIEFINGS

During the first weeks of the 2012 session, members of the principal standing committees of the Senate and House were briefed on various topics that fall within their purview. Briefings addressed areas such as maintenance of effort, taxes, eyewitness identification, public health and long term care, Plan Maryland, state of the Bay, foreclosures, workplace fraud, electric reliability standards, the electronic courts initiative, and an update on the economy from the Federal Reserve. Each committee also received a fiscal briefing on the condition of Maryland's finances from staff of the Department of Legislative Services.

ELECTIONS AND ETHICS

Signatures on Petitions

A committee heard testimony recently on [HB 41](#), which specifies, subject to regulations adopted by the State Board of Elections, that the process of verifying and

counting signatures on petitions be open to observation by representatives of the petition sponsor, opponents of the petition, and other members of the public. The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

A related measure before the same committee, [HB 42](#), requires that an individual whose signature on a petition is not validated and counted during the initial verification process when a petition is filed be provided the opportunity to resubmit the individual's signature. The bill sets out a process and timeline for public notice of signatures not validated and counted and the reason for each signature not being validated and counted, and for resubmission of signatures for reasons that can be corrected by resubmission. The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

FISCAL MATTERS

Capital Budget

The Governor has submitted his \$1.7 billion capital budget to the General Assembly, which includes a net borrowing of \$1.1 billion in general obligation bond funds in the Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2012 ([SB 151/HB 86](#)), and \$0.6 billion in funds in the Budget Bill ([SB 150/HB 85](#)) and academic revenue bond funds. These figures exclude most transportation projects. Among the highlights:

- public school construction is authorized \$372.8 million, including \$351.4 million in [SB 151](#), \$15.9 million for the Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program, and \$6.1 million in the Aging Schools Program in [SB 151](#);
- four-year State universities and colleges are authorized \$204.6 million in general obligation bonds, including \$28.87 million for a new science and technology center school at Coppin State University, \$44.6 million for a new Center for Communications and Information Technology at Frostburg State University, and \$29.6 million for the Physical Sciences Complex at the University of Maryland, College Park; and
- community colleges are authorized \$44.4 million in authorizations for general obligation bonds, including \$6.7 million for Baltimore City Community College.

Under provisions related to the environment and natural resources, Program Open Space receives \$75.6 million, including \$3 million in federal funds, while the Rural Legacy Program receives \$14.9 million. Community Parks and Playgrounds receive \$2.5 million, and the Agricultural Land Preservation Program receives \$22.9

million. Oyster restoration receives \$8.1 million in general obligation bonds. The Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund receives \$27.8 million in general obligation bonds.

Additionally, the Department of the Environment receives \$415.1 million for environmental projects of which \$62.6 million is general obligation bonds and \$307.7 million is special funds in the Budget Bill. The projects include \$198 million for the Maryland Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund, \$123.9 million for the Enhanced Nutrient Removal Program, \$17 million for septic system upgrades, and \$26.8 million for the Biological Nutrient Removal Program.

As well, [SB 151](#) contains \$6 million in general obligation bonds for the Community Legacy Program. The Strategic Demolition and Smart Growth Impact Project Fund receives \$5 million in general obligation bonds, and the Shelter and Transitional Housing Facilities Grant Program receives \$2 million in general obligation bonds.

TRANSPORTATION

Tolls

[HB 40](#), which requires public notice at least 30 days before the Maryland Transit Authority may vote to raise bridge tolls, was heard this week in committee. Two additional bills that address transportation facility tolls have been introduced in the Senate, [SB 3](#) and [SB 62](#), but hearings have not yet been scheduled.

NEXT WEEK

The agendas of the standing committees will be crowded with public hearings on legislation. Among the bills scheduled for hearings in the next two weeks are the proposals of the State's departments and independent agencies. These departmental bills are by custom and courtesy sponsored by the appropriate standing committee chair. There are 49 departmental bills in the pipeline to date.

On February 1 at noon, Governor O'Malley will deliver his State of the State address to the legislature assembled in a joint session in the House chamber.