



The Legislative Wrap-Up

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INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION

The bill count in the Senate has reached 385. The House bill count is at 400. Deadlines for the regular submission of legislation for the 2013 session take effect for the Senate on February 1 (the 24th day) and for the House on February 8 (the 31st day).

ADMINISTRATION BILLS

Sponsorship of legislation requires one or more legislators. By custom and courtesy, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House introduce Administration bills at the request of the Governor. A list of these bills may be accessed on the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) website by choosing the Legislation by Session tab and Administration from the Sponsor drop down menu.

In addition to the Governor's budget bill package ([HB 100](#), [HB 101](#), and [HB 102](#)), the most prominently discussed Administration bills address:

- regulation of firearms (Firearm Safety Act, [SB 281/HB 294](#));
- repeal of the death penalty (Death Penalty Repeal and Appropriation from Savings to Aid Survivors of Homicide Victims, [SB 276/HB 295](#)); and
- generating offshore wind energy (Maryland Offshore Wind Energy Act, [SB 275/HB 226](#)).

Other 2013 Administration proposals deal with:

- Election Law – Improving Access to Voting ([SB 279/HB 224](#));
- Veterans Full Employment Act ([SB 273/HB 225](#));
- Maryland Employment Advancement Right Now (EARN) Program ([SB 278/HB 227](#));
- Maryland Health Progress Act ([SB 274/HB 228](#)); and
- State Aid for Public Education – Certification of Net Taxable Income ([SB 277/HB 229](#)).

DEPARTMENTAL BILLS

Departmental bills are introduced by legislative committee chairs by the request of agencies of the Executive Branch of State government. To date, there are 67 departmental bills to be considered this session. A list of these bills may be accessed on the MGA website by choosing the Legislation by Session tab and Departmental from the Sponsor list drop down menu.

ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS ISSUES

Gas Companies–Infrastructure Replacement Surcharge

Testimony was heard this week on House and Senate companion bills that authorize gas companies to add a surcharge to customers' bills to recover costs for infrastructure replacement projects ([SB 8/HB 89](#)). The measures require gas companies to file a plan and cost recovery schedule with the Public Service Commission (PSC) for approval. The fixed annual surcharge may not exceed \$2 per month for residential customers and may not be less than the fixed annual surcharge for nonresidential customers.

Since 2009, the PSC has declined to authorize at least five requests for surcharge plans (or "trackers") by public services companies. In contrast to Maryland, many other states have adopted surcharge mechanisms similar to those offered in [SB 8/HB 89](#).

FISCAL MATTERS

The Governor has submitted to the General Assembly his \$1.5 billion capital budget, which includes a net borrowing of \$1.1 billion in general obligation (GO) bonds. The budget does not consist of one bill, but of \$1.1 billion in GO bond funds in the Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan of 2013 ([HB 101](#)), with the remaining funds contained in the Budget Bill ([HB 100](#)) and in academic revenue bonds. These figures exclude most transportation projects. Under the Maryland Constitution, a bond bill may not pass until the Budget Bill has passed. The General Assembly may increase the authorization for a project or add a project in a bond bill, as well as delete or reduce projects.

All references to bonds in the following list are to GO bonds authorized by [HB 101](#), unless indicated otherwise. Highlights include:

- public school construction – \$335.7 million, consisting of \$300 million in GO bonds, \$25 million in General Funds in the Budget Bill ([HB 100](#)), \$6.1 million in GO bonds for the Aging Schools Program, and \$4.5 million in Qualified Zone Academy Bonds in [HB 115](#);
- State universities and colleges – \$248.2 million in GO bonds, including \$50.5 million for Morgan State University for a new School of Business Complex, \$22.7 million for a new Engineering and Aviation Science Building at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, \$9.1 million for a new Center for Communications and Information Technology at Frostburg State University, and \$50.4 million for a new Science and Technology Center at Coppin State University. Community colleges receive \$52 million through the Community College Construction Grant Program; and
- Program Open Space – \$32.9 million in GO bonds, \$22.8 million in State special funds in the Budget Bill, and \$4.5 million in federal funds in the Budget Bill, while the Rural Legacy Program is authorized \$14.5 million in GO bonds plus \$5.4 million in special funds in the Budget Bill, and the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program is authorized \$2.5 million in GO bonds. The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program receives \$36.7 million, including \$12.7 million in GO bonds and \$24.1 million in special funds in the Budget Bill.

Additional capital budget proposals for 2013 include:

- the Waterway Improvement Program – \$3.8 million in GO bonds in the Capital bond bill and State and federal funds in the Budget Bill;
- the Oyster Restoration Program – \$10 million in GO bonds;
- the Chesapeake Bay 2010 Trust Fund - \$36.6 million in GO bonds;
- the Department of the Environment – \$293.9 million for environmental projects of which \$48.2 million is GO bonds, \$201 million is general and special funds in the Budget Bill, and \$44.6 million is federal funds in the Budget Bill. Projects include \$130 million for the Maryland Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund, \$88 million for the Enhanced Nutrient Removal Program, \$15 million for the Septic System Upgrade Program, and \$29.2 million for the Biological Nutrient Removal Program;

- the Strategic Demolition and Smart Growth Impact Project Fund – \$7.5 million in GO bonds, while the Community Legacy Program is authorized \$6 million in GO bonds;
- the Partnership Rental Housing Program – \$6 million in GO bonds, while the Shelter and Transitional Housing Facilities Grant Program is authorized \$1.5 million in GO bonds;
- the Community Health Facilities Grant Program, which provides grants for community mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse treatment facilities – \$5.3 million in GO bonds;
- the Prince George’s Hospital System – \$30 million in GO bonds;
- the University of Maryland Medical System – \$15.2 million in GO bonds;
- the statewide Public Safety Communications System – \$22.3 million in GO bonds; and
- the Intercounty Connector - \$21.5 million in GO bonds.

TRANSPORTATION

Heard by a committee this week, [SB 93](#) requires the Maryland Transportation Authority, in collaboration with certain State and federal agencies, to begin an environmental impact study by January 1, 2014, addressing construction of a new bridge spanning the Chesapeake Bay. Similar bills have been introduced during previous sessions but have not passed. Opponents contend that the cost of the impact study, which must meet federal standards, and the required approval by any of the Eastern Shore counties that would be affected by the construction of another span, are among obstacles to the project. The public can access recorded testimony before a legislative committee by going to the MGA website, locating the bill by clicking the Legislation by Session tab, then, on the bill page, clicking the Summary tab and the Committee section in the left-hand column.

NEW DELEGATE

On Friday, January 25, Governor O’Malley named Darren M. Swain to fill the vacant seat in District 24. The new delegate served in the House from 1999 to 2003. Mr. Swain is an assistant vice president for alumni relations at Bowie State University.