

**HOUSE BILL 1207**  
**EMERGENCY BILL**

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C7

1999 Regular Session  
9lr2526

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By: **Delegates Swain, Brown, Giannetti, Griffith, and Hill**

Introduced and read first time: March 8, 1999

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

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A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on Revenue Reform in Prince George's County**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Task Force on Revenue Reform in Prince George's  
4 County; providing for the composition, organization, and staffing of the Task  
5 Force; requiring the Task Force to examine the impact of certain tax provisions  
6 in State law and the Prince George's County Charter; establishing certain other  
7 duties of the Task Force; requiring the Task Force to make a certain report on or  
8 before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; making this Act  
9 an emergency measure; and generally relating to the Task Force on Revenue  
10 Reform in Prince George's County.

11 **Preamble**

12 WHEREAS, In 1978, Prince George's County voters amended the County  
13 Charter by imposing a specific dollar limit on the amount of real property tax that  
14 could be collected in Prince George's County; and

15 WHEREAS, In 1984, Prince George's County voters changed the real property  
16 tax cut from a dollar limit to a tax rate limit of \$2.40 for each \$100.00 of assessed  
17 value; and

18 WHEREAS, This real property tax cap affects only the county portion of the real  
19 property tax bill and not the State, bicounty, or municipal portion; and

20 WHEREAS, For many years after the 1984 amendment, real property tax  
21 revenues continued to increase because real property tax assessments continued to  
22 increase; and

23 WHEREAS, In 1994, when real property tax assessments flattened out, or in  
24 many cases declined, a \$108 million structural deficit opened up, causing layoffs of  
25 county employees, renegotiating of labor contracts, and across the board agency cuts  
26 in vital services;

27 WHEREAS, Real property tax assessments have remained flat over the past 4  
28 years, requiring a virtual freezing or diminution of every county government function

1 except for public education and public safety and preventing full funding of the Board  
2 of Education's requested budget; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1996, Prince George's County voters amended the County  
4 Charter once again by prohibiting certain tax or fee increases without prior approval  
5 by referendum; and

6 WHEREAS, This unique situation in Prince George's County restricts the  
7 ability of the county government to provide basic services; and

8 WHEREAS, The county population has increased and changed since the County  
9 Charter was first amended over 20 years ago; and

10 WHEREAS, Court decisions emanating from Talbot and Montgomery Counties  
11 have brought into question the constitutionality of these County Charter  
12 amendments; now, therefore,

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
14 MARYLAND, That:

15 (1) There is a Task Force on Revenue Reform in Prince George's County.

16 (2) The Task Force shall be comprised of the following 19 members:

17 (i) Two members appointed by the County Executive of Prince George's  
18 County;

19 (ii) Two members appointed by the Chairman of the Prince George's  
20 County House Delegation;

21 (iii) Two members appointed by the Chairman of the Prince George's  
22 County Senators;

23 (iv) The Chair and Vice Chair of the County Council of Prince George's  
24 County, or their designees;

25 (v) The Chair and Vice Chair of the Prince George's County Board of  
26 Education, or their designees;

27 (vi) The President of the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce  
28 or the President's designee;

29 (vii) The President of the Prince George's County Council of  
30 Parent-Teacher Associations, or the President's designee;

31 (viii) The President of the Prince George's County Board of Realtors, or the  
32 President's designee;

33 (ix) One member appointed by the presidents of the Prince George's  
34 County Public Safety Collective Bargaining Units;

1 (x) One member appointed by the presidents of the Prince George's  
2 County Public Education Collective Bargaining Units;

3 (xi) One member appointed by the presidents of the American Federation  
4 of State, County, and Municipal Employees Locals in Prince George's County;

5 (xii) The President of the Prince George's County Branch of the National  
6 Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), or the President's  
7 designee;

8 (xiii) The President of the Interfaith Action Communities of Prince  
9 George's County, or the President's designee; and

10 (xiv) The President of the Central Prince George's Coalition of  
11 Community Organizations, or the President's designee.

12 (3) The County Executive of Prince George's County shall designate the  
13 Chairman of the Task Force.

14 (4) The Department of Legislative Services and the Office of the Attorney  
15 General shall provide staff for the Task Force.

16 (5) A member of the Task Force may not receive compensation.

17 (6) The Task Force shall:

18 (i) Evaluate the impact of County Charter tax limitations on adequate  
19 public facilities, public education, public safety, transportation, housing, economic  
20 development, bond ratings, public employee pay and benefits, public health, and the  
21 ability to obtain matching funds in Prince George's County;

22 (ii) Compare its findings from item (i) of this subsection with comparable  
23 counties with and without similar tax limitations;

24 (iii) Evaluate the constitutionality and legality of County Charter tax  
25 limitations in Prince George's County;

26 (iv) Evaluate the feasibility and merits of dedicating certain tax revenues  
27 to public education, public safety, or both in Prince George's County;

28 (v) Recommend amendments to State law, county law, or the County  
29 Charter; and

30 (vi) Convene public hearings in all regions of the county to solicit public  
31 input.

32 (7) On or before April 1, 2000, the Task Force shall report its findings and  
33 recommendations to:

34 (i) The County Executive of Prince George's County;

- 1           (ii)     The Prince George's County House Delegation;
- 2           (iii)    The Prince George's County Senators;
- 3           (iv)     The County Council of Prince George's County; and
- 4           (v)     The Board of Education for Prince George's County.
- 5    (8)     This Act shall terminate and be of no effect after July 1, 2000.

6       SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency  
7 measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health and safety,  
8 has been passed by a yea and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members  
9 elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from  
10 the date it is enacted.