

The General Assembly has power to pass such laws as are necessary for the welfare of the State, and, in addition, it has the power to pass public local laws for counties not having home rule powers and for special taxing areas. The Home Rule Amendment of 1954 (XI-E) virtually prohibits the General Assembly from passing local legislation for incorporated cities and towns, although the Assembly retains its power to pass a general statewide law that affects them. The General Assembly may establish such departments of State government as are necessary for its efficient operation and may establish special taxing districts or areas within the State for the purpose of administering a special function or functions. The General Assembly may establish such taxes as are in accordance with the Constitution of the State and of the United States. It may propose amendments to the State Constitution, which must be embodied in a regular legislative bill passed by three-fifths of the total membership of each House. All amendments to the Constitution must be submitted to the voters at the next general election after passage.

All bills passed by the General Assembly become law when signed by the Governor, or passed over his veto by three-fifths of the membership of each House, on the first day of June after the session in which the law was passed, except (1) when a later date is specified in the Act, or (2) when the bill is declared an emergency measure and is passed by three-fifths of the total number of members of each House, in which case the bill becomes law immediately upon its approval by the Governor.

The General Assembly may add a referendum provision to any local bill but may not submit a statewide bill to referendum (with the exception of a proposed amendment to the Constitution or a Soldiers' Bonus Bill). Most statewide bills, except appropriation bills, and any local bill that concerns a county or Baltimore City, may be submitted to a referendum by petition. No bill subject to a referendum shall be enforceable until approved by a majority of the voters at the election in which the referred bill is voted upon, except an emergency bill, which shall be effective immediately and shall remain effective thirty days following its rejection by the voters (XVI).

The House of Delegates has sole power of impeachment of any officer of the State. A majority of the whole number of members of the House must approve any bill of impeachment. The Senate tries all impeachment cases, and two-thirds of the total number of Senators must concur in a verdict of guilty (III, 26).

Both Houses elect the State Treasurer by joint ballot. The General Assembly also elects the Governor and/or the Lieutenant Governor if the popular election has resulted in a tie or the winning candidate and/or candidates are ineligible. When a vacancy occurs in the office of Governor, the Lieutenant Governor succeeds to that office for the remainder of the term. If a vacancy occurs in the office of Lieutenant Governor, the Governor nominates a person to succeed to that office upon confirmation by a majority vote of all members of the General Assembly in joint session. If vacancies occur in both the offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor at the same time, the General Assembly must convene and fill the office of Governor by a majority vote of all the members in joint session. The chosen Governor then nominates a Lieutenant Governor with the same confirmation.

The President of the Senate serves as acting Governor if the Lieutenant Governor is not able to serve as acting Governor. If there is a vacancy in the office of President of the Senate when he is authorized to serve as acting Governor, the Senate must convene and fill the vacancy (II, 1A, 1B, 6, 7A).

A HISTORY OF THE 1977 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly met in regular session on January 12, 1977, and adjourned on April 11, 1977.

A total of 3,328 bills was introduced of which 1,201 were Senate bills and 2,127 were House bills. Of the 1,201 Senate bills, 423 were passed by both Houses; of this latter number, 382 were signed by the Governor and 41 were vetoed. Of the 2,127 House bills introduced, 649 were passed by both Houses, and of this latter number 595 were signed by the Governor and 54 were vetoed.

Joint Resolutions introduced totaled 201 with 77 in the Senate and 124 in the House. Of these, 24 Senate and 43 House Joint Resolutions were passed by both Houses. Twenty-one Senate and 36 House Joint Resolutions were signed by the Governor.

Five bills vetoed by the Governor following the 1976 Session were passed by both Houses over his veto in this Session.

The budget bill enacted at this Session for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1978, amounted to \$3,978,990,834. The General Construction Loan bill passed was for a total of \$87,430,100.