

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GUIDE TO LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS



LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
OFFICE OF POLICY ANALYSIS

The *Guide to Legislative Documents* describes the basic documents used in the legislative process by the General Assembly of Maryland. Library and Information Services maintains the history of legislative documents from 1637 and copies of documents dating back to 1638. Currently, the Library staffs an Information Desk in the State House and provides information by toll-free telephones from anywhere in Maryland. To reach the Information Desk by toll free telephone call (800)-492-7122. Questions may also be emailed to libr@mlis.state.md.us. The General Assembly's website is a major source of information about legislation from both the current session and recent legislative sessions.

BILLS

A bill is a proposed law and may be introduced only by a member. If a bill passes the Senate and the House of Delegates in the same form, the bill becomes law unless vetoed by the Governor. In practice, the Governor usually signs or vetoes each bill passed by the General Assembly.

A Senate bill (SB) or House bill (HB) is identified by its chamber of origin and is assigned a number. A bill keeps its original identity and number if it passes to the opposite chamber. Bills are not "carried over" from one session to the next, so, for example, 2009 and 2010 bills from the same chamber of origin with the same number would be different bills.

Copies of Senate bills are printed on cream paper and copies of House bills are on blue paper.

For bill information, contact the Legislative Information Desk. Bills are available at the Bill Room (1 West Miller Senate Office Building), by telephone request from the Information Desks, by subscription from Distribution Services, and on the General Assembly's website.

RESOLUTIONS

A simple resolution is used when one chamber wishes to take action independently of the other. A resolution

primarily recognizes individuals or organizations and usually passes the day of introduction. Although assigned a number, only in rare cases is a House resolution (HR) or Senate resolution (SR) printed like a bill.

A joint resolution (SJ or HJ) is designed to affect public policy by expressing an opinion or recommendation of the General Assembly and must pass both chambers. Certain joint resolutions have the effect of law, such as those that establish the salaries of legislators and the Governor. A joint resolution is assigned a number and printed like a bill. Joint resolutions are available from the same sources as bills.

AMENDMENTS

An amendment is a change made to a bill after the bill has been introduced and referred to a committee. A bill may be amended in committee and on the floor of both chambers. The chamber of origin must approve amendments adopted by the opposite chamber. Amendments may also be made to joint resolutions and to other amendments.

Amendments are available at the Information Desk in the State House and on the General Assembly's website.

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTES

A fiscal and policy note, prepared for each bill and joint resolution, provides a summary and analysis of the bill and describes the impact that the bill is expected to have on the State's revenues and expenditures. A note is revised if an amendment alters the projections. Fiscal and policy notes are available on the General Assembly's website.

RACIAL AND EQUITY IMPACT NOTES

Racial and Equity Impact Notes assess the potential disparities among racial and ethnic groups that may be exacerbated or created by selected legislation. These notes may be found on the General Assembly's website as part of a bill's legislative history

SYNOPSES

A synopsis, usually issued daily, lists summaries of all bills and joint resolutions as they are introduced during the session. The synopsis lists the sponsor and committee assignment for each bill. Senate synopses are printed on cream paper and House synopses on blue paper.

Synopses are available by subscription through Distribution Services, and on the General Assembly's website.

HEARING SCHEDULES

A hearing schedule, listing General Assembly committee activity, is posted on the General Assembly website during the legislative session and the interim period. Meetings of other State agencies are included on request.

Hearings are streamed on the General Assembly website and may also be viewed upon the meeting's completion. Individual bills are marked on the website for easy access to a particular bill hearing.

COMMITTEE VOTES AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

A committee vote indicates how individual members of a Senate or House committee voted on a bill or joint resolution in committee. A committee's vote as a whole may be favorable, favorable with amendments, or unfavorable. A committee report is a periodic record of a committee's vote on a number of bills.

If the committee vote is favorable or favorable with amendments, the bill or

joint resolution is sent to the full chamber for consideration. A bill may also be withdrawn by its sponsor or referred for interim study.

Committee votes are available on the General Assembly's website.

FLOOR VOTES

A floor vote or roll call vote is a record of each member's position on a bill or motion proposed on the floor. Floor votes are recorded on an electronic voting machine, and then printed.

A floor vote is always taken on third reading, which determines if the House or Senate will pass a bill from that chamber. At the request of a member, the roll will be called on any vote and recorded.

Floor votes are available at the Information Desk and on the General Assembly's website.

PROCEEDINGS

The proceedings are a daily record of legislative action on the House and Senate floors.

Proceedings are available on the

General Assembly's website.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDAS

Each day, a legislative agenda is issued for the Senate and the House listing matters to be considered on the floor that legislative day.

Legislative agendas are available outside the offices of the Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House, on the first floor of the State House. Agendas may also be obtained at the Information Desk, and on the General Assembly's website.

DATES OF INTEREST CALENDARS

The Dates of Interest Calendar, available at the Information Desk and on the General Assembly's website, lists important dates and deadlines. A calendar is published for each session and interim.

Library and Information Services

Toll-Free Telephones

From Baltimore/Washington Area: 410-946 + extension

From Other Areas in Maryland: 1-800-492-7122 + extension

TTY: 410-946-5401

TTY users may also use the Maryland Relay Service to contact the General Assembly.

General Assembly Website

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>

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Information Desk

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