

= Maryland Senate =

The Maryland Senate , sometimes referred to as the Maryland State Senate , is the upper house of the General Assembly , the state legislature of the U.S. state of Maryland . Composed of 47 senators elected from an equal number of constituent single @-@ member districts , the Senate is responsible , along with the Maryland House of Delegates , for passage of laws in Maryland , and for confirming executive appointments made by the Governor of Maryland .

It evolved from the upper house of the colonial assembly created in 1650 when Maryland was a proprietary colony controlled by Cecilius Calvert . It consisted of the Governor and members of the Governor 's appointed council . With slight variation , the body to meet in that form until 1776 , when Maryland , now a state independent of British rule , passed a new constitution that created an electoral college to appoint members of the Senate . This electoral college was abolished in 1838 and members began to be directly elected from each county and Baltimore City . In 1972 , because of a Supreme Court decision , the number of districts was increased to 47 , and the districts were balanced by population rather than being geographically determined .

To serve in the Maryland Senate , a person must be a citizen of Maryland 25 years of age or older . Elections for the 47 Senate seats are held every four years coincident with the federal election in which the President of the United States is not elected . Vacancies are filled through appointment by the Governor . The Senate meets for three months every year ; the rest of the year the work of the Senate is light and most members hold another job during this time . It has been controlled by Democrats for a number of years . In the 2006 election , more than two @-@ thirds of the Senate seats were won by Democrats .

Senators elect a President to serve as presiding officer of the legislative body , as well as a President Pro Tempore . The President appoints chairs and membership of six standing committees , four legislative committees as well as the Executive Nominations and Rules Committees . When compared to other state legislatures in the United States , the Maryland Senate has one of the strongest presiding officers and some of the strongest committee chairs . Senators are also organized into caucuses , including party- and demographically @-@ based caucuses . They are assisted in their work by paid staff of the non @-@ partisan Department of Legislative Services and by partisan office staff .

= = History = =

The origins of the Maryland Senate lie in the creation of an assembly during the early days of the Maryland colony . This assembly first met in 1637 , making it the longest continuously operating legislative body in the United States . Originally , the assembly was unicameral , but in 1650 , the Governor and his appointed council began serving as the upper house of a now bicameral legislature . These appointees had close political and economic ties to the proprietors of the Maryland colony , Cecilius Calvert and his descendants . Thus , the upper house in colonial times often disagreed with the lower house , which was elected , tended to be more populist , and pushed for greater legislative power in the colony .

The upper house was briefly abolished during the English Civil War , as Puritan governors attempted to consolidate control and prevent the return of any proprietary influence . It was again abolished by Governor Josias Fendall in 1660 , who sought to create a colonial government based on an elected unicameral legislature like that of the Virginia colony . The position of Governor was removed from the legislature in 1675 , but for the following century , its function and powers largely remained the same .

In 1776 , following the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War , Maryland threw off proprietary control and established a new constitution . Under this new constitution , the upper house of the General Assembly first became known as the Maryland Senate . The new body consisted of fifteen Senators appointed to five @-@ year terms by an electoral college . The college , made up of two electors from each county and one each from the cities of Baltimore and Annapolis , was limited in its selections only by the stipulation that nine

Senators need be from the western shore and six from the eastern shore .

The first election under the 1776 constitution took place in 1781 , and the system would not change again until 1838 . In the interim , a number of problems had cropped up in the appointment process , and the 1838 election saw the passage of a number of constitutional amendments that fundamentally changed how Senators were chosen . The electoral college was abolished , terms were lengthened to six years with rotating elections such that a third of the senate would be elected every two years , and a single Senator was chosen by direct election from each county and the City of Baltimore . The Senate no longer acted as the Governor 's Council , although they would continue to confirm the Governor 's appointments . Constitutional changes altered this new system slightly in 1851 , when terms were shortened to four years , and 1864 , when Baltimore City was given three Senate districts rather than one , but substantial change to the structure of the Senate did not come again until 1964 .

In 1964 , the Supreme Court ruled in *Reynolds v. Sims* that state legislative seats must be apportioned on the principle of one man , one vote . A number of state legislatures , including Maryland , had systems based on geography rather than population , and the court rules that this violated the 14th Amendment . Disproportionate population growth across Maryland since 1838 meant that the principle of one seat per county gave the voters of some counties , such as those on the eastern shore , disproportionate representation . Other counties , especially those in suburban areas , were underrepresented .

A special session of the legislature in 1965 changed the Senate to represent 16 districts and reapportioned the seats , again by county , but did so in such a way as to make the representation more proportional to population than it had been . Thus , the eastern shore , which had previously elected nine Senators , elected only four after 1965 . This was done to preserve the ideal of having whole counties represented by a single Senator , rather than breaking counties up into multiple districts . A constitutional amendment in 1972 expanded the Senate to 47 members , elected from districts proportional to the population . These districts are reapportioned every ten years based on the United States Census to ensure they remain proportional .

= = Powers and legislative process = =

The Maryland Senate , as the upper house of the bicameral Maryland General Assembly , shares with the Maryland House of Delegates the responsibility for making laws in the state of Maryland . Bills are often developed in the period between sessions of the General Assembly by the Senate 's standing committees or by individual Senators . They are then submitted by Senators to the Maryland Department of Legislative Services for drafting of legislative language . Between 2000 and 2005 , an average of 907 bills were introduced in the Senate annually during the three @-@ month legislative session . The bill is submitted , and receives the first of three constitutionally mandated readings on the floor of the Senate , before being assigned to a committee . The decision about whether legislation passes is often made in the committees . Committees can hold legislation and prevent it from reaching the Senate floor . The recommendations of committees on bills carry tremendous weight ; it is rare for the Senate as a whole to approve legislation that has received a negative committee report . Once a committee has weighed in on a piece of legislation , the bill returns to the floor for second hearing , called the " consideration of committee " report , and a third hearing , which happens just before the floor vote on it .

Once passed by the Senate , a bill is sent to the House of Delegates for consideration . If the House also approves the bill without amendment , it is sent to the Governor . If there is amendment , however , the Senate may either reconsider the bill with amendments or ask for the establishment of a conference committee to work out differences in the versions of the bill passed by each chamber . Once a piece of legislation approved by both houses is forwarded to the Governor , it may either be signed or vetoed . If it is signed , it takes effect on the effective date of the legislation , usually October 1 of that year . If it is vetoed , both the Senate and the House of Delegates must vote by a three @-@ fifths majority to overturn the veto . They may not , however , overturn a veto in the first year of a new term , since the bill would have been passed during the previous session . Additionally

, joint resolutions and the budget bill may not be vetoed , although the General Assembly is constitutionally limited in the extent to which it may influence the latter ; it may only decrease the Governor 's budget proposal , not increase it .

Unlike the House of Delegates , the Senate has the sole responsibility in the state 's legislative branch for confirming gubernatorial appointees to positions that require confirmation . After the Governor forwards his nomination to the Senate , the Executive Nominations Committee reviews the nominee and makes a recommendation for confirmation or rejection to the Senate as a whole . Only one gubernatorial nominee in recent history has been rejected ; Lynn Buhl , nominated as Maryland Secretary of the Environment by Governor Robert Ehrlich , was rejected over concerns about her qualifications . The Senate also has sole responsibility for trying any persons that have been impeached by the House of Delegates . They must be sworn in before such a trial takes place , and a two @-@ thirds majority is required for conviction of the impeached person .

= = Composition = =

= = Organization = =

Maryland 's Senate consists of Senators elected from 47 Senate districts . While each Senator has the power to introduce and vote on bills and make motions on the floor , various committees , caucuses , and leadership positions help to organize the work of the Senate . Senators elect a President of the Senate , who serves as the presiding officer of the chamber . They also elect a President Pro Tempore , who presides over the chamber when the President is absent . The President of the Maryland Senate has significant influence over legislation that passes through the body through both formal means , such as his ability to appoint committee chairs and leaders of the majority party , and informal means that are less easily defined . These powers place the President of the Maryland Senate among the strongest state legislature presiding officers in the country .

Once legislation is introduced , it is passed to one of the standing committees of the Senate . There are six such committees . As a whole , the Maryland General Assembly has fewer standing committees than any other state legislature in the United States . Each committee has between 10 and 15 members . Four of the standing committees deal primarily with legislation ; the Budget and Taxation Committee , the Education , Health , and Environmental Affairs Committee , the Finance Committee , and the Judicial Proceedings Committee . The Chairs of these legislative committees have the power to determine whether their committees will hear a bill , and they therefore have significant influence over legislation . The Executive Nominations Committee manages the Senate 's responsibility to confirm gubernatorial appointments and makes recommendations of approval and disapproval to the body as a whole . Lastly , the Rules Committee sets the rules and procedures of the body . It also has the power to review legislation that has been introduced by a member of the Senate after the deadline for submission , and decide whether to refer it to a standing committee or let it die . Along with serving on the Senate committees , members of the Senate also serve on a number of joint committees with members of the House of Delegates .

While the committees are established by formal Senate rules , there are a number of caucuses that exercise significant influence over the legislative process . The most powerful of these are the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Caucus , each of which has a leader and a whip , referred to as a majority and minority leader and whip . As Democrats currently control a majority of seats in the Senate , their leader is referred to as the Majority Leader , and their caucus is able to influence legislation to a greater extent than the Republican caucus . The Majority Leader and Minority leader are responsible for managing their party 's participation in debate on the floor . Party caucuses also raise and distribute campaign money to assist their candidates . The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland and Women Legislators of Maryland , caucuses of African @-@ American and female Senators respectively , also play prominent roles in the Senate .

Professional services for members of the Senate and the House of Delegates are provided by the Department of Legislative Services , which is non @-@ partisan . Individual members are also

assisted by partisan staff members , and those in leadership positions have additional partisan staff . These staff members help to manage the offices of the Senators in the Miller Senate Office Building . Each Senator has one year @-@ round administrative assistant , as well as a secretary who assists them during the legislative session . There is also an allowance given to help pay for district offices .

= = Membership = =

= = = Qualifications = = =

To be eligible to run for the Maryland Senate , a person must be a citizen and be at least 25 years old . They must also have lived in the state for at least one year , and must have lived in the district in which they are to run for at least six months , assuming the district has existed with its current boundaries for at least that long . No elected or appointed official of the United States government , including the military , may serve in the Senate , excluding those serving in the military reserves and National Guard . Similarly , no employees of the state government may serve , except for law enforcement officers , firefighters , and rescue workers .

= = = Elections and vacancies = = =

Members of the Maryland Senate are elected every four years , in off @-@ year elections in the middle of terms for Presidents of the United States . Party nominations are determined by primary elections . The general election for Senate seats and all other state and federal elections in the normal cycle is held on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November . Should a Senate seat become vacant in the middle of a term , because of death , illness , incapacitation , disqualification , resignation , or expulsion of a member of the Senate , that seat is filled by appointment . The Central Committee of the previous Senator 's party in the county or counties in which the Senate district lies makes a recommendation to the Governor on whom to appoint to the seat . Within fifteen days of the Central Committee 's recommendation being selected , the Governor must appoint that person to the vacant seat .

The 47 districts from which Senators are elected are apportioned every ten years on the basis of population . Maryland 's constitution explicitly defines the process for the drawing of these districts , requiring that the Governor make a recommendation of a new electoral map and submit it for legislative approval . As of 2005 , there were approximately 112 @,@ 000 people in each district . Each Senate district also elects three Delegates , and incumbent Senators and Delegates will often run jointly as members of incumbent slates in their districts . It is rare , however , for an incumbent to be challenged .

= = = Salaries and benefits = = =

As of the 2006 ? 2010 term , most of Maryland 's Senators and Delegates receive \$ 43 @,@ 500 in annual pay while presiding officers earn \$ 56 @,@ 500 . This pay , relatively low for a state legislator , reflects the part @-@ time nature of the body , which only meets three months out of the year . Most members of the Senate hold additional jobs during the remainder of the year . Senators can also seek reimbursement for expenses related to meals and lodging during the legislative session , and for certain travel expenses related to their duties at any point during the year . They also have access to benefits received by state employees , including health and life insurance as well as retirement savings plans . Maryland has a voluntary legislator pension plan to which both Senators and Delegates have access . Besides receiving their own benefits , Senators can award up to \$ 138 @,@ 000 each year in scholarships to students of their choosing if those students meet requirements set by Senate rules .

== Current makeup ==

As of November 2015 , a majority of seats in the Maryland Senate are held by members of the Democratic Party , with 33 Democrats and 14 Republicans , greater than a two @-@ thirds majority . This dominance is nothing new , as Democrats have had strong majorities in the chamber for decades . Democrats tend to control seats in the large population centers such as Baltimore City , Montgomery County , and Prince George 's County , while Republicans control most seats on the Eastern Shore and in western Maryland . The chamber has also had significant numbers of women and African @-@ Americans serve , with women averaging around 30 % of the seats and African @-@ Americans around 20 % .

== Leadership ==

As of 2009 , Thomas V. Mike Miller , Jr. was serving his fifth term as President of the Senate . Nathaniel J. McFadden , from the 45th district in Baltimore , is the President Pro Tempore . The Democratic caucus is led by Catherine E. Pugh , the majority leader , and Lisa A. Gladden , the majority whip . J. B. Jennings serves as minority leader .

== Rules and procedures ==

Many rules and procedures in the Maryland Senate are set by the state constitution . Beyond the constitutional mandates , rules in the Senate are developed by the Rules Committee . The Senate and House of Delegates both meet for ninety days following the second Wednesday in January , although these sessions may be extended for up to thirty days by majority votes in both houses , and special sessions may be called by the Governor . The Senate meets in the Senate Chamber of the Maryland State House , which has both gallery seating and a door open to the State House lobby , the latter being mandated by the state constitution . Seating in the Senate is by party , with the leaders of each party choosing the exact seating assignments . Each Senator has offices in Annapolis , in the Miller Senate Office Building .

A typical session of the Senate begins with a call to order by the President of the Senate . After the call to order , the previous day 's journal is approved , petitions are heard , and orders involving committee and leadership appointments or changes to the rules are presented . First , readings of legislation take place . Senators are then given leeway to introduce any visitors , often people observing its deliberations from the gallery above the Senate chamber . Then the Senators consider legislation . They begin with unfinished business from the previous session , then consider legislation and special orders with accompanying reports from committees . At the discretion of the presiding officer , the Senate may adjourn at any time , unless a majority of members present object to adjournment .

Lobbying is common in Annapolis ; there are more than 700 lobbyists registered with the state . While lobbyists may spend freely on advocacy , they are limited in gifts to legislators and in their ability to contribute to campaigns . Ethics issues related to lobbyists and other matters are handled by the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics , a twelve @-@ member committee that includes six Senators . Members of the Senate may turn to either this committee or an ethics counsel to help them resolve questions of potential ethical conflict . Members are encouraged to avoid conflicts of interest , and are required to submit public financial disclosures to the state . In addition to employment prohibitions laid out in the state constitution , members are barred from advocating for any paying client before any part of the state government .