

How a Bill Becomes Law in Maryland

The Maryland General Assembly includes two branches—the house of delegates and the senate. Any member of the general assembly can introduce a bill that could eventually become a Maryland law. Listed below is information about how a bill becomes a law and some key terms for understanding this process.



Key terms and phrases

- **Bill:** A proposed law under consideration by the legislature.
- **Companion bill:** Similar or identical bills introduced in both the house and senate.
- **Constituent:** An individual who lives in an elected official's district.
- **Delegate:** An elected official who serves in the house of delegates.
- **General assembly:** The Maryland General Assembly is the state's legislative body. It consists of two branches: the senate, which has 47 members, and the house, which has 141 delegates.
- **Interim office:** The office where a legislator works during the majority of the year, when the legislature is not in session.
- **Legislative session:** The time period when the general assembly meets in Annapolis to act on bills and to pass the annual state budget. The session happens once a year and lasts for 90 days, beginning in January and ending in April.
- **Legislator:** A general term for a senator or a delegate.
- **Senator:** An elected official who serves in the state senate.
- **Session office:** The office where a legislator works during the legislative session.
- **Term:** The length of time that an elected official serves.

What is a bill?

- A proposed law under consideration by the legislative body
- Legislation introduced in the general assembly during the legislative session
- Bills from the current session are posted online at www.mlis.state.md.us/#bill

How is a bill introduced?

- Bills can be introduced at any period throughout the 90-day legislative term.
- Bills introduced by a senator are heard in the senate first, then in the house.
- Bills introduced by delegates are heard in the house first, then by the senate.
- Companion bills are introduced and heard at the same time in both the house and senate.

What does the name and number of a bill mean?

- Bills proposed in the legislature receive a bill number when they are introduced, before they progress through the legislative process.

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LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

- Bills that begin with "HB" originate in the house of delegates.
- Bills that begin with "SB" originate in the senate.

After a bill is introduced in the house or senate, it is assigned to a committee.

- The committee will hold hearings for constituents and interested parties to testify in favor of or against a bill.
- A hearing schedule for different committees can be found at www.mlis.state.md.us.

After the bill is introduced and hearings are held, the bill continues through the legislative process.

- This process could include changes to the bill called amendments.
- The bill is voted on by both bodies of the legislature and then goes to the governor who will sign it into law.

Here is a quick overview of the Maryland government. It begins with you—the voter—and who you elect.

OVERVIEW OF MARYLAND STATE GOVERNMENT

