



LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS OF MARYLAND

ADVOCATE'S MANUAL

20

26

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INTRODUCTION

The League of Women Voters of Maryland is so happy you have joined us to become an advocate. While it may seem overwhelming, there is so much you can do as an advocate. **This manual is here to guide you** as you work through the different tasks you take on as an advocate.

Please join us for virtual office hours every Monday from 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM. We meet via Zoom; <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84545870177?pwd=ObdEDPU81QRlwbQ6SZUmV8bbz8fCz3.1>

If you ever need help, please reach out to action@lwvmd.org. We're here to answer all questions about priorities or how to file testimony!

Thank you for joining the LWVMD advocacy team!



***Empowering
Voters. Defending
Democracy.***

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



OUR 2026 PRIORITIES

-  **MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK**
-  **SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE**
-  **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

Special Elections

Requiring special elections to fill General Assembly vacancies, ensuring that legislators are elected by voters — not party insiders.

Maryland Voting Rights Act

Protecting voters from racial vote dilution by strengthening tools for communities to challenge unfair maps and voter suppression.

Voting Rights for All Act

Restoring voting rights for incarcerated Marylanders serving felony sentences.

SOCIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

End-of-Life Option Act

Allowing terminally ill Marylanders to choose medical aid in dying through a carefully regulated process.

Prescription Drug Affordability

Lowering drug costs by strengthening the authority of the Prescription Drug Affordability Board.

School Discipline Data Transparency

Improving transparency in school discipline data to identify disparities and promote fair practices.

Protecting the Blueprint

Protecting critical education funding for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Transportation & Climate Alignment Act

Expanding clean, safe, and affordable transportation options to reduce climate pollution, lower household costs, and improve access to jobs, education, and healthcare across Maryland.

Additional Policy Areas the League Will Advocate On

Beyond the priority legislation above, LWVMD will actively advocate on the following policy areas:

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Affordable Housing, Food Security, Policies Supporting Children and Families

Administration of Justice

Immigration Rights, Investigatory power for Police Accountability Boards

CHOOSING LEGISLATION TO FOLLOW

PRIORITIZING BILLS

Choose 1 to 5 bills that your team has the capacity to really work on. The bills should meet these requirements:

1

BASED ON LEAGUE POSITION

There must be a National or State League position to support or oppose the bill.

2

MAKES AN IMPACT

The bill will have a real impact: don't waste time on small technical tweaks, bills that are requested by a dept., or sponsored by a Committee Chair; they will likely pass without advocacy.

3

COALITION INVOLVEMENT

There is a coalition that you can work with that will enhance the chance of passage or defeat. This is not always necessary, but can be extremely helpful.

4

IMPACT ON EQUITY

It has taken into account the impact it will have on equity if implemented.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. Did the legislator or a coalition reach out to us directly?
2. Was the bill introduced last session?
3. Will the League stand out if we testify in person or offer written testimony?

LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKER

BILLTRACK50

LWVMD uses the platform Billtrack50.

You can access it here:

<https://www.billtrack50.com/account>

BILL TRACK

★ 50 ★



HOW IT WORKS:

1. Join via Invitation

- Team Leads (and any members who would like one) receive an invitation to join the team. There will be a sheet for their team already created.
 - Please email Nikki at ntyree@lwvmd.org

2. Bills Added to Tracker

- Bills will be added to the team's sheet by LWVMD Staff.
- Team Leads are able to add bills to the sheet if they want to work on it
- This year, LWVMD Staff will operate under heightened discernment of what bills get added

3. Bill Status Updates

- Team Leads, or members will place notes on the sheet to let LWVMD know the status.
- If there are bills you are NOT tracking, LWVMD will remove them from the sheet.

HOW TO READ A BILL

ANALYZING THE BILL

Title: this helps a bit.

FOR the purpose of: sometimes this is not very helpful. If the bill is very simple, it helps.

BY: repealing, etc. - cites the part of the law the bill will change. This helps you to go into the Annotated Code to see where the legislation fits in.

**Caution: often reading the bill does not help you understand where the change fits into the law. You may need to get an explanation to fully understand the impact of the bill. This, however, is not always a problem - sometimes the bill is clear. One way to get help is to call the sponsor's office and ask if someone can explain the purpose of the bill.*

Last Line: tells you when the new legislation will go into effect.

Bill Text Formatting Guide: (found on bottom of first page of the bill)

- CAPS adding to existing law
- [] deleted from existing law
- underlined amendments
- Strike out stricken by amendment
- *Italics* opposite chamber or conference committee amendments

Fiscal Note: Reading the fiscal note can give you a clear picture of what the bill will take to implement it and who it can impact.

HOW TO FOLLOW A BILL

THE PROCESS

1. Bill is read on the floor of the relevant chamber (House or Senate) (first reading).
2. Bill is assigned to a committee. The speaker/pres. decides. Late-filed bills go to Rules.
3. Committee chair places the bill on the hearing schedule.
4. Bill is heard in committee.
5. Committee considers and sometimes amends the bill, usually with the consent of the sponsor. Sometimes, bills are combined with similar bills. Often, the sponsor will “work” the bill behind the scenes, or the bill’s constituency or enemies will work it.
6. Committee votes. Bill dies or goes to the chamber floor. (The committee chair also can “hold” the bill and let it die in committee with no vote.)
7. The full chamber considers the bill. Committee members generally must support the bill. On second reading they can abstain, and they can oppose on third reading. Often, the bill is amended on the floor – no consent of the sponsor is needed here. (Watch carefully all amendment steps. Sometimes the amended bill is totally different from the intent of the original bill.) Bills often are stuck at this point, particularly late in session.
8. Bill is voted on by entire chamber. Bill either is killed or goes to the opposite chamber.
9. Opposite chamber - note committee assignment. (Occasionally you will see that a bill has been reassigned to a different committee than originally noted — even on first reading in the chamber of origin.)
10. Bill is heard again in a committee it is assigned to. This hearing is generally more perfunctory than the original hearing. Often only sponsors are allowed to testify and our testimony must be written.
11. Committee votes (or chair can kill the bill by holding it until session is over). This committee also may amend the bill.
12. Full (opposite) chamber considers the bill. Process is the same as above. However, if the bill has been amended in committee or on the opposite chamber floor, the bill either returns to the original chamber or goes to a specially appointed conference committee to work out the differences. This can kill the bill.
13. If the second chamber votes for the bill without any amendments, the bill is passed.
14. Bill goes to the Governor for signature. The Governor can sign a bill immediately and usually does if it is an “Emergency Bill”. He can sign it at one of the three signing sessions after the Legislative Session, he can let it become law without his signature, or the Governor can veto the bill.

HOW TO FOLLOW A BILL (CONT.)

A NOTE ON IDENTICAL BILLS

Identical bills filed in both chambers may be somewhat more difficult to follow. This depends on the number of changes made in each chamber and how “different” they become. Often, one bill is held while the other goes through the process. Sometimes, two identical bills are passed. The Governor decides which one he will sign. Both bills cannot be signed.

Generally, once a committee has killed a bill, the committee will refuse to hear an unchanged identical bill that has come over from the opposite chamber. (There are rare exceptions to this policy.) They can also hold a bill with the intention of passing the bill from the opposite chamber.

UNDERSTANDING A BILL

NAVIGATING LEGISLATIVE RESOURCES

Fiscal Note: the "cheat sheets" of the Legislature. Usually, the Fiscal Note will explain the bill in plain English. It will tell you what the bill will cost the state or counties or other entities. Be sure the Fiscal Note reflects amendments. The Fiscal Notes may not be available until the day the bill is heard.

Committee Staff: These folks are extremely helpful and really know the bills. Use the Committee Tab on the [General Assembly](#) website to find the names of key staffers from each committee. Remember these people are very busy. Sometimes the clerical staff of a committee may help you but do not count on their knowing about your bill. If possible, talk to the staff person who is in charge of your particular bill. They will know the background and what is going on with the bill in committee!

Legislative Services Analysts: Find out who are the key analyst(s) for your policy area. They write the Fiscal Notes so they can give you the background for your bill.

Legislative Aides: This refers to the bill sponsor's staff person. The aide should know the bill but does not always. You must assess each aide because the jobs vary immensely. If the aide cannot help you, ask him/her to find out what you need to know, or you could try to talk to the sponsor directly but that is difficult during Session.

Committee Files: On the [MGA website](#) they will list a "witness list" where you can access who testified for and against the bill from previous sessions. This can tell you a lot -- you can learn what organizations or groups like or dislike about the bill and why they like it or want to kill it. Once the bill has been voted on on the floor, the testimony is posted on the Bill's page on the General Assembly website.

ADVOCACY TEAM DOCUMENTS

TESTIMONY

Testimony can be presented verbally or in writing. This includes bills we're supporting or opposing. ***Testimony is always submitted or presented on behalf of the LWVMD President and the League.***

When to present **verbal testimony**:

- Always present verbal testimony if the bill is an LWVMD priority, or if the bill sponsor asks you to present verbal testimony
- If it is likely that the League will be among the few people taking an interest in the bill, and it is a priority, it would be good to testify verbally.
- If you are part of a coalition that asks the League to testify verbally and it is a priority bill, you should do so.

When to consider **written testimony**:

- If the bill is not a priority but it is a good bill, you may want to submit written testimony as a courtesy to the sponsor if we have a position and if you have the capacity. If we don't have a position, or the request is last minute, or you are fully engaged on other pieces of legislation, it is o.k. to decline.
- If there will be many people signing up to testify and you don't feel that you have anything unique to say, you may just want to submit written testimony
- Sometimes, you may feel that it would be better to sign on to testimony that is drafted by a coalition. This can be especially desirable if the coalition has the expertise to draft a statement that provides the legislators with research and technical information that you don't have access to. Sign-on letters require the same approval as testimony.

ADVOCACY TEAM DOCUMENTS

WRITING TESTIMONY

Key Components:

- The first paragraph should include the LWVUS or LWVMD position that justifies our support or opposition to the bill and a clear statement of the League's stance on the bill
- Include one or two paragraphs with reasons/examples and any relevant research to support our position.
- The final paragraph should restate the League's position and what we want the committee to do. Good idea to state the strength of the League, i.e. the fact that we have members across the state.

See the testimony example on the following page for formatting.

[Click Here for a testimony template with LWVMD's letterhead.](#)

**** Please make a copy to edit*

EXAMPLE OF TESTIMONY

***For more examples see the [testimony tab](#) on the LWVMD website**

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE *Be sure to check that you have the correct Committee Listed - AND that it is a House or a Senate Committee (This can get missed especially with cross-files)*

HB 1 Labor and Employment - Maryland Healthy Working Families Act *Note Bill # Format here - not "HB0001" or "HB1"*

POSITION: Support *Options: "Support"; "Oppose"; "Support w/ Amendments"; or "Oppose w/ Amendments"*

BY: Linda Kohn, President *Testimony is always submitted by presidents or co-presidents, no matter who writes it*

DATE: January 10, 2018 *Hearing Date*

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. The League believes that one of the goals of social policy should be to reduce poverty and promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families. *Don't forget to first list the LWVMD or LWVUS position you are using to support your stance.*

Most of us work hard to be self-sufficient and stay out of poverty, yet too many employers make it very hard to juggle work and family obligations by not providing paid sick leave. More than 80% of low wage workers cannot earn paid sick days. Workers without paid sick leave may put off medical care and attend work when ill. Because paid sick days allow workers to address their own medical needs, and those of their family without resorting to emergency room use, to seek preventive care, and to remain home when ill rather than risk infecting coworkers, customers, and the general public; paid sick leave benefits workers, employers, and the public.

Employers have little to lose and much to gain from granting paid sick leave. Without paid sick days employees come to work unhealthy, lowering levels of production. Paid sick leave benefits employers by reducing turnover. Studies show that workers who have paid sick leave do not abuse it.

More and more states and municipalities are seeing the benefit of guaranteeing paid sick leave. HB 1 only requires employers with 15 or more employees to provide earned sick and safe leave at a rate of 1 hour for every 30 hours an employee works, and they are not required to provide more than 56 hours of leave per calendar year. The bill permits employers to establish reasonable procedures for employees requesting to take this leave.

The LWVMD, representing nearly 2,000 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, strongly urges a favorable report. *Don't forget to end with what you want the committee to do! Do you want a favorable report? Unfavorable? Amendments? Don't forget to say it.*

ACTION ALERTS

COMPOSING AN ACTION ALERT

***THIS SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN A DOCUMENT PAGE**

SUBJECT: Be Specific and Pithy - Make sure people know what you want them to act on

WHEN, WHO, HOW: (Write? Call? Attend?)

- Provide all the details possible to make it incredibly clear and easy to ACT
- If you are asking them to call, provide the number IN THE ALERT - do not make them look for it.
- If it's a broader ask and you can't provide everyone's specific General Assembly member's info, be sure to provide a link to the easiest way to find out what it is: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebiste/Members/District>

GRAPHICS: Include a pertinent graphic to grab the reader's attention.

An example of a clear + eye-catching graphic for an Action Alert



THE WHY: Briefly, provide more detail about why if necessary - BUT YES, DO THIS AFTER THE ASK - you want what you want them to do up front. Chances are, they have been following your issues with you, and they know they want to act, so make it easy and quick, but provide more info for those who may be interested or need more. Keep it short and to the point, then provide a link to a prior legislative report posted in the Action Blog for those who want more.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Make sure to take advantage of social media to get the word out! Make the post copy short and sweet, and link out to your Action Alert to give more detail.

COMMUNICATIONS

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES + WRAP UPS

Advocacy teams might want to update subscribers to their issue area when certain milestones have happened to their bills.

Updates could include:

- Announcing the Hearing date and time or sharing the link to the hearing if it has already happened.
- Links to LWVMD testimony on the issue
- Actions such as committee votes, floor votes or major amendments
- Actions by the governor on bills that have passed.

In April, after the session ends, each team will write a brief report describing what happened to the bills that they followed. Samples of those reports can be found at <https://www.lwvmd.org/legislativewrapup>

Once the deadline for Gubernatorial vetoes has passed, the Action Chair will write a final Legislative update about the fate of the bills that passed.

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE EMAIL

During the General Assembly session, LWVMD sends a Weekly Legislative Email to keep advocates informed and ready to act. These updates provide a clear snapshot of the League's advocacy work in Annapolis — highlighting key bills we're supporting or monitoring, sharing legislative developments, and flagging opportunities for advocacy and engagement. This is your weekly briefing memo from the front lines of the State House, and is designed to help you stay connected to the work being done to advance the League's priorities.

TESTIMONY APPROVAL PROCESS

TESTIMONY APPROVAL

Please be sure to send your proposed testimony to us as soon as possible. **Every piece of testimony must go through the review and editing process and be approved by 2 Action Team members.**

After getting approval from the Action Team, you must submit your testimony to the MGA website.

01 SUBMIT TESTIMONY TO ACTION TEAM

Please email all proposed testimony as a **Microsoft Word** or **Google Doc** attachment to action@lwwmd.org.

- This email address will be forwarded to the entire Action Team – so you can rest assured everyone who needs to see it has it.

In the Subject Line, please use this format:

[Hearing Date] - [Bill #] [Bill Title]

Ex: 1/10 – HB 1 Labor and Employment – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act

**Using this format will help us to ensure our focus goes to testimony with the soonest hearing dates and will help us to know immediately which topic will be addressed by the attached testimony.*

02 SUBMIT TESTIMONY TO MGA

Once your testimony has received two approvals from the Action Team:

- Convert your testimony to a PDF
- Submit your testimony to the MGA website using your MY MGA account.
- Testimony must be submitted to MGA **two (2) business days before the bill hearing, between 8AM and 6PM.**
- Find the Committee's specific witness guidelines on their MGA webpage.

[!\[\]\(bcd86b3e3f0edc430a942a7aafcccb17_img.jpg\) **Click Here for 2026 Senate Witness Guidelines**](#)

[!\[\]\(8ea5b969742211724a7ce52e1ecf90fc_img.jpg\) **Click Here for 2026 House Protocol Guidelines**](#)

TESTIMONY APPROVAL PROCESS (CONT.)

SIGN-ON TESTIMONY APPROVAL

The approval process for Sign-On testimony is very similar to the regular testimony approval process. **All Sign-On testimony must be reviewed and approved by 2 members of the Action Team.**

01 SUBMIT SIGN-ON TESTIMONY TO ACTION TEAM

Please email the proposed sign-on letter to action@lwwmd.org.

In the Subject Line, please use this format:

SIGN ON REQ DUE [Due Date to Sign On/Suggest Edits/Etc] -
[Hearing Date] – [Bill #] [Bill Title]

*Ex: SIGN ON REQ DUE 1/7 - Hrg 1/10 - HB 1 Labor and Employment –
Maryland Healthy Working Families Act*

02 COLLECT FINAL VERSION

We ask that since you have contact with the Sign On organization, you please follow up and collect the final version of the sign-on testimony for the office to post to our testimony page on our website.

ISSUE PAPERS

ISSUE PAPER KEY COMPONENTS

Before each Legislative Session, LWVMD's Advocacy Team Leads write Issue Papers about their policy area.

Issue papers should include:

- Why this issue is timely
- LWVMD's position for supporting this issue
- Relevant past legislative action on the issue
- Likely legislation that the League will be supporting this year and the rationale for picking that legislation as a priority
- Challenges to passing this legislation
- Other relevant information on the topic
- How/where to learn more about other issue areas on the LWVMD Action Blog

SAMPLE ISSUE PAPER

Juvenile Justice Reform Submitted by Ralph Watkins

Juvenile justice systems seek to balance the task of salvaging young offenders from a life of crime and incarceration while also protecting the public.

A major challenge to crafting effective policies is the public perception of levels of crime. According to data collected by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, overall juvenile complaints have decreased by 50% from 2014, but several categories of violent offenses have increased. With recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings loosening restrictions on gun possession, it is not surprising that handgun violations have increased by 220%. Carjacking, often committed with firearms, has increased by 85.4%, and auto thefts have more than doubled. Criminal justice policies are not the only factor affecting crime rates. In a report to a General Assembly hearing in September 2023, the Department of Juvenile Services noted that part of the increase in auto theft was encouraged by the "Kia Challenge," a TikTok video that showed how to steal certain models of Kia and Hyundai cars, with some versions of that video having more than 40 million views.

Continued on next page...

ISSUE PAPERS (CONT.)

Maryland laws make it much easier to charge juveniles as adults than in many other states. According to state data, from 2013 to 2020, about 7,800 juveniles were automatically charged as adults in Maryland, and about 80 percent of them were Black. Specifically, Black juveniles under age 13 will benefit most under new JJR reforms, given they are disproportionately and disparately impacted by Department of Juvenile Services intakes, dispositions, and placements.

Although it is crucial to have good laws in place for juvenile justice, it is also essential to provide support services that can intervene effectively with youth at an early stage and steer them away from involvement in crime. At the September 2023 hearing, the Department of Juvenile Services and the Office of the Public Defender noted that critically needed resources are lacking; Maryland does not have a residential drug treatment program for adolescents, and other support services for juveniles and their families are underfunded. There are also significant variations in the services available in urban areas versus rural areas.

Over the past year, prosecutors and law enforcement officers have argued that changes made by the legislature in 2022 are contributing to these increases and preventing prosecutions. The 2022 reforms included raising the minimum age of juvenile court to 13 (except for children ages 10 to 12 alleged to have committed the most severe violent offenses), allowing the Department of Juvenile Services greater discretion in areas of diversion and adjustments; and limiting terms of probation imposed by a juvenile court. We anticipate multiple efforts to “fine-tune” the 2022 reforms in this session of the General Assembly. Monitoring those bills will be a high priority to ensure that any changes genuinely improve upon rather than merely roll back the earlier reforms.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) began studying correctional institutions and parole and probation procedures in the mid- 80’s after realizing little progress had occurred since its broader, initial studies in the early 70s, which included a juvenile corrections study that evaluated the juvenile court system and lead to new policy positions.

Specifically, the LWVMD supports:

The use of specialized judges, counseling services, and administration of juvenile cases, all geared to dealing with families, and (1) small, regional juvenile institutions; (2) Individually designed training and treatment programs and local or regional diagnostic services for juvenile offenders; (3) Coordination of programs and services for juvenile offenders provided by the state agencies; and (4) 24-hour supervised residential work and restitution centers with treatment programs available.

Additionally, the League advocates against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement. LWVMD calls upon every level of government to eradicate systemic racism and the harm it causes.

If you wish to update your email subscription preferences so that you can focus your attention on the issues most critical to you. Simply click the link in the footer of any email from LWVMD and uncheck the issue areas you’d rather not receive updates on for now. You can always re-subscribe here: https://www.lwvmd.org/action_signup

Even if you aren't subscribed to receive emails in a particular issue area, you can always find updates about these issues on our new Action Blog page. The Action Blog will be a home for all of the updates and Action Alerts shared by our advocates - so you can catch up any time. For brief and more up-to-the-minute details, follow @LWVMD on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

LEGISLATOR MEETINGS

It is helpful to meet with the sponsor of the bill that you are supporting to ask how the League of Women Voters or the Coalition that you are partnering with can be helpful. They may suggest meeting with members of the committee to which the bill has been assigned.

1 INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Introduce yourself - include your name, the organization you're representing (if applicable), and the issue you're working on

2 CREATE A CONNECTION

Ask how they are! Do your homework. Learn something about them or their district before the meeting. Actually, be interested in their response.

3 GET TO THE ISSUE

Quickly summarize what you want to talk about, and lay out a few reasons why you care/it matters. Make the ask – be as specific as possible - and follow up with a different ask if needed.

4 DISCUSS AMENDMENTS

There may be occasions where you meet with the bill sponsor because there is something about the bill that you think should be changed. You can ask them if they would be open to amending it. If they agree, that's great – you have done them a favor by helping them to make the bill better. If they don't agree, then you can say that you appreciate their reasoning, but you will suggest the amendment in your testimony. It is a matter of courtesy to share this kind of information in advance. You have to be careful about testimony that is "support with amendments" That implies that you wouldn't support the bill unless it is changed. Sometimes that is true and important to state. However, sometimes the bill as written improves the current practice enough that you can live with it even if it's not amended.

MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS (CONT.)

5 LISTEN!

Simple test: the Legislator should talk more than you do. Look out for hedge words to honestly assess their support. Take notes AFTER the meeting, and include any names dropped or hints from the meeting.

6 AFTER THE MEETING

Always note information you said you would get back to them on (and do get them the information!) Grade their support 1 (champion), 2 (yes vote), 3 (swing vote), 4 (no vote) 5 (will work to kill your bill). Always err on the side of caution – unless you hear “yes!” consider them a 3 or 4.

COALITIONS

LWVMD COALITION WORK

The League of Women Voters of Maryland works in collaboration with other organizations to increase the impact of our advocacy efforts. The coalitions we work with can be found on our website: <https://www.lwvmd.org/coalitions>

LWVMD may join coalitions of organizations that have legislative action objectives supportable under LWVUS and/or LWVMD positions. LWVMD also sometimes organizes a coalition to gain support for a League action item. Coalitions may be ongoing or may be organized for a one-time purpose.

**Board approval is required before LWVMD joins any coalition.*

In determining whether to join a coalition, the LWVMD Board considers the following questions:

- Why should the League join or initiate a coalition?
- Will the coalition be nonpartisan?
- Will the coalition be focused on a well-defined goal?
- What will be expected of the League? Can the League meet those expectations?
- Does the League have an experienced, knowledgeable member willing to be active in the coalition and to keep the Board informed?
- How likely is there to be a conflict with any League position?
- Can enforceable ground rules be worked out?
- Are coalition lines of communication clearly defined?
- What are the long-term and short-term advantages or disadvantages to the League of participation in the coalition?
- Will it extend LWVMD's reach to more people or to a wider variety of groups?
- Will the issue addressed by the coalition be divisive on an area or statewide basis?
- Is there disagreement among Local Leagues on support of the issue?
- Is it to be an ad hoc or ongoing group?

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LEGISLATORS

View All Senate Members [HERE.](#)

View All House Members [HERE.](#)



Senators



Delegates

General Assembly Leadership 2025

Senate President

Bill Ferguson

Speaker of the House

Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk

President Pro Tem

Malcolm Augustine

Speaker Pro Tem

Luke Clippinger

Majority Leader

Nancy King

Majority Leader

David Moon

Majority Whip

Joanne Benson

Majority Whip

Ashanti Martinez

Minority Leader

Stephen Hershey

Minority Leader

Jason Buckel

Minority Whip

Justin Ready

Minority Whip

Jesse Pippy

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEES

To learn more about each Standing Committee, click on the Committee's name in the table below to be taken to their webpage.

Senate	House
Budget & Taxation	Appropriations
Education, Energy, and the Environment (EEE)	Economic Matters
Executive Nominations	Environment & Transportation
Finance	*Government, Labor, & Elections
Judicial Proceedings	*Health
Rules	Rules & Executive Nominations
	Judiciary
	Ways & Means

** New Standing Committee for the 2026 Session!*

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OTHER COMMITTEES

To learn more about each Committee listed below, click on the Committee's name to be taken to their webpage.

- [Blueprint for Maryland's Future Accountability and Implementation Board](#)
- [Governor's Redistricting Advisory Commission](#)
- [Governor's Salary Commission](#)
- [Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee](#)
- [Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review \(ALER\)](#)
- [Joint Committee on Children, Youth and Families](#)
- [Joint Committee on Cybersecurity, Technology and Biotechnology](#)
- [Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness](#)
- [Joint Committee on Fair Practices and State Personnel Oversight](#)
- [Joint Committee on Federal Relations](#)
- [Joint Committee on Investigation](#)
- [Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics](#)
- [Joint Committee on Legislative Information Technology and Open Government](#)
- [Joint Committee on Pensions](#)
- [Joint Committee on Protocol](#)
- [Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Areas](#)
- [Joint Committee on the Management of Public Funds](#)
- [Joint Committee on Unemployment Insurance Oversight](#)
- [Joint Committee on Workers Compensation Benefit and Insurance Oversight](#)
- [Joint Electric Universal Service Program Workgroup](#)
- [Joint Subcommittee on Program Open Space/Agricultural Land Preservation](#)
- [Law Enforcement Body Camera Task Force](#)
- [Legislative Policy Committee](#)
- [Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission](#)
- [Maryland Rural Caucus](#)
- [Spending Affordability Committee](#)
- [Sports Wagering Application Review Commission](#)

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

LAWMAKING IN MARYLAND

The legislative process, the mechanism through which the laws of Maryland are enacted, is dynamic and complex. One hundred and eighty-eight men and women are elected every four years to serve in the State's legislative branch to enact laws that protect the interest of Marylanders.

Legislation introduced in the General Assembly is a legislator's response to the needs or desires of his or her constituency.

In Maryland, an idea or concept must pass through many processes before it becomes law. Citizens of Maryland must approach their legislators to introduce a bill. If the legislator agrees to sponsor the legislation, the bill is drafted by the Department of Legislative Services, reviewed by the legislator, and prepared for introduction. Bills or resolutions may be introduced in advance of regular sessions.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

First Reading: When the session convenes, the Reading Clerk reads the numbers and titles of the bills being introduced and indicates the committee to which they have been referred by the presiding officer.

Referral to Committee: The committees meet daily during the session to receive testimony and take action on bills referred to the committee. Since the legislature is instrumental in integrating public demands with public policy, citizens are encouraged to present their views on the proposed bills by mail or by personal appearance. Lobbyists representing organized interest groups, officials from State agencies, local government representatives, and other interested citizens speak at these hearings, to either oppose or support the proposed legislation.

The Department of Legislative Services prepares a fiscal analysis for each bill, and these fiscal notes are considered during the committee deliberations.

Continued on next page.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Second Reading and Floor Consideration: The bill is reported back to the floor by the committee with its recommendation (favorable, unfavorable, favorable with amendment, or rarely, no recommendation). If the bill is amended by the committee, a vote is taken on the amendment, and if passed, another vote is taken on the bill as amended. Committee action may be reversed, but this is infrequent. Amendments can then be offered from the floor by any member. After all amendments are considered, the presiding officer orders the bill to be printed for its third and final reading.

Third Reading: The bill must be printed in its final version with all amendments included for third reading. No amendments may be presented on third reading in the bill's chamber of origin, and the bill must be passed by a majority of the elected membership.

Second Chamber: The procedure follows a pattern identical to that of the chamber in which the bill originated, except amendments may be proposed during third reading, as well as during second reading. If not amended in the second chamber, final passage may occur without reprinting.

Consideration of Bills Originating in One Chamber and Amended in the Second Chamber: If amended in the second chamber, the bill is returned to the chamber of origin where a vote is taken on a motion to concur or reject the amendments. If concurrence is voted, a final vote is taken on the bill as amended, and action is complete. The bill is reprinted, or enrolled, to include the added amendments before it is presented to the Governor.

If the amendments are rejected, two courses of action are possible: 1) the amending chamber may be requested to withdraw its amendments or 2) upon refusal to withdraw the amendments, either chamber may request a conference committee to resolve the differences between the two chambers.

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THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

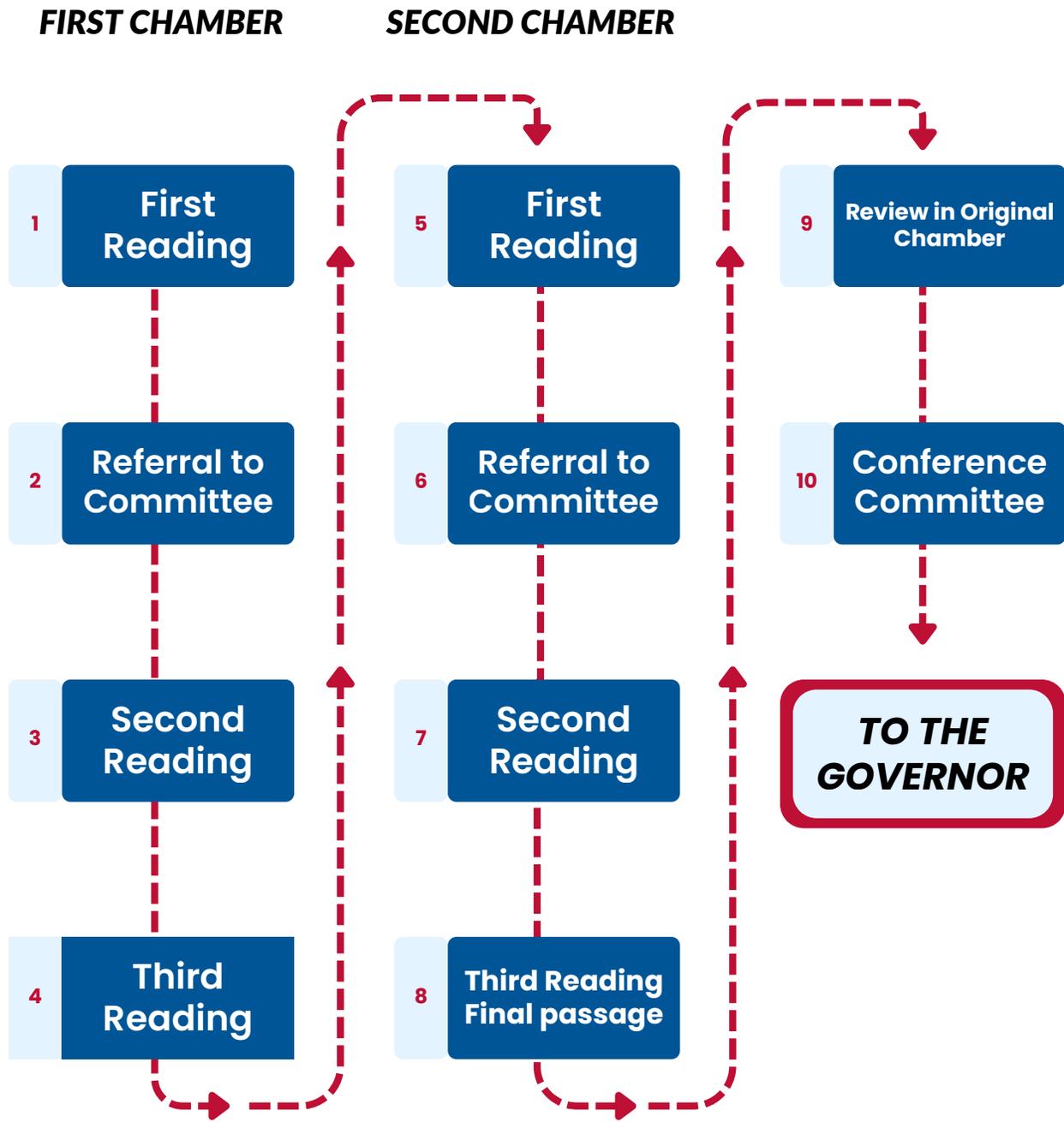
Conference Committee: Three members from each chamber are appointed to a conference committee by the presiding officers to reach a settlement on the proposed legislation. A report of a conference committee goes back to both chambers to be adopted or rejected without amendment. If the conference committee report is adopted, the bill is voted upon for final passage in each house. If the conference committee report is rejected by either house, the conference committee may be directed to reconvene, new members may be appointed, or the bill fails.

Presentation of Bills to Governor: Except for constitutional amendments and the budget bill, presentation of all bills to the Governor is mandatory. The budget bill becomes law upon its final passage and cannot be vetoed. Bills must be presented to the Governor within twenty days after adjournment of a session, and in the case of such bills, the Governor may veto within thirty days after presentation. If the Governor does not veto a bill, it becomes law. The Governor may not veto a constitutional amendment.

Veto Power + Veto Override: The power to override a veto rests with the legislature. If a bill is vetoed during a regular session, the veto message is considered immediately. If a bill presented after the session is vetoed, the veto message must be considered immediately at the next regular or special session of the legislature, except that the legislature during the first year of a new term may not override a veto. A three-fifths vote of the elected membership in each house is necessary to override a veto.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

How a Bill Becomes Law



RESOURCES

KEY DATES: 2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

JANUARY

- 14** General Assembly Convenes (*noon, Wednesday*)
- 21** Final date for the Governor to introduce budget bill
- 21** Final date for the Governor to introduce capital budget bill
- 23** *10th Day* - **SENATE AND HOUSE BILL REQUEST GUARANTEE DATE**
- 26** *13th Day* - Administration bills introduced in the Senate after this date referred to Senate Rules Committee
- 28** *15th Day* - Deadline for recommendations from Salary Commissions for the Governor, General Assembly, and Judicial branch.
- TBA** Governor delivers the State of the State Address (noon)

FEBRUARY

- 9** *27th Day* - **SENATE BILL INTRODUCTION DATE.** Senate bills introduced after this date referred to the Senate Rules Committee
- 12** Day before House Bill Introduction Date; “Hopper” will close at 5:00 P.M.
- 13** *31st Day* - **HOUSE BILL INTRODUCTION DATE.** House bills introduced after this date referred to the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
- 22** *40th Day* - “Green Bag” appointments submitted by Governor (*Delivered on Friday, February 14*)

MARCH

- 9** *55th Day* - Final date for introduction of bills without suspension of Rules
- 17** *63rd Day* - Committee Reporting Courtesy Date. Each Chamber’s committees report their own bills by this date
- 23** *69th Day* - Opposite Chamber Bill Crossover Date
Each Chamber to send to other Chamber bills it intends to pass favorably
Opposite Chamber bills received after this date subject to referral to Rules Committees (Senate Rule 32(c), House Courtesy Date)

Continued on next page

RESOURCES

KEY DATES: 2026 SESSION (CONT).

APRIL

- 6** *83rd Day* – Budget bill to be passed by both Chambers
- 13** *90th Day* – **ADJOURNMENT “SINE DIE”** (Monday)

MAY

- 13** Final date for an extended session (Wednesday)

POST-SESSION DATES OF INTEREST

MAY

- 3** 20th Day after adjournment - Final date for presentment of bills to Governor

JUNE

- 1** Other than emergency bills, earliest date for bills to take effect
- 2** 30th Day after presentment – Governor to sign/veto bills by this date

JULY

- 1** Budgetary, tax, and revenue bills to take effect

OCTOBER

- 1** Usual effective date for bills

RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES

Studies and Action: Click “Studies & Action” at: <http://www.lwvmd.org/positions>

LWVUS Public Policy Positions: <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>

Maryland Legislator’s Handbook:

<https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/RecurRpt/Handbook Volume 1 MD Legislators Handbook.pdf>

General Assembly Website: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>

Issue Papers 2026 Legislative Session:

<https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/RecurRpt/Issue Papers 2026 Legislative Session.pdf>

This report contains valuable background information on many of the areas we report on. This provides information on the status of issues before the General Assembly just prior to the legislative session, and lists which staff member worked on each topic in case you need to contact them (VERY valuable information!).

Daily synopsis/Synopsis Index: on the MGA [homepage](#) and provides a list of all the bills introduced each day in each house. You can scan the list for bills that may be in your reporting area.

- **Daily status report** contains information about most recently introduced bills and resolutions. Bill numbers in bold indicate enacted legislation.
- **Bill indexes** are lists of bills and resolutions that are available indexed by Sponsor, Subject, Statute, File Code, or Specific Interest Profile. Indexes include sponsor names, the title, committees assigned to consider the legislation, and current status (where the bill or resolution stands in the legislative process).
- **Hearing schedule index** includes hearing schedules by the committee and by date. It is a good idea to call the committee or check the computer regularly, because committee chairs sometimes change the schedule.
 - FYI: Hearings start at a specific time but your bill may not be heard until later in the day or evening, depending on the schedule. There may be many people testifying on a bill.

RESOURCES

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LEGISLATIVE LINGO

KEY TERMS

Adopt: To approve an action (i.e., an amendment, committee report, motion).

Amend: To make a change in a bill or a law.

Attorney General's Bill Letters: The letters that examine the legal sufficiency of the bills passed by the General Assembly. The Attorney General's Office prepares the letters and submits them to the Governor before the approval or veto of bills.

Bill: A proposed law presented for approval to a legislative body.

Bill Number: The number the Secretary of the Senate or the Chief Clerk of the House assigns to a bill at the time of introduction. The bill retains the same number if it moves to the opposite chamber.

Bill Status: The current standing of a bill.

Blue Back: The original copy of a bill. House bills are printed on blue paper and Senate bills are printed on cream paper.

Calendar Day: The 24-hour day as denoted on the calendar.

Chapter Number: The number the Secretary of State assigns to a bill after the Governor signs the bill. Chapter numbers are issued in the numerical order in which the bills are signed.

Committee Report: The report a committee submits to the chambers listing actions taken on bills (i.e., favorable, favorable with amendments, unfavorable, re-referred, or referred for interim study).

Committee Reporting Courtesy Dates: Each chamber's committees report their own bills to the floor by this date.

Committee Reprint: The reprinting of a bill to include committee amendments.

Concur: One chamber approves an action taken by the other chamber.

Conference Committee: Three members from each chamber, five in the case of the budget conference committee (appointed by the presiding officers) who work to resolve the differences in a bill passed by both chambers. A bill does not pass the General Assembly unless each chamber passes the bill in identical form.

LEGISLATIVE LINGO

Conference Committee Report: The report the Conference Committee submits to the chambers for final passage of a bill. The report may consist of adopting, rejecting, or adding amendments. Each chamber must adopt the report and then vote for final passage of the bill.

Crossover Date: Each chamber sends to the other chamber those bills it passes favorably by this date.

Drop into the Hopper: A member files a bill with the Chief Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate for introduction.

Enacted: A bill is enacted when the bill becomes a law, i.e., is signed by the Governor and takes effect.

Enrolled (Passed Enrolled): A bill is an enrolled bill if it was amended in the opposite chamber.

Failed: A bill does not receive a majority vote on the chamber floor.

First Reader: A bill as printed for the first time with its assigned bill number.

First Reading: A bill is introduced in a chamber, “read across the desk” for the first time and assigned to a standing committee.

Fiscal and Policy Note: An analysis prepared by the Department of Legislative Services of a bill’s impact on State and local revenues and expenditures. It also identifies any mandated appropriations in the State budget and any mandates on local governments; describes the impact on small businesses; describes current law; and, if relevant, outlines the background relating to the proposal. Beginning with the 2017 session a fiscal and policy note is “revised” when an adopted amendment necessitates a change; a fiscal and policy note is also “revised” if it is changed for any other reason.

Fiscal Year: July 1 to June 30.

Goldenrod: A committee report printed on gold paper indicating the next day’s committee agenda on the Senate floor.

LEGISLATIVE LINGO

Green Bag: Proposed gubernatorial appointments, requiring legislative approval, are submitted to the General Assembly by the 40th day of the session (Art. II, Sec. 13, MD Constitution). The appointments are delivered to the floor of the chambers in a green bag.

Guarantee Date: A bill introduced by this date is guaranteed a committee hearing in the chamber of origin.

Interim: The nine months between legislative sessions.

Joint Resolution: A resolution both chambers pass making a statement on a public issue, a request of the Governor or a government office, or establishes a task force. With certain exceptions, Joint Resolutions do not have the effect of law.

Motion: To propose an action.

Move the Previous Question: To end debate and return to the question on the floor.

Passed: When a bill is voted on favorably by the majority of the elected members.

Prefiled: A bill the Department of Legislative Services drafts, by request, prior to a legislative session for introduction in that session. Pre-filing dates are set by law.

Quorum: Minimum number of members of a chamber (or committee) required for the transaction of business.

Quorum Call: Action used to establish the presence of the majority required to transact business.

Reassigned: Assignment of a bill(s) from one committee to another

Referred: The action of assigning a legislative measure to a committee or committees

Referred for Interim Study: The action a committee takes to refer a bill for committee study during the nine-month interim.

Re-referred: The reassignment of a bill to a different committee after the original referral.

Referendum: The power of the registered voters, under certain conditions, to petition an act of the last General Assembly (with certain exceptions) for approval or disapproval at the next General Election.

LEGISLATIVE LINGO

Reject: The failure of an action (i.e., an amendment)

Returned Passed: A bill passed in its chamber of origin is returned by the opposite chamber without amendments.

Roll Call: Names of members present in the Chamber are recorded; used to establish a quorum or to take a vote on an issue before the body.

Second Reading: When a bill is reported out of committee and brought to the chamber floor for preliminary approval, or second reading. Committee and floor amendments may be added to the bill at this time. (The bill is not reprinted for second reading.)

Simple Resolution: A form of legislative measure introduced in only one chamber of the General Assembly and used for the regulation of business only within the chamber of origin.

Sine Die: The final adjournment of a session, without adjourning to a specific time or date.

Session Laws: The compilation of all the Chapters, the bills the Governor signs, from a legislative session.

Special Order: Postpones floor action on a bill until a definite date or time.

Suspend the Rules: To set aside the rules temporarily, by a 2/3 vote, to allow a certain action.

Sunset Provision: Provides that a provision of the law is automatically repealed on a specific date, unless the General Assembly reenacts the law.

The Chair: Refers to the presiding officer of a chamber or of a committee.

The City: Baltimore City.

The Code: The *Annotated Code of Maryland*, the codified statutory laws of Maryland.

The Floor: That portion of the chamber reserved for members and officers of the assembly or other persons granted access.

The Shore: The Eastern Shore of Maryland.

LEGISLATIVE LINGO

Third Reader: A bill that is printed after second reading in the chamber of origin, including adopted amendments.

Third Reading: A bill is voted on for the final time in each chamber. The third reading vote is recorded.

Veto: Action the Governor takes to prevent enactment of a bill passed by the General Assembly. At the next session the General Assembly may override the Governor's veto with a 3/5 vote in each chamber (except in an election year when overrides are not feasible).

TYPES OF BILLS

Administration Bill: A bill introduced at the request of the Governor.

Bond Initiative: A request for a bond authorization to support a local or non-state owned capital project. Bond initiatives are not adopted individually, but instead are handled as amendments to the capital budget bill.

Budget Bill: A bill that consists of the Governor's proposed operating budget for the State for the next fiscal year. The Budget Bill becomes law on approval by both chambers. The Governor's signature is not required. The bill must be passed by both chambers seven days before the end of a session or the Governor must extend the session. (Art. III, Sec. 52(10), MD Constitution)

Capital Budget Bill: A general construction loan or bond bill that finances construction of State-owned buildings ("bricks and mortar"). This bill states the amount of State debt to be incurred and the projects to be funded. The Capital Budget Bill may not be acted on until the Budget Bill has been passed by the General Assembly.

Constitutional Amendment: A bill that amends the Maryland Constitution. A Constitutional Amendment requires a 3/5 vote in each chamber and approval by the voters at the next General Election.

Cross-filed Bill: An identical bill that is introduced in both chambers.

LEGISLATIVE LINGO

Departmental Bill: A bill introduced by a committee chairman at the request of the Executive Branch of State government.

Emergency Bill: A bill that takes effect immediately upon the Governor's approval. A bill marked as "emergency bill" must pass third reading with a 3/5 vote in each chamber.

Reintroduction Bill: A bill that was unsuccessful in a previous session and is reintroduced in the present session. In the upper left corner the bill is identified as a reintroduction.

Snake: A bill or provision that has a hidden purpose