

# WELCOME *to the* SENATE OF PENNSYLVANIA



*Compliments of*  
STATE SENATOR  
**WAYNE D. FONTANA**  
SERVING THE 42ND SENATORIAL DISTRICT

*The* lawmaking power of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is vested by the Constitution in a General Assembly consisting of a Senate of fifty members, elected by the voters for a four year term, and a House of Representatives of two hundred and three members, elected for a two year term. Senators must be at least twenty-five years of age and Representatives at least twenty-one years of age. They shall have been citizens and inhabitants of the State four years, and live in their respective districts one year before their next election (unless absent on the public business of the United States or of this State), and shall reside in their respective districts during their terms of service. Each Senatorial District contains an average of 245,621 people; each House District an average of 60,498 people.

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## THE STATE CAPITOL



### HISTORY OF THE STATE CAPITAL

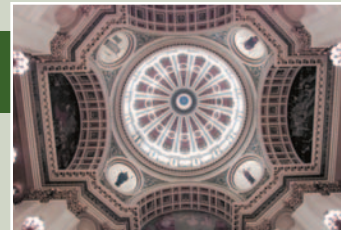
William Penn first arrived in America late in 1682 and, as Philadelphia was in the process of being laid out into lots, he stopped in Chester. The first General Assembly of the Province was held there and the "Great Law" was passed. The following year the provincial government was established in Philadelphia, which remained the capital until 1799, when Lancaster became the capital. In 1810, the state Legislature passed a law moving Pennsylvania's capital to Harrisburg. By an Act passed in 1816, the erection of a capitol building was authorized and the two wings of the building were built. In 1819 the completion of the building was authorized. The General Assembly occupied the building on January 2, 1821, but fire destroyed the structure on February 2, 1897. Plans were made soon afterward to build a second Capitol. Architect Henry Cobb's plans were chosen, and the cornerstone was laid on August 10, 1898. This building was never completed, being heavily criticized for looking too plain—"like a warehouse." Thus, by an act signed on July 18, 1901, funds were provided for the construction and completion of a more suitable Capitol Building—the one which stands today.

### TODAY'S CAPITOL BUILDING

Designed in the classic style adapted from the architecture of the Italian Renaissance by Philadelphia architect Joseph M. Huston, the Capitol is 520 feet long and 254 feet wide. It covers two acres of ground and within its one-half mile circumference are 475 rooms. The exterior is of Vermont granite. Above the center wing is a magnificent dome, towering to a height of 272 feet. Surmounting this dome, a figure symbolic of the Commonwealth upholds a garlanded mace.

Throughout the interior, the Capitol is sumptuously finished in marble, mahogany, bronze and tiling and adorned with appropriate decorations and mural paintings by artists of great reputations. State records give the amount of \$13,000,000 as the total cost of the original Capitol Building, exclusive of furnishings.

The East Wing Addition to the Capitol was designed in the "post modernist" style by Thomas C. Celli of the Pittsburgh firm of CelliFlynnBrennan, Inc. This 950,000 square-foot addition contains legislative offices, hearing rooms, a public cafeteria, an interactive "Welcome Center" and underground parking. Completed in 1986, it compliments the Italian Renaissance style of the Capitol. The entrance plaza evokes Bernini's colonnade semi-circling Vatican Square.



*THE CAPITOL DOME* inspired by St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, rises 272 feet from the ground. It is a combination of two shells — an inner dome and an outer dome, weighing 52 million pounds. The tremendous weight of the dome is supported entirely by four pillars which are sunk seven feet into a natural bed of slate rock.



*THE HEROIC GROUPS OF STATUARY* at the front of the Capitol were executed by Pennsylvania sculptor George Grey Barnard. The group of nude men and women are in positions representing spiritual burdens and the inspiration of work and brotherhood.



*THE WELCOME CENTER*, located in the East Wing of the Capitol, offers colorful, informative exhibits as you learn about Pennsylvania's history and the legislative process.

## HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

### *An Idea . . .*

*Proposed new laws or amendments to existing laws are introduced by individual members in the House or Senate in the form of bills as required by the Constitution.*

◆ **A member of the General Assembly submits his/her ideas in writing** to the Legislative Reference Bureau, the bill drafting agency of the General Assembly. The bill is drafted and signed by the member as the Prime Sponsor and then distributed to other members of the legislative body for co-sponsorship.

◆ **The bill is introduced by being read across the desk in the appropriate chamber** (House or Senate) and is then referred to the respective committee. This is done by the President in the Senate or the Speaker in the House. Every bill, when introduced, is numbered and printed for the members of the House, the Senate, and for public distribution.

◆ **The Senate and House committees are the workshops of the General Assembly.** There are 21 Senate Standing Committees and 25 House Standing Committees. It is their duty to study carefully the bills which are to be reported with favorable recommendation to their respective houses. **Members are assigned to Committees** by the President Pro Tempore and the Speaker of the House respectively. Chairpersons are awarded on the basis of tenure and experience. A quorum is necessary to conduct a meeting, and all meetings are open to the public.

—**Once a bill is in committee, the committee has full power over it.** Sometimes it is referred by the chairperson to a subcommittee to do a further study of the issue and to make a report or recommendation to the main committee. Persons or organizations interested in a proposed bill may request a public hearing on the matter through the chairperson to the committee.

◆ **After a committee has considered a bill, it may report the bill from said committee to the floor of the chamber as committed** (no changes), **or as amended** (changes). If amended, the bill is sent to the printer for reprinting. The committee by a majority vote may decide not to report the bill at all.

◆ **It is required that each bill be considered on three different days** in both

the Senate and the House. On first consideration, in each chamber, amendments and debate are not permitted. On second consideration amendments may be proposed from the floor, if they are germane to the subject of the bill.

—If amended, the bill must be reprinted. The next step is considering the bill for the third time and advancing it to final passage. The bill may be amended on third consideration. However, the bill on final passage may not be amended, but is open to debate. If a constitutional majority of twenty-six senators vote in favor of the bill, the bill passes the Senate. Some special class appropriation bills require two-thirds of the elected membership of each house.

◆ **After the bill passes the Senate it is transmitted to the House** and is handed over to the Speaker who then refers it to one of the House standing committees.

◆ **The House committee process is the same as the Senate.**

◆ **If the bill is reported from a House committee, it follows somewhat the same course of passage as in the Senate except in the area of first consideration.** When the bill is given first consideration it is not automatically moved on to second consideration but is laid on the table. It may be removed from the table by a motion of the majority leader, acting on a report of the Rules committee. Such report must be in writing and a copy thereof distributed to each member. When the bill is removed from the table it is placed on Second consideration. If the bill remains on the table for 15 legislative days it is automatically removed from the table and placed on the calendar for Second consideration.

—Second consideration, Third consideration, and final passage procedures are the same as in the Senate, with a constitutional majority of 102 votes being required for final passage in the House.

—The House may amend a Senate Bill, in which case it is returned to the Senate for concurrence in the House Amendments. (All Senate bills amended in the House and all House bills amended in the Senate must first pass through their respective Rules Committee before coming to the floor for a vote.) A Constitutional yea or nay vote is required to concur. The Senate may amend House bills in the same manner.

Either house may defeat a bill of the other house, either in committee or on the floor.

◆ Should the Senate refuse to agree to the amendments made by the House (and vice versa), the bill usually goes to Conference committee made up of three members from each Chamber, appointed by the presiding officers, to resolve the differences and to then report to their respective houses for a vote to adopt the Conference committee report. A constitutional majority is required.

◆ When a bill has finally passed in both houses, it is signed by the President of the Senate (Lieutenant Governor) or President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. It is then transmitted to the Governor for his consideration. The Governor may consult the Attorney General for opinion as to the legality and constitutionality of the legislation. If the Governor signs the bill it becomes law. If the Governor vetoes the bill, it is returned to the house of origin together with the Governor's reasons for the veto. The veto can be overturned by a two-thirds vote of each house.

—If the Governor does not act upon the bill within ten calendar days after it has been received by him, while the General Assembly is in session, it automatically becomes law. After final adjournment of the General Assembly, the Governor has 30 days to act upon the remaining bills on his desk. Bills on which he takes no action automatically become law. It is rare for a bill to become law by reason of the Governor taking no action.

◆ The official certified copy of each bill approved by the Governor is placed in the custody of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, given an act number, and filed in the State Department. The Legislative Reference Bureau, the agency in which the bill originated, prepares the act for printing. The Bureau then publishes the acts in book form, known as the Pamphlet Laws, for distribution to the courts, attorneys, libraries, and the citizens of the Commonwealth who may request them.

*Proper consideration of bills requires much time and a lot of hard work. Much of this work is done in committee rooms before daily floor sessions and before a bill reaches the floor of either House. What the visitor sees is the final committee approval of all the hours of work that has been done before a bill is submitted to the floor for action by the whole Senate.*

*... becomes a law.*



THE SENATE CHAMBER  
Photo by Jim Haberski

*THE RICHLY-APPOINTED SENATE CHAMBER is where Pennsylvania's 50 state senators meet to debate and vote upon legislation and resolutions. Groundbreaking female artist Violet Oakley spent more than eight years completing the murals. The desks are constructed of mahogany and imported from Belize. The drapes weigh 87 pounds per pair and the bronze light fixtures weigh 2 tons each.*

# THE LEGISLATURE

## SESSIONS OF THE LEGISLATURE

- ◆ **The Legislature meets** regularly every year, as a continuing body, and at other times when called into Special Session. The Governor calls a Special Session whenever in his opinion the public interest requires or when petitioned by a majority of the members elected to each house. Since the General Assembly is a continuing body, sessions usually last throughout the year with occasional recesses. Visitors are welcome in the balconies of both Houses.
- ◆ **Constitutionally, regular sessions must begin at noon on the first Tuesday of January of each year.** There is no restriction or limitation on the subject matter of the legislation that may be considered at a regular session. Any bill, except those raising revenue, may begin in either House. Bills raising revenue must originate in the House.
- ◆ **Sessions of the Senate are usually held on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday for an average of 35 weeks a year,** convening at 2 P.M. on Monday, 1 P.M. on Tuesday and 11 A.M. on Wednesday, unless the Senate sets a different hour. Toward the latter part of session, these days many times lengthen to 12 and 14 hours daily.
- ◆ **The Lieutenant Governor,** by virtue of his/her office, is the presiding officer of the Senate and, while serving in this capacity, is known as the President of the Senate. He/she has no vote (except in case of a tie on certain matters) for the reason that he/she is not a member of the Senate. In his/her absence the President Pro Tempore, who is elected to this office by the members of the Senate, presides.
- ◆ **At the beginning of the regular session** when the House of Representatives meets for organization, it elects one of its members as Speaker to be their presiding officer. The Speaker, being a member, votes on all questions.
- ◆ **The Legislature enacts our laws;** levies taxes and appropriates funds from such levies for the support of schools, the elderly, hospitals, the poor, colleges and universities, and other similar categories in addition to the administration of the affairs of state government. Amendments to the Constitution of Pennsylvania have to be approved by the electorate after passage by two separate sessions of the Legislature are proposed. The General Assembly must also pass on proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States. The Senate, alone, must approve certain nominations made by the Governor to boards, commissions, judgeships, etc.
- ◆ **Only Senators and necessary staff are permitted on the floor during session.** Senate proceedings are video taped in-house and provided to the media for broadcasting. Many of the floor proceedings and committee meetings of the General Assembly can be found on the Pennsylvania Cable Network.

## LEGISLATIVE AIDS

- ◆ **DAILY CALENDAR**  
Placed on each member's desk each day the Senate is in session is the "calendar" listing all the bills or executive nominations before the Senate for action that day.
- ◆ **LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL**  
A Senate and House journal is prepared daily in each House recording all action and votes taken plus other pertinent information. These are printed for members to review and distributed to libraries throughout the Commonwealth.
- ◆ **COMPUTERS**  
It should be noted that with the advancement of technology, computers are prevalent in offices and even on the floors of both Houses. This allows for a more efficient operation of legislative proceedings and greater availability of necessary information to the legislative body. The Senate still uses a voice-vote system with members calling out "aye" or "nay". The House of Representatives uses an electronic voting board to make it easier to tally the responses of the 203 members.



## SENATE STAFF AND FLOOR CONDUCT

*Many employees work behind-the-scenes. Among them are bill drafters, clerks, secretaries, committee attorneys, computer specialists, administrative assistants, etc. Readily apparent to the visitors during a session, however, are:*

- ◆ **SERGEANT-AT-ARMS**  
Stationed inside and outside the chamber and in the gallery, these men and women are the policemen of the Senate charged by the President to keep order.
- ◆ **PAGES**  
They are the young men and women stationed on the benches at the front of the Senate. They serve by running errands for a Senator who would otherwise be required to be away from his or her seat. They also bring bills or other communications from a Senator to the desk.
- ◆ **DESK STAFF**  
Immediately behind the pages are the desk staff consisting of the Secretary of the Senate, who also acts as parliamentarian, the Chief Clerk, and reading clerk. These people assist the President in conducting the affairs of the Senate during a session in addition to their administrative duties.
- ◆ **OFFICIAL REPORTERS**  
Seated on either side of the rostrum at the oval-shaped desks, these people record everything that is said and done during a session transcribing all debate and other matters for the Legislative Journal.
- ◆ **LEGAL COUNSEL AND ASSISTANTS**  
Seated beside and behind the Majority and Minority Leaders, legal counsel and assistants advise on technicalities and interpretation of bills under consideration.


## What are the responsibilities of a State Senator?

# THE SENATOR'S JOB

Following is a summary of the responsibilities:

- ◆ Prepares and legislates for an agenda derived from a variety of sources, including his/her district, the committees on which he/she serves, his/her party, and other interest groups.
- ◆ Conceives the need for new legislation through study of the problems of his/her district and the Commonwealth. Initiates research through staff and committees and requires preparation of bills and amendments.
- ◆ Develops support for his/her proposals and lends support or opposes proposals of other Senators following a thorough personal review.
- ◆ Studies the daily calendar, journal, and history to keep informed on bills scheduled for action by the Senate.
- ◆ Attends session, takes part in debates and votes on business before the Senate.
- ◆ Attends caucus, committee meetings, and hearings to inform himself/herself on the details of proposals, the arguments for and against them, and to vote on their submission to the Senate.
- ◆ Acts as a liaison between his/her district, state, and federal agencies, providing personal assistance to constituents in handling their problems.
- ◆ Replies to correspondence and telephone calls from constituents and supervises the work of his/her office staff when acting as a committee chairperson.
- ◆ Exercises legislative oversight over the administrative branch of government and the more than 20 billion dollar annual State budget through committee meetings and hearings, personal contacts, review of reports, and investigation of complaints.
- ◆ Keeps constituents informed on the progress of legislation and his/her position on specific bills and, in turn, keeps himself/herself informed on the opinions of his/her constituents, political party, and interest groups.
- ◆ Assumes an active role in his/her district by serving on local committees, attending and speaking at civic organizations interested in legislation.
- ◆ Plays an active role in his/her political party by attending and participating in party caucuses, meetings of a specialized nature and in general conventions.
- ◆ Takes part in ceremonial local and state functions.

*It is apparent that a Senator must perform a wide variety of duties which require a diversity of skills. A Senator must make decisions under heavy pressures from many conflicting interests. He or she must exercise judgement on issues that affect every citizen of the Commonwealth. The State Senator must have the ability to organize his or her own time to meet the schedules demanded of a multiplicity of committee meetings and still spend sufficient time studying issues to understand complex problems.*

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