

MD LAND TITLE ASSOCIATION

Weekly Report
Law Office of J. William Pitcher
January 19, 2019

GENERAL:

The 2019 Session is in full swing now. Because this is the first year of a new 4-year term for all State elected officials, the Legislature is off to a slow start, getting organized and playing musical chairs with offices, with nearly 40% new members and many new Committee leaders. Only about 175 bills and resolutions have been introduced in the House and Senate so far, and the hearing schedule for the standing committees is mostly made up of briefings and orientation matters. The MLTA Legislative Committee will be holding its weekly teleconferences to review and discuss bills as they are introduced.

Republican Governor Larry Hogan's new budget was just introduced and seems to be well received by the majority of the Legislature, even though the Democrats hold a two-thirds majority and many of their core constituencies are calling for more spending across the board. Savvy legislators know that Hogan currently enjoys a favorability polling rate of over 75%. The biggest storm cloud on the horizon, even while the State currently enjoys a substantial budget surplus, is the Kirwan Commission recommendation of an increase in education expenditures of many billions of dollars in the near future. Coupled with certain economic forecasts predicting a recession in the next year, this could become a real battleground.

Much of the Democratic legislators' agenda this session will be driven by their desire to counter the actions of President Trump and the Republican Congress. After the elections last November, there are seven more Democrats in the House, but one less Dem in the Senate. Both Houses are still firmly in control of the Democrats and their aging leadership. Speaker Busch recently underwent open heart surgery and President of the Senate Miller was recently diagnosed with Stage 4 prostate cancer. Dozens of the newly elected Democrats in each House can be categorized as more Liberal or Progressive than ever before.

As far as prevailing issues go, there is increasing support for reform of the redistricting process, mainly because of a court case pending before the U.S. Supreme Court which invalidated the 6th Congressional district as overly

gerrymandered. Another hot button issue that will break into a battle very soon is whether they will establish a Drug Pricing Commission to set prices for pharmaceuticals. Also look for numerous bills to increase the amount of energy sold by utilities to be from “renewable” sources, i.e. non-carbon based. And of course, there will be dozens of bills designed to control guns, allow for sports betting at casinos and other outlets, allow for recreational use of marijuana, and to ban vaping. Always good theatre and ugly sausage making.

UPCOMING DATES OF INTEREST:

January 22nd - Senate and House Bill Request guarantee date.

February 4th - SENATE BILL INTRODUCTION DATE - Senate bills introduced after this date referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

February 8th – HOUSE BILL INTRODUCTION DATE. Ditto, bills introduced after this date go to the Rules Committee.

March 4th - Final date for introduction of bills without suspension of Rules
18th - Opposite Chamber **Bill Crossover Date** - Each Chamber to send to other Chamber those bills it intends to pass favorably. Opposite Chamber bills received after this date referred to Rules Committees.

April 1st —Budget bill to be passed by both Chambers
8th - 90th Day - **ADJOURNMENT “SINE DIE”**

ACTIVITY THIS PAST WEEK

Most of our efforts so far this Session have been on our priority of reforming the Notary law and legalizing remote electronic notaries in Maryland. We are working in close coordination with Notarize Inc., the MD Bankers Assoc., MD Realtors and others, MLTA President Bill O’Connell and Legislative Committee Chair Clare Schuller served on a Work Group this past year which was under the auspices of the Secretary of State’s office. They had numerous meetings to look at Maryland’s law in comparison with other States, and released a Report on Dec. 20, 2018. However, the workgroup report did NOT recommend any legislation, and so it has been left to our private sector coalition to do so. We have drafted legislation, to be sponsored by Senator J.B. Jennings, the Senate Minority Leader, which should be introduced in the Senate very soon. It is based on the national model act

known as RULONA (Revised Uniform Law on Notarial Acts) and incorporates language allowing for remote electronic notarial acts. Once it is printed, we will send it out for review.

Below is a status report on some of the more important bills introduced thus far which may be of interest to you. I will update you immediately if there are any changes to the status, for instance when a committee hearing or vote is scheduled. Each week our report will include the status and any new bills introduced. Please let me know if any of them are of particular interest and if you want to weigh in on them, for instance by writing a letter, sending written or oral testimony, or if you want me to testify at the hearing.

If you want to view and read a bill, press Ctrl and click on the bill number in the left column. That will take you to the full status page on the MD Legislative website. If you then click on the bill number, it will come up in pdf format. Call anytime to discuss.

MLTA Bill Status

Current Status 2019 Regular Session

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Number / Chapter (Cross File / Chapter) Total: 5	Title	Primary Sponsor	Status	Original House Committee(s) and Hearing Dates	Opposite House Committee(s)) and Hearing Dates
HB0068	Real Property - Maryland Condominium Act - Powers of Council of Unit Owners	Delegate Holmes	First Reading Environment and Transportation	Environment and Transportation	
SB0025	Real Property - Conservation Easements, Covenants, Restrictions, and Conditions - Recording Notice	Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee	Hearing 1/22 at 1:00 p.m.	Judicial Proceedings 1/22/2019 - 1:00 p.m.	
SB0026	State Department of Assessments and Taxation - Expedited Document Processing	Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee	Hearing 1/22 at 1:00 p.m.	Judicial Proceedings 1/22/2019 - 1:00 p.m.	
SB0096	Baltimore City - Tax Sales of Real Property - Water Liens (Water	Senator Washington	Hearing 1/30 at 2:00 p.m.	Budget and Taxation 1/30/2019 - 2:00 p.m.	

[SB0122](#)

Taxpayer
Protection
Act of 2019)
Property Tax
Credits - Real
Property
Used for
Robotics
Programs

[Senator
Guzzone](#)

Hearing 1/30
at 2:00 p.m.

[Budget and
Taxation](#)
1/30/2019 -
2:00 p.m.