

How to Testify in Annapolis

The Legislative Process

The Maryland General Assembly meets for 90 days each year, from January thru April and is made up of two chambers: the Senate and the House of Delegates. There are 47 Senators and 141 Delegates, respectively. The members of both chambers are split into different committees and it is in those committees that bills are introduced for their



First Reading. The committees hear public testimony on the bills, can amend them, and eventually vote on the bills before them. The committee heads (Chairs) have tremendous power because they can decide whether or not to bring a given bill to a vote at all. If a bill is voted out of committee, it goes to the floor of the corresponding chamber for its Second Reading and vote. The chamber may further amend the bill. If it passes that second vote, it's on for its Third Reading. Upon passage, it's

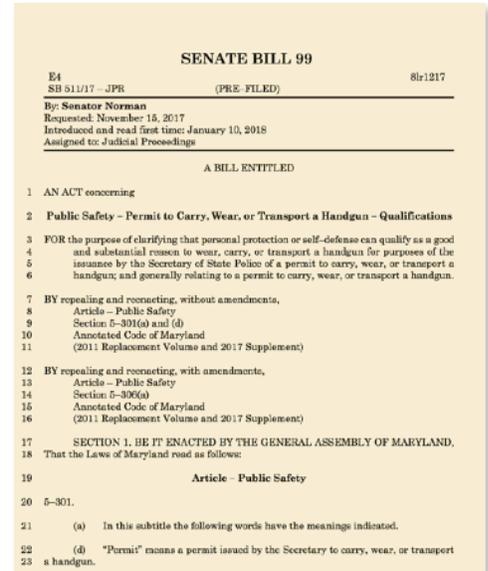
moved to the sister committee in the opposite chamber where the whole process starts over again. For a bill to become law, the identical language must pass the Senate and the House. It's sent to the Governor's desk where it can be vetoed, signed, or left alone to become law by inaction.

Learning About the Bills and Knowing Who Represents You

As current or potential gun owners, it's in everyone's interest to keep an eye on what our lawmakers are doing. We all know the effect laws have on us and the best way to prepare for what may be on the horizon is to read the bills. All legislation that is introduced in the General Assembly is available on their website for viewing (<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>). You can read the entire text of a bill, who introduced it, any amendments, and current bill status. Audio/Video streams and recordings are available for committee hearings there as well.

Maryland Shall Issue has a Legislation Tracker with our current position and testimony we have on the bills here: <http://bit.ly/LegTrk-18>

As a citizen of this State, you have every right to speak with your elected officials and let them know where you stand. Emails are *OK*. Phone calls are *good*. Visits are *great*. While it's entirely possible your representatives have an entirely different opinion or couldn't care less about what you think, it is still important to be a part of the record and let your voice be heard. Silence and inaction certainly cannot change anything. Some lawmakers have a vision of firearms and gun owners not based in the reality you understand. Educate them. Help them understand. If they still don't agree, well, that's what elections are for.



You can find out who represents you by clicking here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/firm1st.aspx?tab=home&poptype=find&popid=>

Visiting the Committees

For our purposes, most gun-related bills are introduced into the Judiciary committees of each chamber. In the House, we have the House Judiciary Committee (JUD) and in the Senate, the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (JPR). Each committee has their own rules for the submission of testimony and whomever is chairing each committee decides the procedures for what bills are called, the order they're called in, when and who may testify, for how long, and any other conditions they deem necessary. Currently, the JUD is Chaired by Delegate Joseph Vallario (D) and Vice-Chaired by Delegate Kathleen Dumais (D). Senator Bobby Zirkin (D) Chairs the JPR and Senator Delores Kelley serves as the Vice-Chair.

How to Get There

When coming down to Annapolis, pay attention to traffic and try to arrive early. I-97 can be finicky and parking availability is limited. Car pool with some friends if you can. Organize with your fellow supporters on social media and in forums. If you rely on public transportation, plan a route via the MTA (<https://mta.maryland.gov/>). The more voices we have in Annapolis, the better!

The House Judiciary Committee (JUD) is located at:

Room 101

House Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (JPR) is located at:

2 East

Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

Paid parking is available in garages in downtown Annapolis, or at the nearby Navy-Marine Corp Memorial Stadium. You can take a bus from the stadium into downtown for \$2 cash. The Calvert Street Garage is free to use after 6pm.

Information on the State Shuttle can be found here: <https://www.annapolis.gov/365/State-Shuttle>

Upon entering each building of the Legislative Complex, you must pass thru a security checkpoint and a metal detector. This is very similar to a TSA checkpoint at an airport. **DO NOT FORGET** to remove and secure any of your knives, guns and other tools **long** before entering the buildings. Make sure any bag you bring in is free of objects you wouldn't try bringing on an airplane. There is an x-ray machine and they will have you put your belongings thru it. You'll also need to present a photo ID to the security staff when getting screened. They'll also give you a sticker to wear. Make sure to keep it on throughout your stay.

After security, you'll head towards the committee room. In the hallways close to those rooms, you'll find touchscreens attached to the walls. Enter your personal information and then select the bills you're testifying on and whether or not you have a Favorable, Opposing, Favorable with Amendment, or Information Only position and whether or not you have Oral, Written, or no testimony on each bill. If you have no testimony, you can still choose whether or not to support or oppose each bill. Take your time here and be deliberate with your choices. ***Review your choices before hitting Submit.*** Once you've submitted, you're all set. Stay close to the chamber door to make sure you get a good seat after they open up (usually within 10-15 minutes of the hearing start time). Be aware that you may not wear hats, bring in signs, or consume any food or drink inside of the committee rooms.

Oral Testimony

As stated, each committee has their own rules for how testimony will play out. Generally, a bill or series of bills will be announced. The sponsor of the bill (Senator or Delegate) will give a description of the bill and testify on why it's needed. They may bring up witnesses they've selected to speak in support of the bill. Once they've finished, the chair of the committee will usually call upon expert witness panels: one to testify in support and one against the bill(s). After they finish, the chair will start calling upon everyone else who has signed up to testify, usually in alphabetical order of each witness's last name. The witness will be given a set time to testify (usually 2-3 minutes) on the bill or bills before them. ***Reading what you've submitted as written testimony is generally frowned upon.*** Instead, make or further a point that has not been stated yet by someone else. Respectfully speak your mind. Be sincere and concise. Represent your fellow self defense supporters well. Committee members may ask questions of you, so be ready to think on your feet. When the committee is finished with you, they'll call the next name and so on and so forth. If you're called upon and someone has already covered your points, it doesn't hurt to simply say "Support" or "Oppose" and cede your time (the Chair likes that).

These hearings can last quite a while and sometimes into the evening. Other bills may be heard before the gun bills come up, so be prepared to wait some time to speak. If you were unable to come down during the day because of work or other commitments, be sure to check social media, your email, forums, etc... to see if the proceedings are still going on because there still may be enough time for you to come down and testify in person!

Written Testimony

Once again, each committee has their own rules for submitting written testimony. Both Judiciaries require multiple copies of your testimony and there is a submission deadline which must be met in person. **Written testimony must include the following on the front page: the bill number, the name of the individual or organization submitting the testimony, and their position (Support, Support with Amendments, Oppose, or Informational).** Submitting written testimony alone doesn't require you to enter yourself on the touchscreens for your testimony to be received, but it doesn't hurt for you to do that as well. If you are unable to come down to Annapolis to submit your testimony yourself, reach out to your fellow supporters. Your Senator or Delegate's staff may also be able to help you out as well.

House Judiciary Committee

The JUD requires 30 COPIES of your written testimony and it must be submitted BEFORE 11AM. The Clerk's room is on the RIGHT of the committee entrance doors.

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The JPR requires 16 COPIES of your written testimony and it must be submitted BEFORE 12PM. The Clerk's room is on the RIGHT of the committee entrance doors.

Wrapping Up

As always, you can reach out to Maryland Shall Issue from our website, social media, or at info@marylandshallissue.org for any other questions and help you may need. Joining MSI will ensure that you are kept up-to-date on the happenings in Annapolis and supporting what we're doing to protect, promote, and restore the self defense rights of Marylanders.



www.marylandshallissue.org

References

Maryland General Assembly Website

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmlst.aspx?tab=home>

Virtual Map of Annapolis

<https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=28db352f76ce41cc8b24470a2d2f3d03#>

The Legislative Process

<http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPblTabLibResDocs/Legislative-Process.pdf>

Committee Rules

House Judiciary Committee (JUD):

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs-current/current-jud-faqs.pdf>

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (JPR)

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs-current/current-jpr-faqs.pdf>

General Assembly Legislative Services

<http://dls.maryland.gov/>