

Name _____

THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly first met as the House of Burgesses at Jamestown in 1619. It is now known as the “oldest continuous law-making body in the New World.”

Today, the General Assembly of Virginia is made up of two houses - the House of Delegates and the Senate. All members of the General Assembly are elected by the voters from the respective districts. The primary duties of the General Assembly are to amend and pass laws (work in committees, debate, on the floor of the legislature).



The General Assembly meets annually starting the second Wednesday in January. The sessions last for 60 days in even-numbered years and 30 days in odd numbered years. The governor may call a special session when it is deemed necessary or when petitioned by two-thirds of the members of both the House and the Senate. A reconvened session is held after adjournment of each regular session to consider the governor’s recommendations and vetoed legislation (A difference for the national legislature).



SENATE

The Senate of Virginia is composed of 40 members who serve a term of four years. The Lieutenant Governor is the presiding officer of the Senate and is elected in a statewide election for a term of four years. If the Lieutenant Governor is absent, the President pro tempore carries out the duties of the presiding officer. The President pro tempore is elected by the members of the Senate for a four-year term and must be a senior member of the majority party. The Clerk of the Senate is elected by the Senate and is responsible for the administration of the Senate and referring bills to committee.



HOUSE OF DELEGATES

The House of Delegates consists of 100 members who serve a term of two years. The presiding officer of the House of Delegates is the Speaker of the House who is elected by its members for a two-year term. The Speaker's duties include assigning bills to committees and appointing members to the 20 House standing committees. The Clerk of the House is elected by the House of Delegates for a two-year term and is responsible for the administration of the House.