

Legislative Education Group

Shaping Our Future



Legislative Education Group

Social Concerns — Parish Social Ministry
228 West Lexington Street — Suite 220
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-3432

P: 410.261.6782 / E: legislat@cc-md.org

www.cc-md.org

L.E.G. Member Handbook



Publisher: Catholic Charities
Office of Social Concerns and Parish Social Ministry
228 West Lexington Street — Suite 220
Baltimore, MD 21201-3432
410.261.6782
legislat@cc-md.org

©1999
Revised 2009

Disclaimer:

Without reference to candidates, political parties, or platforms, the Legislative Education Group seeks to educate members and parishioners about issues of importance. It does not intend in any way to endorse, oppose, or imply endorsement of or opposition to any candidate or political party.

Appendix B: L.E.G. Membership Application



**Join Catholic Charities’
Legislative Education Group
TODAY!**

“As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental option for the poor — to speak for the voiceless, to defend the defenseless, to assess life styles, policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor.”
- Economic Justice for All,
US Bishops

www.cc-md.org

Catholic Charities’ Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.), a network of concerned volunteers, impacts public policy on behalf of the vulnerable, voiceless, and powerless in our State. A non-partisan group, L.E.G. focuses on legislation affecting the aging, vulnerable children and families, people living with disabilities, and people who are poor.



Yes! I want to help L.E.G. protect the vulnerable, voiceless, and powerless in my community!

***Please Complete the Form
and Mail or Fax to:***

Catholic Charities
228 West Lexington Street — Suite 220
Baltimore, MD 21201-3432
p: 410.261.6782 / f: 410.889.0203

You may also email your information to: legislat@cc-md.org

L.E.G. Membership Application

Name: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	Email: _____
_____	Parish: _____
City: _____	Legislative District: _____ (if known)
State: _____	Zip: _____

Appendix A: How a Bill Becomes a Law in Maryland

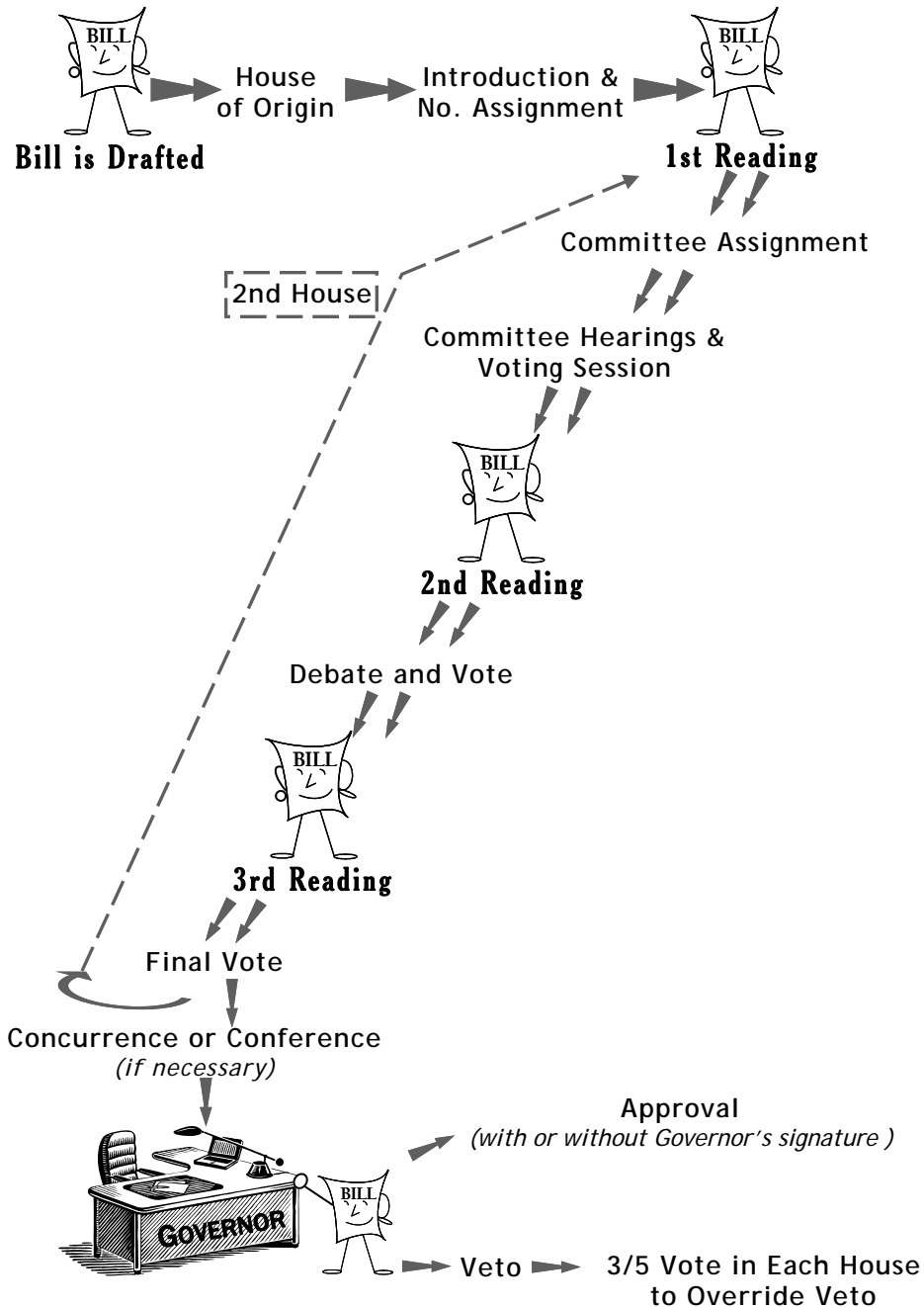


Table of Contents

Welcome to the Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.)..... 1

Why L.E.G. is Important 1

How L.E.G. Works..... 2

Communicating with Legislators and Policy Makers..... 6

About the Maryland General Assembly 8

How a Bill Becomes a Law 8

Finding Information on a Specific Bill 9

Parish Participation in the Political Arena..... 10

Appendix A: How a Bill Becomes a Law in Maryland 11

Appendix B: L.E.G. Membership Application 12

Welcome to the Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.)

WELCOME! On behalf of Catholic Charities' Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.), thank you for adding your voice to the chorus of concerned Christians and people of good will in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

For over 30 years, L.E.G. has impacted Maryland public policy on behalf of people in need. As a non-partisan volunteer network, L.E.G. focuses on legislation and issues affecting the aging, children and families, people living with disabilities, and people who are poor. L.E.G. consists of hundreds of individuals, like you, who want to live out their faith by impacting public policy.

Each year in Annapolis our legislators make many decisions about the quality of our lives and that of many others in our society. With your help, L.E.G. will continue to ensure that people who are concerned with Maryland's most vulnerable citizens will influence public policy decisions to create the best quality of life for all people in our state.

Why L.E.G. is Important

Many problems affecting the citizens of Maryland can be addressed or even solved by effective legislation. During the 90-day legislative session the Maryland General Assembly and the Governor make countless decisions that affect Marylanders' daily lives.

Passing effective legislation that focuses on the most vulnerable can help reduce or eliminate the challenges faced by people who are poor, the aging, children and families, and people living with disabilities. L.E.G. members help legislators understand why and how faith-based values should inform Maryland public policy. Since legislators may see up to 3,000 bills during the session, when L.E.G. draws attention to key bills, it can have a significant impact.

One of our greatest blessings in the United States is our right and responsibility to participate in civic life. Everyone can and should participate. Even those who cannot vote have the right to have their voices heard on issues that affect their communities.

~Faithful Citizenship:
A Catholic Call to Political
Responsibility

Parish Participation in the Political Arena

Parishes can play an integral role in supporting just public policy. The Church has a long tradition of protecting the powerless and vulnerable. In entering the public debate, the Church offers a wealth of experience in serving those most in need. It also brings its values to the discussion and highlights the moral dimensions of public issues. Catholic Christians are challenged to apply the resources of faith and the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy to build a society in which all can live in dignity and peace.

Parishes can engage in advocacy that supports or opposes *issues*. They cannot participate in any way in *partisan* political activities. Churches and other institutions with tax-exempt status cannot directly or indirectly support, oppose, or endorse candidates or political parties.

However, parishes may share Church teaching and its implications for decision-making and policy setting. They can facilitate voter education about issues, sponsor candidate forums during election years, and conduct voter registration drives.

For more information about conducting these types of activities, contact the Office of Social Concerns and Parish Social Ministry 410.261.6782 of Catholic Charities or the Maryland Catholic Conference at 410.269.1155.

Jesus called us to "love one another." Our Lord's example and words demand care for the "least of these" from each of us. Yet they also require action on a broader scale. Faithful citizenship is about more than elections. It requires on-going participation in the continuing political and legislative process.

~Faithful Citizenship:
A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

Second Reading: The bill is reported to the full house by the committee. It is open to amendments by any member of the house.

Third Reading: The bill must be printed for third reading with all amendments included in this final version. No amendments may be presented on third reading in the house of origin. The bill must be passed by a majority.



Second Chamber:

- The bill goes to the other house, and the procedure is repeated, except amendments may be proposed during the second and/or third reading.
- If the second house amends the bill, it must return to the originating house for consideration.
- If the originating house does not accept the amendment, it can request that the amendment be withdrawn.
- Either house can request that a conference committee made up of members of both houses review the legislation and recommend a course of action.

The Governor reviews all bills passed and may either sign a bill, let it become law without a signature, or veto it. To override a veto, the Assembly must have a 3/5 vote in each house. During the first year of a new term, the legislature cannot override a veto.

Finding Information on a Specific Bill

Maryland:

Library & Information Services	410.946.5400 or 301.970.5400
Maryland General Assembly	800.492.7122
90 State Circle	http://mlis.state.md.us
Annapolis, MD 21401	See "Bill Information and Status"

Federal:

House Document Room, B-18	Senate Document Room
Annex 2	SH-B 04
Washington, DC 20515	Washington, DC 20515

For bill status: see <http://thomas.loc.gov> or email thomas@loc.gov or call 202.225.1772.

How L.E.G. Works

L.E.G. members are encouraged to do the following:

- *Review educational materials sent in late fall about the people for whom we advocate and the potential issues of concern during the legislative session.*
- *Carefully read and respond to Action Alerts sent up to five times between January and mid-April. A one-page alert (see Figure 1: Sample Action Alert on the following page) explains one issue, includes facts, recommends a position, suggests an action, and includes a sample letter.*
- *Encourage other parishioners, friends, and colleagues to join L.E.G.*
- *Attend the briefing co-presented by Catholic Charities and the Maryland Catholic Conference early in the session, usually a Saturday in late January.*
- *For Catholic L.E.G. Members: Meet your legislators on Catholics in Annapolis Night – sponsored by the Maryland Catholic Conference (usually scheduled for Presidents' Day, the 3rd Monday of February).*
- *Pray for our legislators.*
- *Review an update after the session that details the outcome of L.E.G.'s actions.*

Citizens should cultivate a generous and loyal spirit of patriotism, but without narrow-mindedness, so that they will always keep in mind the welfare of the entire human family which is formed into one by various kinds of links between races, peoples, and nations.

~ *The Church in the Modern World*

Figure 1: Sample Action

March 2009

L.E.G. ALERT: Keep Seniors Safe

Dear L.E.G. Member:

We write asking you to support legislation that requires the Maryland State Police to establish a Silver Alert Program, which will help locate missing seniors who suffer from cognitive impairments including Alzheimer's disease or dementia. The proposal is **HB 317 / SB 303 – Silver Alert Program – Establishment**.

Background:

- Maryland currently uses an AMBER Alert system which activates urgent bulletins to help locate children who have been abducted.
- Currently, Maryland *does not* have a similar alert system to locate missing vulnerable adults.

HB 317 / SB 303 Would:

- Require the State Police to establish a Silver Alert Program to quickly disseminate information to help find a missing person who suffers from Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other cognitive impairments.
- Require the State Police to:
 - Develop procedures for issuing a Silver Alert when there is a threat to the health and safety of the missing person.
 - Provide training and assistance to local law enforcement agencies to help in the safe recovery of a missing vulnerable adult.
 - Work with the State Highway Administration, television, and radio broadcasters, local volunteer groups, and other members of the public to develop and implement the Silver Alert Program.
 - Consult with the MD Department of Education to develop a program allowing high school students to assist in the search for a missing person as part of their required student service learning.

Why Support HB 317 / SB 303?

- It would help the police find missing adults whose health and safety are at risk due to their age and / or health.
- As the population of older Marylanders is rapidly increasing, this bill would provide a much needed system to assist with the safe return of vulnerable adults who may become lost and confused as they navigate their daily lives.

About the Maryland General Assembly

The Maryland General Assembly has served nearly continuously from Maryland's founding in 1634. For over 370 years, the Maryland General Assembly has consisted of citizen legislators – part-time elected officials who live and work in their communities.



General Assembly Facts:

- 188 members – 47 Senators, 141 Delegates
- Maryland is divided into 47 legislative districts
- About 3,000-3,500 pieces of legislation are introduced each year – only about 25% pass
- 90-day session (with occasional special session), mid-January through mid-April

Much of the work of the General Assembly takes place in committees, which are organized by policy areas. In the Senate, the committees are:

- Budget and Taxation;
- Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs;
- Finance; and
- Judicial Proceedings.

In the House of Delegates, they are:

- Appropriations;
- Environmental Matters;
- Economic Matters;
- Health and Government Operations;
- Judiciary; and
- Ways and Means.

The presiding officer appoints each legislator to one of these committees.

How a Bill Becomes a Law (See Appendix A, page 11)

First Reading: The title of the bill is read and the bill is assigned to a committee.

Committee Action: The committees meet daily to receive testimony and take action on bills assigned.

With other like-minded advocates and officials...

L.E.G. MEMBERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- 2009 L.E.G. members asked Governor O'Malley and our State legislators to help preserve and fortify service to vulnerable Marylanders, including at-risk children and those living on low incomes. The legislature sustained these services by avoiding decreases in funding as the need for these services continues to increase.
- 2008 L.E.G. members supported a bill to raise the workforce standards and require certification for people who provide daily, direct care to children in residential child care programs or "group homes". These improvements are now law.
- 2007 L.E.G. members supported a bill that allowed an automatic expungement of a police record when a person is arrested, but not charged with a crime. With L.E.G.'s encouragement, the bill passed, helping to remove a major barrier to persons seeking employment and housing.
- 2006 L.E.G. members successfully urged the legislature to override the Governor's veto of an increase in the minimum wage. Maryland's minimum wage is now \$6.15/per hour (up from \$5.15).

What Can I Do?.

Write or Send an Email

We have the opportunity to support this legislation to require the Maryland State Police to establish a Silver Alert Program, like the AMBER Alert system for abducted children, to help locate missing vulnerable adults. Your action is particularly important to older Marylanders who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other cognitive impairments, as well as their families and caregivers. These bills can help save lives.

Write or email a brief note to the legislator from your jurisdiction on the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee (*list follows*). If your legislator does not serve on either committee, please send a note to the Chairperson.

A "Sample Alert Letter" is enclosed on the following page to help you with your letter.

Thank you for your willingness to speak out in support of this very important legislation which will assist with the safe recovery of older Marylanders who are missing and at risk due to their age, health, or other conditions. A quick response system is necessary to protect missing vulnerable adults from threats to their health and safety. When writing or emailing your letter, please be sure to include the House Bill Number and the Senate Bill Number (HB 317 / SB 303).

Sincerely,



Sr. Joan Marie Stief, L.E.G. Coordinator
Catholic Charities — Parish Social Ministry

"The signs of humanity frailty which are clearly connected with advanced age becomes a summons to the mutual dependence and indispensable solidarity which link the different generations, inasmuch as every person needs others..."

~To The Elderly, 10/1/99 Letter
Pope John Paul II

SAMPLE LETTER OR EMAIL



Delegate's Name
House Office Building, Room #
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Senator's Name
Miller Senate Office Building OR
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: *Support of HB 317 / SB 303 – Silver Alert Program – Establishment*

Dear Delegate OR Senator OR Chairman:

As a Maryland resident who cares about the health and safety of our vulnerable adult Marylanders, I support HB 317/ SB 303.

With a rapidly increasing number of senior population, more and more Marylanders are suffering from Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and other cognitive impairments. Due to their impairment, they are at greater risk of becoming disoriented and lost. If they become lost, their health and safety will be at great risk. Maryland needs a system in place, similar to the AMBER Alert for abducted children, to ensure a quick response from our police and a rapid dissemination of information to help locate the missing adult.

HB 317 / SB 303 which requires the State Police to establish a Silver Alert Program will help ensure the safe return of our vulnerable adults who are missing and need supervision.

I urge you to vote **FOR HB 317 / SB 303**.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Address

Communicating with Legislators and Policy Makers

When To Speak On Behalf Of Others

Generally, L.E.G. members contact legislators at one or more of these points:

- 1) Early in the legislative process (sometimes before the session begins) in mid-January.
- 2) When a bill is heard in committee.
- 3) Just prior to a full floor vote – especially if your legislators are not on a committee that has previously dealt with the bill.

How To Speak On Behalf Of Others

In all communication:

- Identify yourself by name and hometown.
- Specify the name and bill number that you would like to discuss.
- State your position briefly. Limit yourself to one issue.
- Thank legislators for past votes and for supporting your position, if you know they agree.
- Be positive and constructive.
- If calling, ask you legislator to return your call if you speak to a staff person.

Visit Your Legislator

- Call ahead to make an appointment with the legislator (or staff person if the legislator is unavailable).
- Respect the value of your own and the legislator's time and discuss only one issue.
- If appropriate, ask why a legislator opposes your opinion or thank the legislator for sharing your view.
- Leave any written materials with the legislator at the end of your visit.
- Follow up the visit with a thank-you note and request to be kept informed about the issue.