

Legislator Orientation in Maryland

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland

Program Overview

- 4 Year Election Cycle
- Orientation is held after election results are certified, usually in early December
- Program developed by DLS with oversight and guidance of presiding officers
- A mix of policy briefings and “nuts and bolts”
- Over time the program has evolved to respond to legislator feedback

History

- Maryland has held a new legislator orientation since the mid-1980s.
- Original format was policy issue briefing heavy
- The State's colleges and universities provided academic experts to present and discuss policy issues.
- Duration was usually three days with the better part of two full days given to policy briefings.

Yet more history

- The early program required coordination between the two major staffing agencies.
- As note, the university system was heavily involved, both in terms of providing academic expertise for briefings and in underwriting the costs of some of the social program (e.g., one dinner and reception)
- Most of, if not the entire program held in Annapolis, but off-site.

Changes were spawned as a result of the 1998 program

- Held on the first three days of December
- Included party caucuses, issue panels, overview of staff services, tours of complex, House and Senate procedures, a briefing by the Judiciary, discussion groups, two dinners, three luncheons (two with speakers), and a staff fair
- Looks good, right? Surveyed new members had other ideas

1998 – the Time Breakdown

- Total time excluding dinners = 24 hours
- Policy/issue briefings
(including Judiciary) 25%
- Luncheons 23%
- Staff services and staff fair* 21%
- Registration 6%
- Complex tours 6%
- Discussion groups 6%
- Chamber procedures 4%
- Party caucuses 4%
- Official opening 2%

* Note: Staff services included all professional services, ethics counsel, and all administrative functions (e.g., HR, IT, tax consequences)

We asked for feedback

- We asked about:
 - Dates of the Program
 - Length of the Program
 - Program Content and Format
 - Social Activities
 - Our Staff
 - Overall Assessment
 - Other Comments

And we got it. . .

- Several major programmatic changes implemented
 - Replaced University orchestrated issue briefings (one and a half days of panels) with four 45 minute concurrent sessions presented by DLS staff
 - Increased the time spend on “nuts and bolts” issues
 - Added sessions on ethics and sensitivity training
 - Reduced program length from three to two days

Current Program

- Two full days
- Requiring legislators moving from House to Senate to participate, as well as members appointed during previous term who have less than two sessions' experience
- Increased time spend on “nuts and bolts” – Almost entire first day
 - Legislative Process (including budget process and State finances)
 - Ethics
 - HR matters
 - Setting up and managing Annapolis and district offices
 - Staff services
- Deferring sensitivity training to later date
- DLS staff provide issue briefings
- Chamber procedures, Security, Staff Fair
- Opening luncheon and one dinner (Also luncheon buffet with respective presiding officer and their staff)
- Take away materials provided

A word about the “Magical Mystery Tour”



The magical mystery tour is waiting to take you away,
Waiting to take you away . . .

The Purpose and Elements

- To familiarize new members with the bigger picture in the State
- To provide an opportunity for new members to get to know each other and veteran legislators who also went along for part or all of the trip
- Buses and overnight stays – usually 3 or 4 days and held after orientation
- Organized primarily by Speaker's staff with President's
- Not done last time and future uncertain