

Massachusetts Genealogical Council

www.massgencouncil.org

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FROM DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

by Bernard J. Couming, MGC President

Springtime brings a new season of hope in the opportunity and challenge of many critical issues as the 183rd session of the Massachusetts General Court has convened. Currently, the reorganization issues presented by the new governor's restructure of his administration, as well as the structural realignments from the new senate president's office have imposed some process delays. The budget crisis also commands the full attention of both the governor's team and the combined house and senate leadership.

Meanwhile, commanding the attention of the genealogical community in the state, (as well as many outside the state's boundary), the reformation of the state's vital record administration awaits its turn in the spotlight. Four Senate bills and ten House bills have been filed relative to vital records including the (MGC) Mass. Genealogical Council's bill, S-405 and the Mass. (DPH) Department of Public Health's bill, H-1465. These two bills are comparable to the initial filings of these two proponents of a year ago. The MGC bill has been modified slightly, to provide some closer approach to noncontroversial sections of the DPH bill. The DPH bill, on the other hand has the same objectionable language of last July, (and it even omits the ameliorating language improvements in the last year's bill as it was ultimately modified to appease the genealogical community at the end of the year during informal session).

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ANNUAL MEETING: Election of Officers/Directors

According to the By-Laws of the Massachusetts Genealogical Council, Officers and Directors of MGC are elected for 2-year terms. Elections are held in odd-numbered years and conducted at the Annual Meeting. Officers and Directors take office on June 1st. The next Election of Officers will take place at the Annual Meeting on March 29, 2003. The Nominating Committee is required to present a list of at least one nominee for each office and directorship to the general membership. Candidates for offices must have been members of MGC for at least one full year. Nominations may also be made by the general membership from the floor at the Annual Meeting, provided each nominee has given consent to serve, if elected. All members in good standing may vote.

**Officers and Delegates of
the Massachusetts
Genealogical Council**

Bernie Couming, President

Daphnah Sage, Vice President

Peter Viles, Treasurer

Sandra Gambone, Secretary

Ann Dzindolet, Director of
Archives, Massachusetts Society of
Genealogists Delegate

Shirley Barnes, Director of Civil
Records

Georgie Hallock, Asst. Dir. of
Civil Records

Mary Ellen Grogan, Director of
Newsletter

Sharon Sergeant, Director of
Programs

Bobby Lyman, Director of
Publicity

Sheila Fitzpatrick, Director of
Ways and Means

Jewish Genealogical Society of
Greater Boston Delegate

William H. Potter, Descendants of
Whaling Masters Delegate

Essex Society of Genealogists
Delegate

Arlene Jennings, Friends of Silvio
Conte Archives Delegate

Suzanne Richardson, Genealogical
Roundtable Delegate

Wheaton Wilbar, Massachusetts
Chapter of Mayflower Descendants
Delegate

New England Historic
Genealogical Society

Mary Choppa, The Irish Ancestral
Research Association Delegate

Joan Sheridan, Waltham Historical
Society Delegate

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following slate :

OFFICERS

President: Bernie Couming

Vice-President: Daphnah Sage

Treasurer: Peter Viles

Secretary: Sandra Gambone

DIRECTORS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Director of Archives: Ann Dzindolet

Director of Civil Records: Shirley Barnes

Directors of Newsletter: Mary Ellen Grogan, Georgie Hallock

Director of Program: Sharon Sergeant

Director of Publicity: Bobby Lyman

Director of Ways and Means: Sheila FitzPatrick

The MGC welcomes and encourages all members to be active participants on the committees. Please contact us via the PO Box or website and let us know how you would like to be involved.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

By Georgie Hallock

She was a very proud woman. I was informed that she had paid over fifty dollars for a brief genealogical study by a professional to look for one of our common ancestors. My dedicated amateur status was just beneath her consideration. My research could not be right: the man was described in my report as a tenant farmer. (She is also a cousin and there is a certain disdain between us.)

"Okay, let me see what you've got", I said.

"Here he is in England. You can see how very special he was. You were totally wrong about him. He was not just a tenant farmer; he was an AGLAB."

"Very interesting. Did your source tell you what an AGLAB is?"

"No, but it has to be important because they put it in capital letters."

I did not know what else to tell her, nor did I suppose that she would believe me if I told her that our "distinguished" ancestor was an agricultural labourer.

MASSACHUSETTS VITAL RECORDS LEGISLATION REVIEW

By Sharon Sergeant, Director of Programs

Budgetary difficulties now present the strongest motivation for changes. A special Senate committee comprised of Robert E. Travaglini, Stan Rosenberg, Cynthia Stone Creem, Susan C. Fargo, Harriette L. Chandler, Robert O'Leary and Michael R. Knapik issued ***A Report of the Special Committee to Recommend Mitigation for Local Aid Cuts*** with the following recommendation:

“Relating to Birth, Marriage, and Death Records (HD2428)

- The bill relating to the birth, death and marriage records would permit the development of a statewide database to serve the needs of the public.
- Through a surcharge on certified copies of vital records, the state projects income of \$1.28 million in the first year, rising to \$2.09 million in the seventh year, with surpluses ranging from \$327,000 to \$663,000.” (see <http://www.stanrosenberg.com/mitigation.html>)

The bills filed in the legislature present a murkier picture. Contact your legislator for copies of these bills. Several close vital records!

The MGC created Senate Bill 405 AN ACT RELATIVE TO BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH RECORDS a petition of Susan C. Fargo, Charles E. Shannon, Susan W. Pope, Robert L. Hedlund and other members of the General Court. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/st00405.htm>

Senate Bill 408 RELATIVE TO THE MANAGEMENT OF CERTAIN RECORDS a petition of Guy W. Glodis, Bruce E. Tarr, Brian A. Joyce, Anthony J. Verga and John P. Fresolo for legislation relative to the management of adoption records by city and town clerks <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/st00408.htm>

Senate Bill 443 AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE USE OF ELECTRONICALLY RECORDED VITAL RECORDS a petition of Michael W. Morrissey – most notably "Special certified copy", may include, but are not limited to, professional, personal or genealogical research. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/st00443.htm>

Senate Bill 533 AN ACT RELATIVE TO THE ELIMINATION OF RESEARCH FEES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S VITAL RECORDS DEPARTMENT a petition of Irving R. Murstein and Robert L. Hedlund <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/bills/st00533.htm>

House Bill 143 Petition of William M. Straus for legislation to regulate the use of social security numbers for identification purposes in the Commonwealth <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h00143.htm>

House Bill 545 Petition of Thomas P. Kennedy and Robert S. Creedon, Jr., relative to the issuance of certified birth records to Native Americans (to correct the race listed on their birth certificates at no charge when proof is presented). <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h00545.htm>

House Bill 1085 Petition of Elizabeth Poirier, Jo Ann Sprague, Michael J. Coppola, Scott P. Brown, Martin J. Walsh and Shirley Gomes relative to access to birth records of certain persons born out of wedlock (opens records in those cases where the father's name is listed). <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h01085.htm>

House Bill 1321 of J. James Marzilli, Jr. relative to the treatment of vital records of certain non-marital children. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h01321.htm>

House Bill 1465 Petition of Daniel E. Bosley relating to birth, marriage and death records [This is a resubmission of the July 2002 version of the H5158 bill which last year passed the House and was blocked in the Senate.] <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h01465.htm>

House Bill 1656 Petition of of Peter V. Kocot relative to the issuance of certified birth records to Native Americans. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h01656.htm>

House Bill 1661 Petition of Anthony J. Verga and Christopher P. Asselin relative to disclosure of information concerning certain birth, marriage and death records - closes all birth records after 1913 and all marriage and death records after 1953, such that only immediate family or representatives may access either the indices, the records or the certificates – at the discretion of the custodian.

<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h01661.htm>

House Bill 2233 Petition of Thomas J. O'Brien, other members of the House and another relative to birth, marriage and death records. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h02233.htm>

House Bill 2459 Petition of Paul C. Casey relative to the issuance of certain birth and marriage records - exempts vital records recorded before 1 Jan 1841 [that is, before reporting to the state was required] and those for which volunteer waivers were registered from Section 2A of chapter 46 of the General Laws.

<http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h02459.htm>

House Bill 3147 Petition of Brian S. Dempsey for legislation to further regulate the issuance of death certificates. <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/history/h03147.htm>

FROM DESK OF THE PRESIDENT *(continued from page 1)*

At any rate, this is our initial read of the situation. The MGC has formed a committee to monitor and interact on behalf of our proposal. We will study the language of each bill and have already begun further proposed modifications to our bill to attempt to bring our proposal closer to the DPH bill elements. Needless to say, these adjustments shall not condone the closing of access to records long held as public information in Massachusetts. We hope, prior to public hearings, to gain access at the table where language evaluation and adjustment is prepared. There is not much optimism that we will gain that access, and actual progress will likely be made only as we face the committee at the public hearing. As soon as we have a public hearing date we'll notify the community. I'm sure that our webpage and our e-mail contact lists will suffice to spread the alarm. Those not online who wish notification should make arrangements with friends who are online.

The public hearings are done in bill categories, such as telecommunications, utilities, licensing, gaming, et cetera. The seven filed bills for vital records will be taken up together under the umbrella of "miscellaneous category". They have typically been held in late March or April, and this year there seems to be little chance of any hearings before April. (An early calendar of hearings was proposed by the Joint Committee on Governmental Regulations responsible for this issue, but that was aborted when the Sergeant at Arms was unable to assign any hearing room for the proposed schedule. That Committee's first public hearing, regarding gaming - of eight bill categories, has now been proposed for April 18th but may well be cancelled for lack of meeting space assignment.) Note that this Committee has 198 bills before it in these 8 categories.

Please continue to watch this space in future editions for updates as they unfold. Of course those of you registered to attend our Annual Meeting Conference on the 29th of this month at Regis College in Wellesley MA will participate in ongoing discussions and the latest news at that time.

IDENTITY THEFT

By Mary Ellen Grogan and Georgie Hallock

Identity theft is commonly cited as the reason for closing access to vital records. In fact, identity theft is very seldom the result of open vital records.

According to the United States Postal Services Publication 280:

Identity theft involves acquiring key pieces of someone's identifying information, such as name, address, date of birth, social security number and mother's maiden name, in order to impersonate them. This information enables the identity thief to commit numerous forms of fraud which include, but are not limited to, taking over the victim's financial accounts, opening new bank accounts, purchasing automobiles, applying for loans, credit cards, and social security benefits, renting apartments, and establishing services with utility and phone companies.

The Post Office website (http://www.usps.com/postalinspectors/idthft_ncpw.htm) states:

Identity theft is now the No. 1 consumer fraud in the nation. It almost always involves the U.S. Mail. U.S. Postal Inspectors, charged with protecting the nation's mail system from criminal misuse, recommend you follow these guidelines:

- Deposit outgoing mail in a designated collection box and promptly remove mail from your mailbox after delivery.
- Shred pre-approved credit applications and all other financial documents before discarding them in the trash.
- Every year, order and thoroughly review copies of your credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies.
- Never give personal identifying information over the telephone or the Internet unless you initiated the contact.

What's the primary source of information used in identity theft? Information you supply yourself to obtain loans, credit cards, etc.

The Associated Press reported on Monday, November 25, 2002:

Largest identity theft ring in U.S. history busted: Information taken from more than 30,000

Manhattan U.S. Attorney James Comey said the arrests mark the largest identity theft case in U.S. history, with initial losses pegged at \$2.7 million and growing. More than 15,000 credit reports were stolen using passwords belonging to Ford Motor Credit Corp. to access information from Experian, a commercial credit history bureau, officials said. Credit reports also were stolen from other companies, authorities said. Authorities say the scheme began about three years ago when a help-desk worker at a computer software company, agreed to give an unidentified co-conspirator the passwords and codes for downloading consumer credit reports. Victims have reported losing money from their bank accounts, seeing their credit cards hit with unauthorized charges, and having their identities assumed by strangers.

[Editor's Note: this paragraph is an edited version of the original. Quotes, names and descriptions have been deleted for space reasons.]

LAWMAKING IN MASSACHUSETTS

[Observing a Committee Hearing](#) | [Observing a House or Senate Session](#)
[Participating in the Legislative Process](#) | [Glossary of Terms](#)

[This document is provided on the webpage of the General Court of Massachusetts. It is an excellent presentation of the legislative process. We have printed it here unedited and complete because it is a valuable resource for all our members. See also: <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/lawmkng.htm>]

The responsibility for enacting laws in Massachusetts rests primarily with the state legislature, formally known as the General Court. It is divided into two branches: a 160-member House of Representatives and a 40-member Senate. The two legislative branches work concurrently on pending laws brought before them.

Lawmaking begins in the House or Senate Clerk's office where petitions, accompanied by bills, resolves, etc., are filed and recorded in a docket book. The clerks number the bills and assign them to appropriate joint committees. There are 21 of these committees, each responsible for studying the bills which pertain to a specific area (i.e., taxation, education, health care, insurance, etc.). Each committee is composed of six senators and eleven representatives.

The standing committees schedule public hearings for the individual bills, which afford citizens, legislators and lobbyists the opportunity to express their views. Committee members meet at a later time in executive session* to review the public testimony and discuss the merits of each bill before making their recommendations to the full membership of the House or Senate. The committee then issues its report, recommending that a bill "ought to pass" or "ought not to pass" and the report is submitted to the Clerk's office.

NOTE: An "executive" session in the legislature is not private. The public may observe, but not participate in, these meetings.

The first reading of a favorably-reported bill is automatic and occurs when the committee's report appears in the Journal of the House or Senate Clerk. Matters not requiring reference to another Joint, House or Senate committee are, following the first reading, referred without debate to the Committee on Steering and Policy in the Senate (except certain special laws relative to a city or town), or placed in the *Orders of the Day* (the *Calendar*) without debate, for a second reading in the House.

If a bill affects the finances of the Commonwealth, it is referred to the Senate or House Committee on Ways and Means after the first reading. If it affects county finances, the bill is read and referred to the Committee on Counties of the House (if the matter is reported into the House).

Adverse reports ("ought not to pass") are also referred to the Committee on Steering and Policy* in the Senate or placed without debate in the *Orders of the Day* for the next session of the House. Acceptance by either branch of an adverse report is considered the final rejection of the matter. However, an adverse report can be overturned. A member may move to substitute the bill for the report, and, if the motion to substitute carries, the matter is then given its first reading and follows the same procedure as if reported favorably by committee.

NOTE: The Committee on Steering and Policy was established in 1986 to advise the Senate on the order of priorities of the matters referred to it, on the urgency for consideration of such matters, and

on alternative methods of responding to such matters. The committee is required to report on the Senate floor on the bills referred to it no later than 30 days after receiving them, and before the last formal sitting of the legislative session.

After a bill takes its second reading, it is open to debate on amendments and motions. Following debate, a vote is taken and if the bill receives a favorable vote by the membership, it is ordered to a third reading and referred to the Committee on Bills in the Third Reading. This amounts to preliminary approval of the bill in that branch.

That committee examines technical points, as well as the legality and constitutionality of the measure, and ensures that it does not duplicate or contradict existing law. The committee then issues a report and returns the bill to the House or Senate for its third reading. At that time, legislators can further debate and amend the bill. Following the third reading, the body votes on "passing the bill to be engrossed."

The bill must then pass through three readings and engrossment in the second legislative branch. Should that occur, it is sent to the Legislative Engrossing Division where it is typed on special parchment in accordance with the General Laws.

However, if the second branch passes an *amended* version of the bill, the legislation returns to the original branch for a vote of concurrence in the amendment. If concurrence is rejected, a conference committee consisting of the three members from each legislative branch representing both political parties may be formed to effect a compromise piece of legislation. When a compromise is reached, the bill is sent to both legislative branches for their approval.

A vote "to enact" the bill, first in the House and later in the Senate, is the final step in the passage of a bill by the legislature.

Following enactment, the bill goes to the governor, who may sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without signing it (if the governor holds the bill for ten days without taking any action while the legislature is in session, it becomes law without his or her signature), veto it, or return it to the legislature with recommended changes. If the legislature has concluded its yearly session, and the governor does not sign the bill within ten days, it dies. This is referred to as a "pocket veto." The ten-day period includes every day except Sundays and holidays, and it begins the day after the legislation is laid on the governor's desk.

A bill signed by the governor, or passed by two-thirds of both branches over his veto, becomes a law. It is usually effective in ninety days. The day after the governor signs the bill is considered to be the first day, and each succeeding day, including Sundays and holidays is counted until the ninetieth. Laws considered "emergency" in nature take effect immediately upon signing if the legislature has voted to attach an "emergency preamble" to the bill. Adoption of the preamble requires a two-thirds standing vote of the membership.

The governor may also declare an act to be an emergency law and make it effective at once. A special act takes effect thirty days from the day it is signed, unless it contains a provision to make it effective immediately.

The Legislative Process: Accessible to All

The workings of the legislature are accessible to you as a citizen of Massachusetts. You are strongly encouraged to observe the proceedings at the State House.

Observing a committee hearing

Call the House Clerk's office at 722-2356 or the Senate Clerk's office at 722-1276 or check the newspapers for the schedules of public hearings on legislative proposals. Most hearings occur during the morning, Monday through Thursday, between February and April.

Upon arrival at the State House, go to the Legislative Documents Division (Room 428), where you can obtain a copy of the *Daily List of Legislative Committee Hearings*. It contains a list of bills upon which testimony will be heard on that day. Bills concerning the same general subject are usually grouped together and heard at a single hearing.

Copies of bills under consideration may be secured either in Room 428 or in the hearing room. Also available to you are *Bulletins of Committee Work*, containing the names of the members of each committee, as well as a listing and brief legislative history of all bills assigned to each committee. Most hearings are informal. Visitors are allowed to enter and leave the hearing room at any time during the proceedings.

The Senate or House chairperson conducts the hearing on matters before joint committees. Bills are generally discussed in the order of their appearance in the *Daily List*. Customarily, the testimony of the proponents is presented first, followed by that of the opponents. Legislators and constitutional officers are permitted to speak out of turn.

The hearing ends following completion of testimony on the bills under consideration. Later, the members meet in executive session to discuss the bill as described earlier.

Observing the House or Senate in Session

The House of Representatives and the Senate usually meet Monday through Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. in formal session, and Thursday at 11:00 a.m. without a Calendar. Formal sessions of the House and Senate are broadcast live on local television (Channel 44).

Public galleries for observing the activity within the chambers are located on the fourth floor and visitors are permitted to enter and leave freely.

The presiding officers in each chamber are elected by the full membership of the respective branches at the beginning of each biennial session of the legislature. The presiding officer in the House is the Speaker of the House; in the Senate, the presiding officer is the Senate President. The presiding officer first takes up matters which are not listed in the *Calendar*, such as reconsideration or enactment of bills, and adoption of resolutions and orders. The body then proceeds to those matters listed in the *Orders of the Day*. Informal, or non-Calendar sessions consider only non-controversial matters.

You may obtain the *Calendar* for the House or Senate sessions from the Legislative Documents Division, Room 428. This document will enable you to follow the proceedings of the legislative session.

The clerk of each branch reads each bill by title before any action is taken on it. The clerk's staff records the proceedings of each session. Any member desiring to debate a specific item on the *Calendar* calls out "pass" when the item is read by the clerk. The item is then "passed" for debate. After all non-controversial items are disposed of, the "passed" items are taken up.

Debate on a bill may occur during the second and third readings. The clerk identifies the bill by title before debate is allowed to begin. Following the conclusion of debate, a vote is taken.

When a vote is taken on a bill, the presiding officer in each branch calls, "all those in favor, say 'aye'; opposed 'nay'." He or she then interprets the consensus of the membership. A member doubting that ruling may request a standing vote or a roll call. The later is ordered if at least twenty members of the House support it. In the Senate, one-fifth of the members must support the request for a roll call.

In the Senate, roll call votes are conducted orally. Each member's name is read and the vote recorded, with the results tallied by the clerk. An electronic voting system is used in the House. There, each representative is assigned a desk with a roll call box, which is connected electronically to the roll call boards* in the front of the House chamber. During the vote, a member presses either a "yea" or a "nay" button on his or her desk corresponding respectively to either a green or red light beside the member's name on the roll call board.

NOTE: The roll call board on the left side of the chamber contains the names of the majority membership, beginning with members of the leadership. The remaining party members are listed below in alphabetical order onto the board on the right side of the chamber. Members of the minority party leadership and their members follow.

When the vote is completed, a tally is shown at the top of the boards, beneath the number of the bill upon which the vote was taken.

Participating in the Legislative Process.

Massachusetts citizens are permitted and encouraged to take an active role in the lawmaking process of the state legislature. It is a good idea for a person who feels strongly about an issue to present his or her ideas to a representative or senator. That person may discover that those concerns have already been formulated into a bill which is awaiting legislative action. If not, the citizen is allowed to file legislation addressing the subject. Massachusetts is one of the few states to allow its citizens to do so. This access is called the "right of free petition."

Although it is not mandatory that a representative or senator sponsor a citizen's bill, the rules of the House and Senate provide that a petition must be endorsed for presentation by a member before it can be considered by the General Court. Obtaining the support of individual legislators, then, is most advisable.

Due to the new rules established to allow the carry over of legislation from the first to the second year of a term of the General Court, legislation must be filed in either the House or Senate Clerk's office by the first Wednesday in December prior to the first year of the term of the General Court. Legislation filed subsequent to the filing deadline would thus be subject to Joint Rule 12 and would require approval by the committees on Rules of the Two Branches. Only matters filed by the Governor and matters that have local approval of a city or town would be exempt from the joint rule provision.

When a bill is filed, it is recorded in a docket book in the Clerk's office. The book provides the name of the legislator filing the bill, the names of the petitioners, the subject matter of the bill and the number the bill has been given for the legislative session. The books are especially useful when one is trying to locate various pieces of legislation of a similar nature before the *Legislative Bulletin* is published or the formal listing of all legislation appears in the subject index. (A partial subject index

is available in the Clerk's offices shortly after all legislation has been filed in the first year of a term of the General Court; a more complete version is available usually by mid-year. Pending legislation from the first term is now carried over into the second term, effective with the 1995-1996 session of the General Court).

The petitioner may want to contact other petitioners whose legislation addresses the same issue as the one in which he or she is interested. Working cooperatively rather than independently can increase the impact of the proponents' arguments.

A petitioner should be well-prepared before testifying at a public hearing. Well-organized, well-researched presentations and statements naturally have a positive influence on committee members. If unable to attend a public hearing, a petitioner should prepare written testimony which can be accepted by a committee before the scheduled hearing.

Petitioners should prepare a summary of the planned testimony and make a number of copies for distribution to committee members, staff members and any media representatives present. This allows members to make notes on the testimony while the petitioner is speaking. If the petitioner is serving as a spokesperson for a group, he or she should mention that to the committee prior to testifying. Very often, only written testimony is accepted on refiled bills.

At the conclusion of the presentation, committee members may request further information or clarification. After all testimony is heard, the hearing is complete and the committee will meet, in executive session, either that day or at a later time, to decide whether to issue a favorable or unfavorable report.

The committee report is crucial to the survival of a bill, since the recommendations of all committee reports are generally followed by the legislature.

"Money" bills (bills imposing a tax) must be first reported in the House. Following the first reading of such a bill it is referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means for further study. Ways and Means issues a report which is sent to the House; the bill is then read a second time and continues through the legislative process. The same procedure is followed when the bill reaches the Senate. Petitioners should remain in contact with the Clerk's office or the appropriate committee to find out when the bill will receive a reading before the full body. Petitioners should also try to attend that legislative session so that they can encourage support of legislators to speak in favor of the bill. If the bill survives the debate in the second reading, a vote will be taken on "ordering the bill to a third reading," and the process continues as described earlier.

As the bill continues through the legislative process, the petitioner should work to convince legislators to support it. The survival of any bill depends on continued favorable votes in both branches of the legislature.

If the bill passes in both branches, it is sent to the House and then to the Senate for a "vote to enact" the bill. Enactment is usually a formality but it does represent the final passage of a bill by the legislature.

The last step in the process is action by the governor. Letter-writing campaigns and telegrams are often utilized to acquaint the governor with citizen support or opposition.

After the bill is signed by the governor, it becomes law, usually effective in ninety days. However, there may be an "emergency preamble" attached to some laws, making them effective immediately, as explained earlier.

The process of bringing a bill to fruition as a law in Massachusetts is a long, often tedious, one. However, it is also very exciting and extremely worthwhile. It brings the average citizen of the Commonwealth much closer to state government. And, quite likely, if a petitioner is successful in gaining acceptance for the legislation, that law will be in existence long after he or she and all the legislators who passed it have departed from the scene.

Glossary of Terms.

Act: A bill that has been signed into law by the governor.

Acts and Resolves: A compilation of the bills and resolves enacted and passed by the legislature and signed by the governor. Bound in a volume on a yearly basis.

Adjournment: Termination of daily session.

Adverse Report: A committee recommendation that a matter ought not to pass.

Bill: Document accompanying a petition, usually asking for legislative action of a permanent nature.

Committee on Bills in the Third Reading: A committee of three which is empowered to examine and correct bills and resolves prior to their final reading in the Senate or House, resolutions prior to their adoption, and amendments to bills, resolves and resolutions adopted by the other branch and before the body for concurrence.

Concurrence: Agreement by one branch with an action originating in the other branch.

Conference Committee: Committee consisting of three members from each body (one senator and one representative acting as chairmen) appointed by the legislative leaders to resolve differences between the two bodies with regard to specific matter. Failure of the committee to agree or failure of one body to accept the committee's recommendation results in the appointment of a new conference committee.

Daily List: List of committee hearings giving the committee, its matters, and the time and room number of each hearing.

Emergency Preamble: A preamble to a bill setting forth the facts constituting an emergency, and the statement that the law is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety or convenience. Matters with emergency preambles become law immediately upon approval by the governor. Either the governor or the legislature may attach a preamble.

Enactment: Final passage of a bill by the House or Senate.

Engrossed Bill or Resolve: Final version of a bill or resolve before the House or Senate for final action after being typed on special parchment by the Legislative Engrossing Division and cited by the clerk.

Favorable Report: A committee recommendation that a matter ought to pass. A matter takes its first reading at this time.

Formal Session: Meeting to consider and act upon reports of committees, messages from the governor, petitions, orders, enactments, papers from the other branch, matters in the *Orders of the Day*, and various other matters which may be controversial in nature and during which roll call votes may be taken.

General Laws: Legislative act applying generally to the Commonwealth and its citizens.

House and Senate Rules: Rules of order and procedure adopted by that branch at the beginning of each biennial session.

Informal Sessions: Meeting designated by the Speaker of the House and Senate President to consider reports of committees, enactments, papers from the other branch, amendments, matters in the *Orders of the Day*, and various other matters which are of a *non*-controversial nature. Any session may be declared an informal session with prior notice given, or in cases of an emergency.

Initiative Petition: Request by a specified number of voters to submit a constitutional amendment or law to the people for approval or rejection. The petition is introduced into the General Court if signed by a number of citizens equaling three percent of the entire vote for governor in the preceding gubernatorial election. If a proposed initiative law fails to pass the General Court, additional signatures are required to place it on the ballot. A proposed initiative constitutional amendment approved by at least one quarter of the General Court, sitting in joint sessions by two consecutively elected General Courts, can be placed on the ballot.

Joint Committees: Twenty-one committees, consisting of six senators and eleven representatives, responsible for holding public hearings and reporting on all legislative matters referred to them.

Joint Rule 10: Rule ordering that all matters referred to joint committees be reported out of committees by the fourth Wednesday in June of the first annual session of the General Court. If the matter is referred to committee after June 15 of the first annual session of the General Court, it must be reported out within 10 days, excluding Sundays and holidays.

Joint Rule 33: Rule allowing the alteration, suspension or rescision of joint rules by a concurrent 2/3 vote of members present and voting. Some rules are suspended only by a 4/5 vote and a very few by unanimous consent.

Joint Rules: Rules for the governing of the two bodies adopted by both branches.

Lay on Table: To temporarily lay aside the consideration of a specific bill, resolve, report, amendment or motion. If laid on the table, consideration is postponed until a subsequent motion taking the item off the table succeeds. A motion to lay on the table can be made only in the Senate.

Legislative Bulletin on Committee Work: A complete listing of all matters and the committees to which they are assigned. A short description of each matter, its number, hearing date and committee report can also be found here.

Legislative Record: Numerical listing of all numbered matters filed for consideration by the General Court. Includes a brief description of the matter and its full legislative history.

Massachusetts General Laws: All of the laws of Massachusetts of a general and permanent nature as embodied in the Official Edition of the Massachusetts General Laws (which are updated on a monthly basis), together with all amending and related general statutes subsequently enacted down through the current session of the General Court.

Money Bill: A Bill that transfers money or property from the people to the Commonwealth, i.e., a bill that imposes a tax. These bills must be taken up in the House of Representatives first.

Order: Formal motion in writing, not requiring the governor's signature, which is temporary in nature and is used to establish investigative committees, to change rules and for other parliamentary actions.

Orders of the Day (Calendar): Listing of most matters to be considered by the Senate and the House at each sitting.

Override: To overturn the governor's veto by a 2/3 vote of the members present in both the House and Senate.

Pairing of Votes: Procedure allowed in the Senate only, whereby a member, before the vote is taken, announces to the Senate that he or she has paired his or her vote with an opposing vote of an absent member. The two votes do not affect outcome of the final tally.

Pass a Resolve: Final passage of a resolve by the House or Senate.

Petition: A request describing the nature of the proposed legislation and the objects sought by it, signed by the petitioner, and accompanied by a draft of the bill or resolve embodying the legislation proposed.

Pocket Veto: A veto resulting from the governor's failure to sign a bill following prorogation or dissolution of the General Court. Because the session has ended, the bill will not automatically become law after ten days and the General Court has no opportunity to override the veto.

Point of Order: Challenge to the breach of order or rule.

Proposal: Document accompanying a petition introducing legislative amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth.

Prorogation: Termination of a legislative year by agreement of the governor and both legislative bodies.

Quorum: Twenty-one members in the Senate, eighty-one members in the House. Quorum is set by rule.

Recess: Temporary delay in proceedings.

Reconsideration: Motion to reconsider a vote on action previously taken. Any member may propose reconsideration and if the motion prevails, the matter is voted on again. Must be moved prior to entering upon the *Orders of the Day* on the next legislative session.

Referendum Petition: A petition signed by a specified number of voters to repeal a law enacted by the legislators, and requesting that the legislation be suspended until the vote is taken.

Refile: A petition similar to one which was presented to the General Court in a previous year.

Report of Committees: Recommendation on a legislative matter by the committee to which it was referred.

Resolution: Documents which may or may not accompany a petition expressing an opinion of the sentiment of one or both branches of the General Court, used for congratulations, for memorializing the Congress of the United States regarding public questions, etc. Resolutions do not require the governor's signature.

Resolve: Document accompanying a petition, usually asking for legislative action of a temporary or immediate nature; e.g., establishing temporary investigative commissions.

Senate and House Journals: Records of proceedings in each chamber for each legislative day, including matters considered, amendments offered and votes taken.

Special Law: Legislative act applying to a particular county, city, town or district, individual or group of individuals and not general in nature.

Standing Committees: Eight permanent committees in the Senate (Administration, Rules, Ways and Means, Bills in Third Reading, Ethics, Post Audit and Oversight, Science and Technology, Steering and Policy) and in the House (Rules, Ways and Means, Bills in Third Reading, Ethics, Counties, Post Audit and Oversight, Personnel and Administration) which serve their respective legislative bodies separately.

Substitution for an Adverse Report: Procedure by which a committee's adverse report is overturned. The original or a new but very similar bill, resolve or resolution is substituted for the adverse report.

Veto: Governor's objection in writing to legislation enacted by the General Court. The legislation is returned to its branch of origin.

IMPORTANT ONLINE RESOURCES FOR MASSACHUSETTS

Search the Massachusetts General Court Site: <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/gcsearch.htm>

There is a search box in which you type in a term (ex., vital records). The default will return all current bills and enacted state laws with that term. You can choose only to search specific categories of legislation.

Find a Legislator: the following websites provide names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and biographies for all Massachusetts Legislators.

Senators: <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/memmenuh.htm>

Representatives: <http://www.state.ma.us/legis/memmenuh.htm>

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Celebrating History: Anniversaries to Educate, Promote and Preserve History

Date: Friday, May 9, 2003

Location: Merrimack College, North Andover

Description: Organized by Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin, the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board and the Essex National Heritage Commission, the forum will bring together archivists, historians, librarians, educators, scholars, genealogists and other interested parties from public, private, and nonprofit organizations. The forum will offer a full day of speakers and sessions to examine the practical ways historical records and archival materials can be utilized in the celebration of histories, anniversaries and commemorative activities. For additional information, contact Bill Milhomme, Field Archivist at (617) 727-2816 x257 william.milhomme@sec.state.ma.us

National Genealogical Society Annual Conference in the States

Dates: Wednesday, May 28 to Saturday, May 31, 2003

Location: David Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, PA

Registration: NGS members, \$200 (\$175 by March 17); non-members, \$225 (\$200 by March 17). \$10 discount for online reservations. Special workshops and meals have an additional charge.

Hotels: Several hotels are holding rooms for this conference ranging from \$115 to \$132 per night. See the website for details

Website: <http://www.eshow2000.com/ngs/>

Description: The conference includes 143 lectures, 16 workshops, and 84 speakers. Presenters include nationally known speakers such as Sharon Carmack, Cyndi Howells, Helen Leary, Elizabeth Shown Mills, and David Rencher. Massachusetts makes a significant contribution in presentations by: Nancy Arbeiter, George Handran, Henry Hoff, and Michael LeClerc. Topics include: English Research; Colonial Families; Methodology; Military Records; Land Records; and Italian, Irish and Jewish Genealogy.

New England Regional Genealogical Conference (NERGC)

Dates: Thursday, November 6 to Sunday, November 9, 2003

Location: Sea Crest Oceanfront Resort & Conference Center in Falmouth, MA

Registration: \$99 per person for the entire conference; special workshops and meals have an additional charge.

Hotel: The NERGC Group Rate is \$99.00 per night, + tax for a single or double. Each additional person in the room will be charged \$10.00 + tax, per night. Book early, this rate is only in effect until 5 October 2003. Call 800-225-3110 (mention NERGC)

Website: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~manergc/conference/information.htm>

Description: NERGC is composed of New England genealogical and historical societies. These conferences are well respected and well attended. If you have never attended a genealogical conference, you will find NERGC an excellent introduction to both theory and practice. This conference features 40 speakers and 65+ lectures and/or Workshops. With a choice of five lectures in each period, there will be something of interest to all genealogists. NERGC always features a good Exhibit Hall (shopping!!) and lots of friendly faces.

Be sure to keep these activities in mind. I can personally recommend them. *[Mary Ellen Grogan]*

- ***Genealogy 101:*** A series of three lectures on Thursday afternoon for the Beginner, or a review for family genealogists who want to brush up their skills and methodology.
- ***Photography Workshop:*** On Thursday afternoon three Photo Workshops in a row, over three hours for only a \$15.00 fee over the Conference Registration Fee. Be sure to bring some family photos with you to this exciting afternoon.
- ***Sunday Morning:*** Dr. James W. Gould will lead the group in a typical early New England Sunday Quaker (Friends) Meeting.

MGC ANNUAL MEETING AND SEMINAR: Beyond Vital Records

- Date: Saturday, March 29, 2003
- Location: Alumnae Hall, Regis College, 235 Wellesley St., Weston, MA
- Registration: \$20 for MGC members, \$30 for non-members. Your registration includes a continental breakfast and a full range of soup, salad, sandwich and brunch style waffle and omelet stations provided by the Regis cafeteria.
- Vendors: The vendors will open before the conference starts and will be available through the lunch break and perhaps later. Be aware that most vendors are small operations and will only take cash and checks.

The Massachusetts Genealogical Council's By-Laws mandate an annual educational conference on genealogical issues. This conference is held in conjunction with our Annual Meeting and helps us focus on good research techniques, and the proper use and preservation of our records - whatever form they may take

Program

- 8:00 to 9:00 - Registration
- 9:00 to 10:00 -MGC Annual Meeting will review what we learned in 2002, what legislation has been filed in the 2003 session, information about the public hearings process and what you can do to make sure that your legislators represent your interests. The election of officers will take place.
- 10:15 to 11:15 - **Peter Koutoujian**, former President of the Massachusetts City Clerks Association and 30-year veteran of the Waltham City Clerk's office: *From the Office of the City Clerk: Records, Resources and Issues in Massachusetts Towns and Cities*
- 11:30 to 12:30 - **Ruth Thomasian**, Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives Founder: *Using Photographs to Gather Oral History: Stirring Memories for Individuals and Groups*
- 1:30 to 2:30: **Sharon Howland**, Washington County Maine Records Preservation Fund Founder: *Grassroots Organizations for Records Preservation: Washington Country Maine Records Preservation Fund Model*
- 2:45 to 3:45: **David Lambert**, New England Historic Genealogical Society Reference Librarian: *Read Between the Lines: Getting the Most Out of Newspaper Research*

Call 781-209-8861 or visit our website www.massgencouncil.org for more information

 Please make checks payable to Massachusetts Genealogical Council and mail to
 P.O. Box 5393, Dept. AM, Cochituate, MA 01778-5393

REGISTRATION for Massachusetts Genealogical Council Annual Meeting and Seminar

The cost, including continental breakfast and lunch, is \$20 for individual MGC members and \$30 for non-members. Non-members may join at this time by sending \$27.50 (\$7.50 for 2003 individual annual membership dues plus the seminar admission price of \$20 for members)

Name _____ Member ___ Non-Member ___
 Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____ Amount Enclosed _____

Registrations received by March 20, 2003 will guarantee admission and lunch. Let us know if you need any assistance with access or public transportation information

Massachusetts Genealogical Council
P.O. Box 5393
Cochituate, MA 01778-5393

Have you remembered to renew
your membership?

If the date above your name on the mailing label does not read "03", you may need to renew your membership.

Annual Dues:

\$7.50 Individuals
\$10.00 Organizations
\$15.00 Sponsors

Please make checks payable to
Massachusetts Genealogical Council
and mail to: P.O. Box 5393, Cochituate,
MA 01778-5393

The **Massachusetts Genealogical Council** is dedicated to serving the interests of the state's genealogical community. Founded in 1980, the Council's stated aim is to develop and promote the study and exchange of ideas among persons and organizations interested in the pursuit of genealogy. Its programs and activities are designed to complement those of the many genealogical and hereditary societies throughout the state and to provide a statewide forum for genealogists. One of the Council's leading functions is to represent the concerns of genealogists in the halls of state and local government. The Council monitors the activities of agencies which bear on genealogical interests and testifies at hearings and other forums of government. The Council promotes the preservation and publication of state and local records and also provides information about them. It guards the rights of all researchers' access to public records and educates genealogists about the proper use and preservation of these records.

The MGC Board meets four times a year. Meetings are open to all interested genealogists, and we welcome your participation. Massachusetts genealogical organizations are urged to send a representative to these meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for: May 3, 2003.

Annual Meeting: The 2003 Annual Conference will be held on Saturday, March 29. Information on this program is included in this newsletter, and is available on our website. All genealogists are welcome to attend.

Newsletter: If you have information, notices, etc., that you would like included in the MGC Newsletter, please send them to the Newsletter Editor, Massachusetts Genealogical Council, P.O. Box 5393, Cochituate, MA 01778-5393 or email megrogan@ix.netcom.com.