

# Wicomico County, Maryland

## Council-Administrator\* or Council-Executive

### An Outline of the Arguments

#### Existing Structure

#### Proposed Structure

#### Underlying Premises

##### Council-Administrator

- Voters elect council members.
- County Council performs legislative and executive functions.
- Council appoints administrator who manages county services under the direction of the council.

##### Council-Executive

- Voters elect council members and county executive.
- County council performs legislative functions; county executive performs executive functions.
- Executive manages county services while council performs legislative oversight.

#### Arguments in Favor of Each Form

##### Council-Administrator

- All government activity is unified in a single body: the county council.
- Political power is diffused among seven council members, allowing checks and balances.
- Management is nonpolitical yet guided by elected officials.
- Unified government minimizes the potential for gridlock.
- Administrator is a full-time professional assuring government efficiency.
- Present form of government fits the population character of the county.

##### Council-Executive

- One person is declared the head of county government.
- Concentration of power in the executive creates an effective spokesman and lobbyist.
- Executive is accountable to the voters for county management.
- Two branches of government check and balance one another.
- Executive devotes full-time to the job, creating greater efficiency.
- Sophisticated government operations require one person to manage them.

#### Arguments Against Each Form

##### Council-Administrator

- Political accountability for county operations diffused among seven council members.
- Management initiatives require council members to agree among themselves (consensus).

##### Council-Executive

- No assurances that qualified candidates for county executive will run for office.
- Cost of change may be too high, especially when county revenues are capped by charter amendment.

\*Council-administrator is the name that is frequently used at the county level to refer to the council-manager form of government.