

# Law on the Frontlines

*Legal Reference for Public Libraries*



## Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference

TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC 2022 10 rev.

This session is being recorded.

# Introductions



Catherine McGuire  
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Assistant Law Librarian  
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# Pre-Assessment

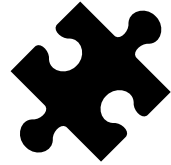
Review each of the following statements and respond with TRUE or FALSE. We will review at the end of class.

1. When someone asks for the law, they just need the Code.
2. If a patron asks for a legal form, I know where to look to find it.
3. Laws are pretty much the same between the states. What is law in Pennsylvania is the same as in Maryland.
4. If a patron wants to appeal their case, I know that information on the Court of Appeals is all that they need.
5. When a patron asks for court cases, I can help them identify which cases will be most helpful for them to use.

# Learning Outcomes



Describe the structure of government



Explain the connection between the structure of government and finding law



Utilize primary sources of law



Assess options for forms and select appropriate options

# Access to Justice

*A quick review...*



# What is Law?

Language passed by government bodies that holds force over all parties in a particular jurisdiction

# Test Yourself – Is it Law?

- Maryland Code
- Senate Bill
- Federal Register
- COMAR
- Carroll County Code
- Annapolis City Ordinance
- Brief in the opinion of Smith vs. Doe



The "need to know" for  
effective reference

# Three branches and the law they make




**LEGISLATURE**

*Congress  
General Assembly  
County Council*

Statutory Law

Statutes  
(aka Acts, Session  
Laws, Ordinances)



*Source: Maryland Code*

**EXECUTIVE**

*President  
Governor  
executive agencies*

Regulatory Law  
Administrative Law

Regulations  
Executive Orders




*Source: COMAR*

**JUDICIARY**

*Courts  
(appellate, trial)*

Case Law

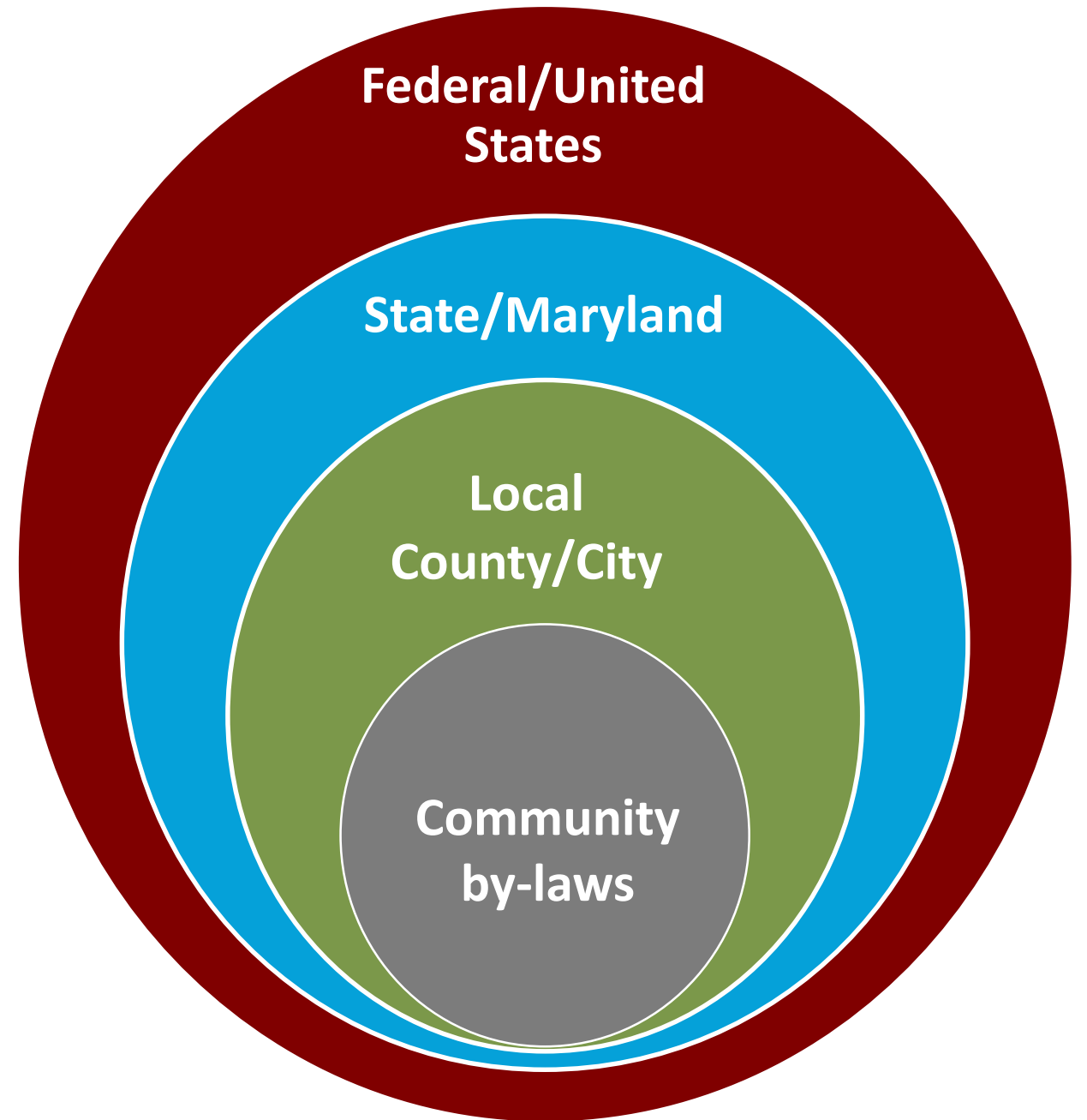
Cases, aka opinions  
Rules of Procedure



*Source: Case Reporters*

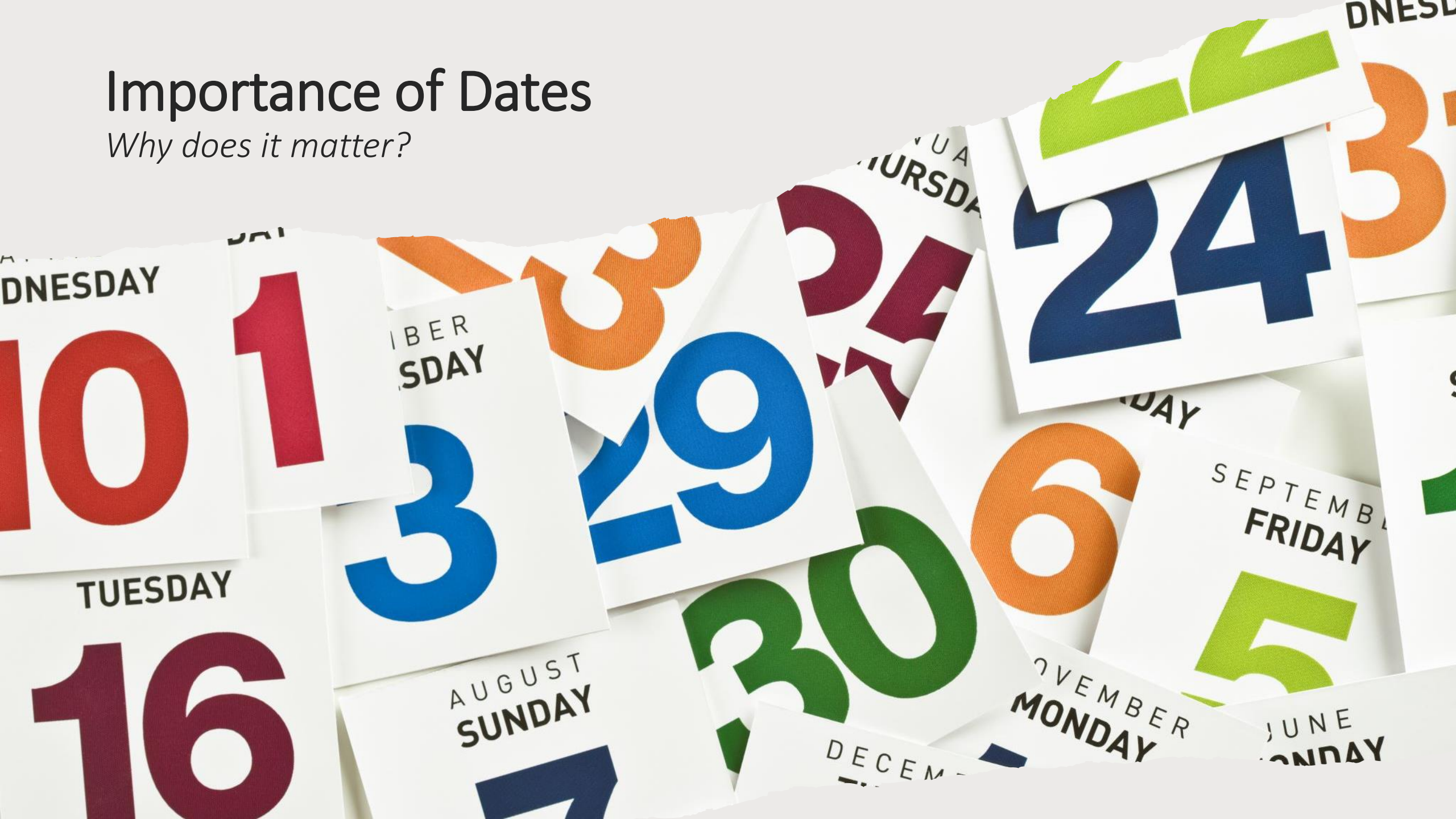
# Location, Location!

*Where something takes place matters*



# Importance of Dates

*Why does it matter?*





Language of Law  
What does it mean?

# Recognizing Citation Formats

Md Code, Family Law §5-104

07.01.02.05

Jane Doe vs. John Johnson, 413 Md. 817

# Finding the Law

The screenshot shows the top portion of the Maryland Courts website. At the top left, the text reads "MARYLAND COURTS" in a large, bold, serif font, with the tagline "Fair, Efficient, & Effective Justice For All" underneath in a smaller, italicized serif font. To the right of this text is a search bar with the placeholder "Site Search" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar are links for "Opinions Search" and "Search Tips". A horizontal navigation bar below the header contains the following menu items: "HOME", "USING THE LIBRARY", "RESEARCH", "ABOUT US", "PEOPLE'S LAW LIBRARY", and "ASK A LAW LIBRARIAN". Below the navigation bar is a grey banner for the "Thurgood Marshall State Law Library". On the left of this banner is the library's logo, which features a scale of justice inside a circular seal with the text "MARYLAND THURGOOD MARSHALL STATE LAW LIBRARY". To the right of the logo, the text reads "Thurgood Marshall State Law Library" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, followed by the address "361 ROWE BOULEVARD", "ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401", and the phone number "410-260-1430 | 888-216-8156". Below the phone number is the email address "LAWLIBRARY@MDCOURTS.GOV". At the bottom of the banner are two search boxes: "Search Catalog" and "Search Library Website", each with a "Search" button.

- YOU ARE IN:
- Research
  - Catalog
  - Gateway to Maryland Law
  - Databases
  - Research Guides
  - Collections
  - Special Collections Room

## Gateway to Maryland Law

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library has an extensive collection of primary and secondary sources focusing on Maryland law. Many of these resources are available online, but some require physical presence at the Library to access.

[Maryland Code](#) | [County and Municipal Codes](#) | [Court Rules](#) | [Case Law](#) | [Regulations](#) | [Attorney General Opinions](#) | [State Publications](#) | [Task Force Reports](#) | [Incorporated by Reference](#) | [Law Reviews and Journals](#)

## Maryland Code and Laws of Maryland

Maryland statutes are passed by the General Assembly, Maryland's legislative body. The Laws of the State of Maryland is a chronological collection of laws passed by the General Assembly.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Maryland Code and Rules](#)
- [Maryland County Codes](#)
- [Maryland Law Collections](#)
- [Maryland Law Reviews and Journals](#)
- [Maryland Municipal Codes](#)
- [Maryland Publications](#)
- [Scanned Collections](#)
- [Task Force Reports](#)

<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/research/gateway-to-md-law>

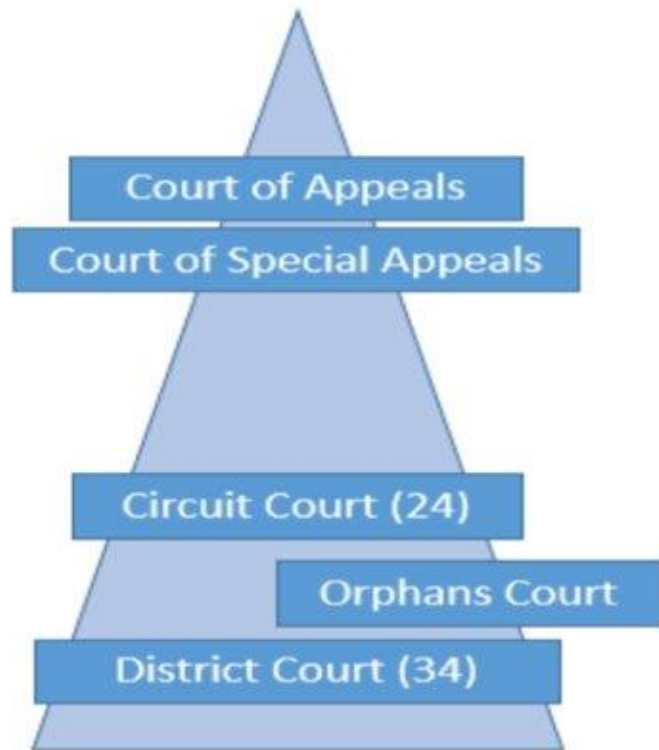
# Practice Time

Using the Gateway to Maryland Law, find the following:

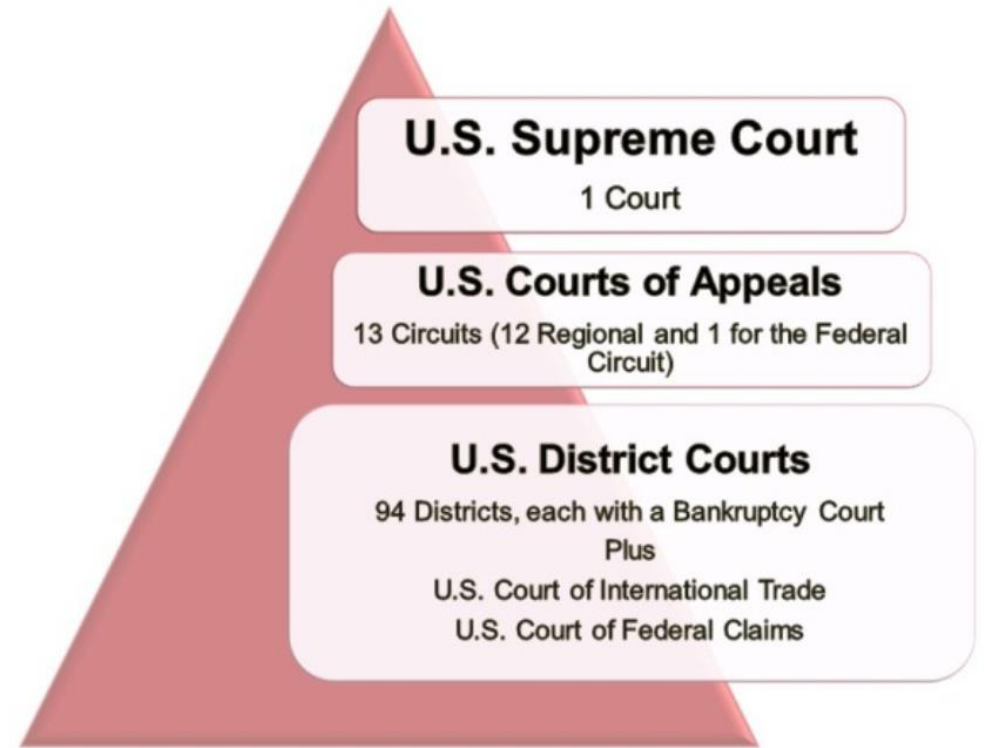
1. Md Code, Nat. Res. §4-803 – what is this section about?
2. Find the Md Code section that addresses actions for evictions for nonpayment of rent in a mobile home park.
3. Find the COMAR regulations addressing the topic from question #1
4. Does your local county code include any language about the keeping of chickens?



# Court Structure



**Maryland Courts**



**Federal Courts**

# Case Law

## **Secondary Sources**

- Can provide citations to primary law

## **Case law databases**

- Westlaw / Lexis (fee-based)
- [Google Scholar](#) (free)

# Practice Time

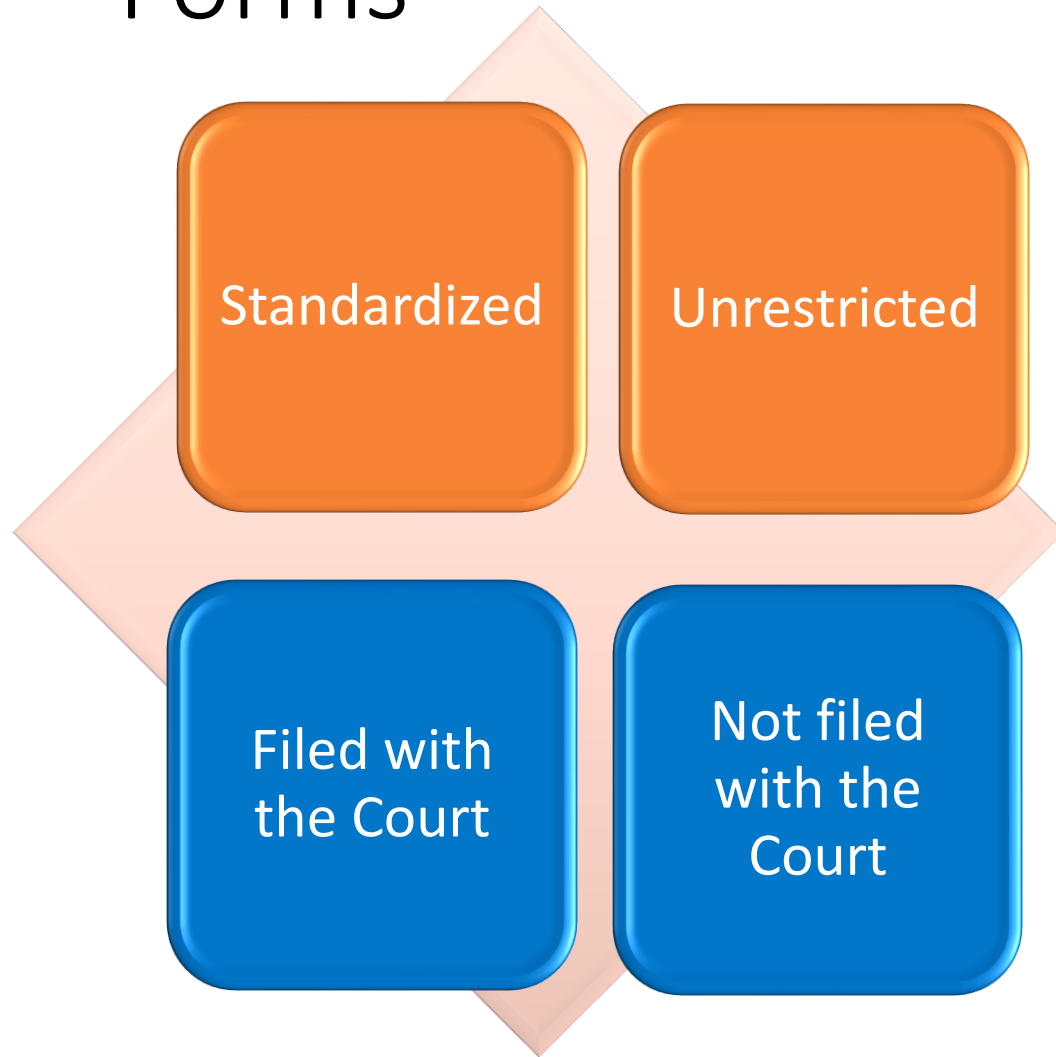
Using the Maryland PLL website, find the article on Defamation Law; locate and write down the citations to the two Maryland cases cited for this topic.

Then, go to Google Scholar. Look up one of the two citations you identified. Check the "how cited" tab. Does the other case appear in the list?

# Test Yourself – Is it Law?

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# Forms



- Standardized fill-in-the-blank forms are rare in MD
- Standard court forms are on MDcourts.gov
- MD Rules contains formatting
- Sample forms books provide examples and guidance
- Identifying the right form is often *advice*
- When in doubt – contact a law library

<b>Standardized Forms</b>		<b>Unrestricted Forms</b>	
<b>Filed in Court</b>	<b>Not Filed in Court</b>	<b>Filed in Court</b>	<b>Not Filed in Court</b>
Most District Court Forms	Power of Attorney	Motions	Wills
Most Family Law Forms		Complex Civil Complaints	Leases
Bankruptcy			Contracts

# Let's find some forms...

Using the free version of Westlaw's Maryland Code & Rules from the Gateway to Maryland Law, find the statutory form for a limited power of attorney.

Using the Maryland Judiciary's website, find the form for Petition for Guardianship of a Minor.

When you  
hit a wall...


# Maryland Law Libraries


Thurgood Marshall State Law Library 

## Circuit Court Law Libraries

Allegany County


Charles County 

Prince George's County 

Anne Arundel County 


Dorchester County

Queen Anne's County

Baltimore City 

Frederick County

St. Mary's County

Baltimore County 

Garrett County

Somerset County

Calvert County

Harford County

Talbot County

Caroline County

Howard County 


Washington County 

Carroll County 


Kent County

Wicomico County

Cecil County

Montgomery County 

Worcester County

 indicates the library is staffed.

<https://mdcourts.gov/ccll>



# Post-Assessment

Let's review each of the following statements again. Respond with TRUE or FALSE. Is your response different now than it was at the beginning of this class?

1. When someone asks for the law, they just need the Code.
2. If a patron asks for a legal form, I know where to look to find it.
3. Laws are pretty much the same between the states. What is law in Pennsylvania is the same as in Maryland.
4. If a patron wants to appeal their case, I know that information on the Court of Appeals is all that they need.
5. When a patron asks for court cases, I can help them identify which cases will be most helpful for them to use.

# Self-Education: Basic Civics

- Schoolhouse Rock, *Three Ring Circus* (YouTube)
- [Center for Civic Education](#)
- National Constitution Center [video collection](#)
- [USA.gov/branches-of-government](https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government)

# Self-Education: Legal Reference

- Maryland Judiciary video – What is the Law?  
<https://mdcourts.gov/video/selfhelp/what-law>
- Frontlines – recordings and slides from past sessions  
<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training/PLR-schedule-training>
- Frontlines – Legal Reference Training  
<https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training>

# Want some practice?

[Sign-up](#) for one of our hands-on LAB sessions on

- November 2, 2022 (9:00 am -10:00 am)
- November 15, 2022 (9:00 am -10:00 am)



Questions?