

Jamestown's System of Government

As Jamestown grew, the system of government developed and changed. The Virginia Company of London decided that the colonists should elect representatives to meet with the governor (the top leader of the colony) and the governor's council. A representative is someone chosen by a group and given the power to make decisions for its members. Certain free adult men elected two representatives, called **burgesses**, from each of the different parts of the colony and in 1619, the governor of Virginia called a meeting of the General Assembly. The **General Assembly** included two burgesses, along with the governor's council and the governor. They met as one **legislative**, or lawmaking, body.

By the 1640's, the burgesses became a separate legislative body called the **House of Burgesses**. They began meeting separately from the governor and the governor's council, as one of the two legislative bodies of the General Assembly. This was the first elected legislative body in English America giving settlers the opportunity to control their own government.

Currently, the Virginia General Assembly is based on the establishment of the House of Burgesses at Jamestown in 1619.