

# SENATE BILL 535

L2

11r2142  
CF HB 826

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By: **Carroll County Senators**

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2011

Assigned to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Committee Report: Favorable

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 18, 2011

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Carroll County – Abatement of Nuisances**

3 FOR the purpose of altering the number of days' advance notice the County  
4 Commissioners of Carroll County must give to an owner or occupant of property  
5 before removing a certain nuisance or menace; authorizing a property owner or  
6 occupant to file an appeal of a certain determination that a nuisance or menace  
7 exists to a certain hearing officer or board of appeals within a certain time after  
8 receiving notice of the determination under certain circumstances; requiring a  
9 hearing officer or board of appeals to hold a certain hearing and issue a certain  
10 written decision on the determination of the existence of a nuisance or menace  
11 within a certain period of time after receiving an appeal; providing that a  
12 decision of a hearing officer or board of appeals that a nuisance or menace to  
13 public health or safety exists for certain reasons is final and binding; altering a  
14 provision that limits the removal of weeds on certain property to the removal of  
15 weeds on land that is within a certain number of feet from the boundary with  
16 residential property and that is used for certain purposes; defining certain  
17 terms; making conforming changes; and generally relating to the abatement of  
18 nuisances in Carroll County.

19 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
20 The Public Local Laws of Carroll County  
21 Section 3–106  
22 Article 7 – Public Local Laws of Maryland  
23 (2004 Edition and July 2010 Supplement, as amended)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
2 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

3 **Article 7 – Carroll County**

4 3–106.

5 (a) (1) In this section[,] THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
6 INDICATED.

7 (2) (I) “BONA FIDE AGRICULTURAL PURPOSE” MEANS THE USE  
8 OF LAND FOR ACTIVE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

9 (II) “BONA FIDE AGRICULTURAL PURPOSE” INCLUDES THE  
10 USE OF LAND FOR:

11 1. ACTIVE PLOWING, TILLAGE, CROPPING, SEEDING,  
12 CULTIVATING, OR HARVESTING OF FOOD, FIBER PRODUCTS, OR SIMILAR  
13 PRODUCTS;

14 2. GROWING SOD PRODUCTS, CHRISTMAS TREES, OR  
15 OTHER NURSERY PRODUCTS;

16 3. ACTIVE GRAZING OR RAISING OF LIVESTOCK;

17 4. AQUACULTURE;

18 5. BEE PRODUCTION; AND

19 6. ORCHARDS.

20 (3) “Notice” means delivering to the owner or occupant of property a  
21 written order to abate.

22 (4) “RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY” MEANS ANY LOT OR PARCEL  
23 OCCUPIED BY A DWELLING WHERE THE DWELLING AREA OR CURTILAGE IS  
24 WITHIN 500 FEET OF THE BOUNDING PROPERTY LINE.

25 (b) (1) The County Commissioners may remove any nuisance or menace  
26 to the public health or safety arising from the growth of weeds, the accumulation of  
27 refuse, an abandoned well, the presence of stagnant water, or the presence of  
28 combustible material after [10] 15 days’ advance notice to the owner or occupant of  
29 the property upon which the nuisance or menace is found.

1           (2) [The] **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (E) OF THIS**  
2 **SECTION, THE** growth of weeds may not constitute a nuisance or menace if [the]:

3                   **(I) THE** land on which the weeds are growing is being used for  
4 a bona fide agricultural purpose; or [if the]

5                   **(II) THE** land is owned by the County and is specifically  
6 designated as a natural regeneration project area.

7           (3) (i) Notice may be given by personal service or by mail.

8                   (ii) If the written order is delivered by mail, notice is effective at  
9 the end of the known fifth day after its deposit in the mail to the last known address of  
10 the owner or occupant of the property concerned.

11           (4) If both the owner and occupant of property on which a nuisance or  
12 menace is found have been notified of a violation of this subsection more than two  
13 times within a 12-month period:

14                   (i) The continuing growth of weeds, accumulation of refuse,  
15 presence of stagnant water, or presence of combustible material shall be considered an  
16 ongoing violation; and

17                   (ii) [Additional] **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (5)**  
18 **OF THIS SUBSECTION, ADDITIONAL** notice is not required before the County may  
19 take action to abate the nuisance.

20           **(5) (I) WITHIN 10 BUSINESS DAYS AFTER RECEIVING NOTICE**  
21 **OF A DETERMINATION THAT A NUISANCE OR MENACE EXISTS, THE PROPERTY**  
22 **OWNER OR OCCUPANT MAY FILE AN APPEAL OF THE NUISANCE OR MENACE**  
23 **DETERMINATION TO A HEARING OFFICER OR BOARD OF APPEALS APPOINTED BY**  
24 **THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS.**

25                   **(II) WITHIN 5 DAYS AFTER RECEIVING THE APPEAL, THE**  
26 **HEARING OFFICER OR BOARD OF APPEALS SHALL HOLD A HEARING AND ISSUE A**  
27 **WRITTEN DECISION THAT AFFIRMS, MODIFIES, OR OVERTURNS THE**  
28 **DETERMINATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF A NUISANCE OR MENACE.**

29                   **(III) THE DECISION OF THE HEARING OFFICER OR BOARD OF**  
30 **APPEALS REGARDING THE DETERMINATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF A NUISANCE**  
31 **OR MENACE SHALL BE FINAL AND BINDING.**

32           (c) If the County Commissioners remove any nuisance or menace to the  
33 public health or safety as described in subsection (b), the reasonable costs of the  
34 removal shall be assessed against the property as a special tax.

1 (d) A property owner aggrieved by the assessment of a special tax against his  
2 property, as provided in this section, may petition the County Commissioners for  
3 relief. Upon the receipt of a petition, the County Commissioners shall conduct a  
4 hearing within 30 days of the receipt to determine the propriety and reasonableness of  
5 the assessment. At the hearing, the burden shall be upon the petitioner to show good  
6 cause why the assessment should not be made. The assessment shall be added to the  
7 annual tax bill against the property to be collected in the same manner as ordinary  
8 taxes are collected and subject to the same interest and penalty for nonpayment, as  
9 provided by law for the nonpayment of county taxes. The special tax shall constitute a  
10 lien against the property from the date of assessment until paid.

11 (e) For properties [larger than 1 acre] **USED FOR BONA FIDE**  
12 **AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES**, removal of weeds, as contemplated by this section, shall  
13 be limited to the removal of any weeds [within] **ON LAND THAT IS:**

14 (1) **WITHIN** 50 feet of the nearest property lines bounding [the] A  
15 **RESIDENTIAL** property [on which the weeds are found to constitute a nuisance or  
16 menace to the public health or safety]; **AND**

17 (2) (I) **USED FOR A BUFFER, A FENCE LINE, OR FALLOW**  
18 **GROUND; OR**

19 (II) **NOT PART OF AN AREA USED FOR ACTIVE**  
20 **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.**

21 (f) The determination by the County Health Officer that a nuisance or  
22 menace to the public health or safety exists by reason of the growth of weeds,  
23 accumulation of refuse, an abandoned well, the presence of stagnant water, or the  
24 presence of combustible material shall [be final and] constitute prima facie proof that  
25 the nuisance or menace exists. It shall be the duty of the County Health Officer to  
26 investigate all complaints of a nuisance or menace to the public health or safety, as  
27 described in this section.

28 (g) If for any reason the County Health Officer refuses or fails to investigate  
29 a complaint of nuisance due to the growth of weeds, the County may investigate the  
30 complaint and may, on a determination that the vegetation is lawn or weeds and is at  
31 or exceeds a height of 12 inches, determine the growth to be weeds which constitute a  
32 nuisance under the provisions of this section.

33 (h) Lands that are enrolled in a State or Federal program that removes the  
34 land from crop production for a specified period of time and that has caused the lands  
35 to be established and maintained in plant cover to conserve soil, improve wildlife  
36 habitat, or serve other public benefit purposes may not be determined to have on them  
37 the growth of weeds for purposes of this section. The responsibility for undesirable

1 plant control of these lands shall be that of the State or Federal agency administering  
2 the applicable program.

3 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
4 October 1, 2011.

Approved:

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Governor.

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President of the Senate.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.