

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 766 (Senator Rosapepe)
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
 and Finance

Snowstorm and Related Climate Change Preparation Act

This bill requires the Maryland Commission on Climate Change, in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), to submit a joint report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2011, on the investments necessary for the State to respond effectively to weather emergencies. Based on that report, the bill expresses the General Assembly's intent that the Governor (1) direct a request to the President of the United States and the Maryland Congressional Delegation to provide specified federal funds to the State and local governments to prepare for future weather emergencies in the State; and (2) appropriate sufficient fiscal 2013 funds to support the investments necessary to prepare for future weather emergencies in the State.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase by \$225,000 in FY 2012 for contractual services associated with completing a study and conducting associated public outreach and meetings in order to prepare the required report. Potential significant increase in State expenditures in FY 2013 due to the bill's intent language relating to appropriating sufficient FY 2013 funds to support investments to prepare for future weather emergencies. Potential increase in federal fund revenues due to the bill's intent language relating to requesting specified federal funds. It is assumed that State finances are not affected in FY 2011.

(in dollars)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
FF Revenue	\$0	-	-	-	-
SF Expenditure	\$0	\$225,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF/SF/FF Exp.	\$0	\$0	-	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	\$0	(\$225,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: The bill expresses legislative intent that, based on the report submitted pursuant to the bill, the Governor request that specified federal funds be provided to local governments to prepare for future weather emergencies in the State. To the extent this results in an increase in federal funds, local governments benefit.

Small Business Effect: No direct effect. The extent to which any additional federal or State funding for weather emergency preparedness activities affects small businesses is unknown.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The report must identify (1) the economic and other costs to the residents of the State of severe weather during the winters of 2010 and 2011; and (2) the investments that the State should make to prepare for future weather emergencies, including snow, hurricanes, drought, flooding, and other weather emergencies that may occur as a result of climate change.

Current Law/Background: The State of Maryland received a record level of snow last winter. In December 2009, a storm left upwards of 20 inches of snow on much of the State. In early February 2010, two storms left as much as 50 inches of snow in some parts of the State. On February 5, 2010, the Governor issued a Declaration of Emergency in response to one of the storms, which effectively authorized the State to activate the Maryland National Guard and provide assistance to local emergency managers. A major storm report developed by Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE), in accordance with Public Service Commission requirements, notes that BGE had to restore electric service to approximately 142,200 customers during the early February 2010 storms. In late January 2011, another major winter storm affected the area, causing significant power outages and gridlock on area roads. BGE reports that the January 2011 storm caused 65% more power outages than the back-to-back February 2010 blizzards combined. As of January 29, 2011, BGE had restored service to nearly 235,000 customers.

In Maryland, the Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART) program was developed as a joint effort between MDOT, the Maryland Transportation Authority, and the Maryland State Police, in cooperation with other federal, State, and local agencies. CHART's mission is to improve operations of Maryland's highway system by using real-time mapping technology to improve response time and to mitigate nonrecurring congestion, which accounts for approximately half of the State's highway traffic congestion. In fiscal 2010, CHART personnel responded to over 17,000 incidents and assisted more than 18,000 stranded motorists on Maryland roads.

MEMA, which is part of the Maryland Military Department, is responsible for coordinating the State response in any major emergency or disaster. This includes supporting local governments as needed or requested, and coordinating assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal partners. MEMA manages many of the federal grants that fund a broad range of initiatives leading to enhanced protection from and responses to the full range of natural and man-made disasters which could threaten the State's citizens.

In 2007 Governor O'Malley issued an executive order establishing the Maryland Commission on Climate Change to develop a plan of action to address climate change and to prepare for the likely consequences and impacts of climate change. The commission is staffed by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Department of Natural Resources. In August 2008 the commission issued its Climate Action Plan, which includes a comprehensive assessment of climate change impacts in Maryland and a review and assessment of the costs of inaction. The plan recommended the adoption of goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10% by 2012; 15% by 2015; 25% to 50% by 2020; and 90% by 2050 (from 2006 levels). The plan also includes a comprehensive strategy for reducing Maryland's vulnerability to climate change. In a January 2011 report that outlines strategies to reduce the impacts of climate change, the commission recommends that MDOT and MEMA identify State investment needs to prepare for future weather emergencies. Thus, the bill implements this recommendation.

State Expenditures: TTF expenditures increase by \$225,000 in fiscal 2012 for contractual costs associated with completing a study and conducting associated public outreach and meetings in order to complete the required report. Among other things, the study will address (1) the incremental cost to the State for weather events due to climate change; (2) the likelihood of having similar weather in the future; (3) the potential connection between the 2010 and 2011 winter storms and climate change; and (4) other meteorological conditions that may have led to the winter storms. MDE and MDOT may be required to redirect existing staff resources from other projects to complete the required report.

The bill expresses the General Assembly's intent that, based on the report submitted pursuant to the bill, the Governor appropriate sufficient fiscal 2013 funds to support the investments necessary to prepare for future weather emergencies in the State. To the extent the Governor does so, State expenditures increase, potentially significantly, in fiscal 2013.

Although the bill takes effect June 1, 2011, it is assumed that State expenditures are not affected in fiscal 2011.

State Revenues: The bill expresses the General Assembly's intent that, based on the report submitted pursuant to the bill, the Governor direct a request to the President of the United States and the Maryland Congressional Delegation to provide specified federal funds to the State to prepare for future weather emergencies in the State. To the extent such funds are available, and to the extent the bill results in any such funds being directed to the State, federal fund revenues increase. Although the bill takes effect June 1, 2011, it is assumed that any additional federal fund revenues would not be available until at least fiscal 2012.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 1092 of 2010 received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of the Environment, Military Department, Maryland Department of Transportation, Baltimore Gas and Electric, Department of Legislative Services

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mc/lgc

Analysis by: Amanda Mock

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510