

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 48 (Senator Benson)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Election Law - Polling Places - Accommodations for Disabled Voters

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This bill requires, if a disabled voter is in a waiting line to vote, that an election judge, to the extent practicable, (1) designate another voter in the waiting line to serve as a placeholder and allow the disabled voter to sit until the placeholder reaches the check-in judge or (2) move the disabled voter to the front of the waiting line.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2014.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None.

**Local Effect:** Local government finances are not materially affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Election judges have various duties in statute and State Board of Elections (SBE) regulations relating to administering the voting process and assisting voters. These duties include carrying out any tasks assigned by the local board of elections including those in an election judge instruction manual. Election judges are required in statute and SBE regulations to assist voters with a physical disability and those who are unable to read or write the English language.

**Background:** Wait times for voters in general raised concern following the 2012 elections, both in Maryland and nationally. Chapters 157 and 158 of 2013 required

SBE to study the issue and determine what adjustments could be implemented to reduce maximum wait times. For more information on the issue of voting wait times in general, see the Department of Legislative Services 2014 Issue Papers, <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/legislegal/2014rs-Issue-Papers.pdf>, pgs. 241-243 (“Improving the Voter Experience”).

SBE and several local boards of elections contacted indicate that election judges are currently trained to accommodate elderly and disabled voters.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 109 (Delegate Holmes) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Baltimore City; Anne Arundel, Caroline, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 21, 2014  
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