

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2015 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 1049 (Delegate Hixson, *et al.*)  
 Ways and Means

**Voter Registration Act of 2015**

This bill requires local departments of social services, the office of mobility certification in the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE), and public institutions of higher education, each as voter registration agencies, to implement fully automated voter registration systems by July 1, 2016. The bill also establishes ongoing reporting requirements for those agencies and institutions regarding their voter registration efforts.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** State expenditures (general, federal, higher education, and Transportation Trust Fund (TTF)) increase by over \$900,000 in FY 2016, largely for system programming costs. Future year expenditures reflect ongoing operating costs and limited personnel costs. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	523,800	37,200	38,900	40,800	42,700
SF Expenditure	66,800	70,800	57,300	58,800	60,400
FF Expenditure	69,900	0	0	0	0
Higher Ed Exp.	243,300	8,100	8,200	8,200	8,300
Net Effect	(\$903,800)	(\$116,100)	(\$104,400)	(\$107,800)	(\$111,400)

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

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures may increase significantly to establish systems for local community colleges. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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## **Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The bill requires the affected agencies and public institutions of higher education to report annually beginning January 2016, on (1) the number of individuals who completed an applicable transaction or students who registered for course work in the preceding calendar year at the agency or institution and the number of those individuals or students who successfully registered to vote or updated a voter registration record and (2) any planned efforts to increase the number of individuals who register to vote at the agency or institution. The first report also must describe voter registration efforts of the agency or institution in the preceding calendar year and the status of implementation of a fully automated voter registration system. The reports are submitted to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) submits the reports as single documents on behalf of the local departments of social services and the public institutions of higher education submit reports to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, which then compiles and summarizes the information in a single report submitted to the committees.

**Current Law:** An individual may apply to become a registered voter through a number of means including (1) visiting an election board office; (2) by mail; (3) when applying for services at a voter registration agency (specified public and nongovernmental agencies designated by the State Board of Elections (SBE), including agencies providing public assistance and services for individuals with disabilities, public higher education institutions, and military recruiting offices); (4) when applying to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) for issuance, renewal, or modification of a driver's license or identification card; or (5) through SBE's online voter registration system.

In general, voter registration agencies are required to provide materials offering individuals an opportunity to register to vote with each application for service or assistance the agencies render and with each recertification, renewal, or change of address form relating to such service or assistance. Public higher education institutions are required to provide an individual with an opportunity to request a voter registration application when an individual enrolls, registers, or pays for course work. An applicant may mail the voter registration application to the appropriate State election official or return it to the voter registration agency for transmittal to the appropriate election official. Within five days of accepting a voter registration application, a voter registration agency must forward the application to the appropriate State election official.

Similar requirements of voter registration agencies exist in federal law under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

**Background:** Until recently, voter registration in Maryland was accomplished only through paper applications, but automated voter registration at MVA and online voter registration through SBE's website were both implemented in 2012. In the event voter registration agencies would develop automated systems similar to MVA's, Chapter 106 of 2012 also allowed for an applicant registering to vote at a voter registration agency to consent to the use of an electronic copy of the individual's signature on file with the agency as the individual's signature for the application. Voter registration agencies have not implemented such systems to date, however.

**State Fiscal Effect:** State expenditures (general, federal, higher education, and TTF) are expected to increase by over \$900,000 largely due to system programming to establish fully automated voter registration systems at the affected agencies. Future year expenditures reflect ongoing operating costs associated with the systems and limited personnel expenditures for the agencies to meet the bill's reporting requirements. This estimate is based on information provided by MHBE, DHR, the University System of Maryland (on behalf of University of Maryland, College Park), St. Mary's College, Baltimore City Community College, and MTA.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Local government expenditures may also increase significantly, to implement fully automated voter registration systems for local community colleges. The extent of the overall increase has not been determined at this time.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Human Resources, St. Mary's College, University System of Maryland, Baltimore City Community College, Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Montgomery County, State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

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