

Chapter 125

(Senate Bill 262)

AN ACT concerning

Election Law – Special Elections

FOR the purpose of altering requirements for scheduling special elections to fill vacancies in a county council or in the office of chief executive officer or county executive; ~~authorizing the resolution of a county council establishing the date of a special election to fill a vacancy in the county council or in the office of chief executive officer or county executive to direct that a special primary election not be held and that the vacancy be filled solely through a special general election; requiring a county council to specify a method for conducting the special general election if the county council directs that a special primary election not be held;~~ requiring the State Administrator to conduct a special election in accordance with State law and regulations if the State Administrator determines a conflict exists between State law and regulations and a county charter or other county law relating to the conduct of a special election; providing that a local board of elections is not required to mail specimen ballots to the registered voters of the county in a special election conducted by mail; altering when a local board is required to send a vote-by-mail ballot to each registered voter in a special election conducted by mail; authorizing a voter to return a vote-by-mail ballot through a ballot drop box in a special election conducted by mail; and generally relating to special elections.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Election Law
Section ~~8-202(a)~~, 8-401(a) and (b), 9-502(a) and (d), and 9-504(a)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Election Law
Section 8-402 ~~and 8-403~~
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

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

Article – Election Law

~~8-202.~~

~~(a) A principal political party, as determined by the statement of registration issued by the State Board;~~

- (1) ~~shall use the primary election to:~~
- (i) ~~EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN § 8-402 OF THIS TITLE, nominate its candidates for public office; and~~
- (ii) ~~elect all members of the local central committees of the political party; and~~
- (2) ~~may use the primary election in the year of a presidential election to elect delegates to a national presidential nominating convention.~~

8-401.

(a) A special primary election [and] **OR** a special general election may be held at a time other than the date of a regular primary election [and] **OR** a regular general election:

- (1) to fill a vacancy in the office of Representative in Congress; or
- (2) to fill a vacancy in the county council or in the office of chief executive officer or county executive if the charter of that county provides for special elections.

(b) (1) Special elections to fill a vacancy in the office of Representative in Congress shall be held at the time specified in Subtitle 7 of this title.

(2) (i) **[Special] SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, SPECIAL** elections to fill vacancies in a county council or in the office of chief executive officer or county executive shall be held as provided in the county charter.

(ii) The date set for the special election to fill a vacancy under this paragraph [shall]:

1. SHALL BE AT LEAST 90 DAYS AFTER THE ADOPTION OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE DATE OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION;

2. MAY NOT BE WITHIN 120 DAYS ~~OF~~ BEFORE OR AFTER A REGULARLY SCHEDULED ELECTION, BUT MAY BE CONCURRENT WITH A REGULARLY SCHEDULED ELECTION; AND

3. SHALL allow at least 45 days between the date a local board makes an absentee ballot available to an absent uniformed services voter or overseas voter, as defined under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, and the date of the special election.

~~8-402.~~

~~(A) THE RESOLUTION OF A COUNTY COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE DATE OF A SPECIAL ELECTION TO FILL A VACANCY IN THE COUNTY COUNCIL OR IN THE OFFICE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OR COUNTY EXECUTIVE MAY DIRECT THAT:~~

~~(1) A SPECIAL PRIMARY ELECTION NOT BE HELD; AND~~

~~(2) THE VACANCY BE FILLED SOLELY THROUGH A SPECIAL GENERAL ELECTION.~~

~~(B) IF THE COUNTY COUNCIL DIRECTS THAT A SPECIAL PRIMARY ELECTION NOT BE HELD, THE RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE DATE OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION SHALL SPECIFY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS FOR CONDUCTING THE SPECIAL GENERAL ELECTION:~~

~~(1) A PARTISAN ELECTION IN WHICH THERE ARE NO PARTY NOMINEES BUT EACH FILED CANDIDATE APPEARS ON THE BALLOT WITH THE CANDIDATE'S PARTY AFFILIATION, IF ANY; OR~~

~~(2) A NONPARTISAN ELECTION IN WHICH THERE ARE NO PARTY NOMINEES AND EACH FILED CANDIDATE APPEARS ON THE BALLOT WITHOUT THE CANDIDATE'S PARTY AFFILIATION.~~

~~§ 403.~~

IF THE STATE ADMINISTRATOR DETERMINES THAT A CONFLICT EXISTS BETWEEN A COUNTY CHARTER OR OTHER COUNTY LAW RELATING TO THE CONDUCT OF A SPECIAL ELECTION AND THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE OR THE CODE OF MARYLAND REGULATIONS, THE STATE ADMINISTRATOR SHALL CONDUCT THE SPECIAL ELECTION ENTIRELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS ARTICLE AND THE CODE OF MARYLAND REGULATIONS.

9-502.

(a) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a local board shall mail by nonforwardable mail a vote-by-mail ballot to each registered voter who is eligible to vote in a special election.

(2) A local board is not required to mail a vote-by-mail ballot to a voter if the voter has requested that the ballot be sent by other means.

(3) A LOCAL BOARD IS NOT REQUIRED TO MAIL SPECIMEN BALLOTS TO THE REGISTERED VOTERS OF THE COUNTY UNDER § 8-102 OF THIS ARTICLE.

(d) A local board shall send a vote-by-mail ballot to each eligible voter at least [14] **30** days before the day of a special election.

9-504.

(a) A voter may return a vote-by-mail ballot to a local board:

(1) by mail;

(2) in person during regular office hours; [or]

(3) **THROUGH A BALLOT DROP BOX; OR**

(4) through a duly authorized agent in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a yea and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted.

Approved by the Governor, April 22, 2025.