

SUSAN C. LEE  
Legislative District 16  
Montgomery County

MAJORITY WHIP

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Joint Committee on  
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Maryland General Assembly, Inc.



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 223  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3124 · 301-858-3124  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3124  
Susan.Lee@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

**Senate Bill 666 - Election Law -Time Off For Employee Voting**

This Senate Bill, whose number shall not be named, is an update of an important law that allows the working poor to participate in our democratic process. While we don't have a collective day off of work for Election Day, we do have an under-utilized provision in the Election Law Article under Section 10-315 that requires employers to pay employees for up to 2 hours absence from work to vote if they are a registered voter and vote in Maryland on Election Day. As we have moved to same day registration in combination with early voting, this statute has not been updated accordingly. We find that this updated provision will not only make it easier for employees to vote, but also allow employers more flexibility for when they can allow their employees to cast their ballot for general elections.

My office has been in contact with officials from the State Board of Elections, and they expressed support of the view that this legislation was simply an update of this section of code.

Workers in Maryland who cast votes in other states should also have time off, and perhaps two hours is just enough time to do so in many areas of the state that border other states. We would hope there is reciprocity in other states, but we should be the first to offer this incentive to vote, even if not in Maryland. Moreover, Election Day every other year is not the only important election, as many of you know, most elections are decided at the primary level, especially for Congressional seats. Finally, local elections likely wouldn't require much time off of work, as lines don't tend to be long, but if someone works far from where they live, it might be otherwise impossible to participate in local elections. We should encourage participation in all elections.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable vote on this Senate Bill.