

HB0156

GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTION COMMITTEE | 4 FEB 2026

We are the state chapter of Veterans for All Voters, a diverse community of veterans—constitutional conservatives, progressives, and everything in between—united by a shared belief that the American people deserve better than our current politics. As veterans, we took an oath to serve and protect our nation. Now, we're leading the charge to make elections more fair, functional, and free of partisan gridlock ensuring that every American's voice is heard.

This written testimony for information only to provide a veteran's perspective on the implications of HB0156.

In the military, we were taught that our primary loyalty is to the Constitution and the American people, not a political party. We were not the military of one party or the other, but the military of the American people, directed by a duly elected commander-in-chief selected by those citizens. We operated above the fray of politics despite the direct impact it had on our lives. For many veterans, the decision to remain unaffiliated with a party is a continuation of that oath.

We often see modern politics resembling a sports rivalry where the focus is on ensuring the "other side" loses. While it is perfectly appropriate to root against the Steelers, that mentality is a poor framework for governance. Our priority is country over party, yet the current system often forces a choice between the two.

As of December, approximately 985,000 Marylanders have chosen not to affiliate with a political party. For many, this is a serious and principled decision. Some are frustrated that their former party isn't representing them, while others refuse to pick a side because they believe their voice should be heard regardless of a private organization's membership.

While HB0156 provides a procedural remedy for those who miss the deadline to affiliate, it addresses a symptom rather than the root cause. Currently, nearly one million voters—including many veterans—are effectively excluded from the most consequential

parts of our elections. In districts where one party is dominant, the primary is the only contest that truly matters. This bill eases a clerical burden, but it does not change the fact that a significant portion of the electorate remains on the sidelines.

Veterans for Maryland Voters provides this information to highlight that while procedural improvements are a step forward, the broader challenge remains: ensuring a system that honors the independent service and voices of all Marylanders.

We stand ready to support the committee's work and answer any questions you may have regarding the veteran community's perspective on election reform.