

**Department of Fiscal Services**  
Maryland General Assembly

**FISCAL NOTE**

Senate Bill 3 (Senator Miller)  
Economic and Environmental Affairs

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**Elections - Municipal Corporation and Baltimore City Officers**

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This bill proposes a constitutional amendment requiring that elections for officers of municipal corporations and Baltimore City be held only on a four-year election cycle concurrent with State and county elections. The bill also requires the State Administrative Board of Election Laws (SABEL) and specified local officials to take all actions necessary to implement the change in municipal elections. These actions include changing any municipal or Baltimore City charter provisions regarding terms of office for elected officials so that all officials elected after July 1, 1998 are elected in concurrence with State and county officials; providing all municipal corporations and Baltimore City with the authority to conduct elections; and ensuring that any person who is qualified to vote in a municipal election may not be denied the opportunity to vote.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures could decrease by an indeterminate minimal amount as discussed below. Revenues would not be affected.

**Local Effect:** County revenues and expenditures could increase by an indeterminate amount. Municipal expenditures could be affected as discussed below.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**State Expenditures:** SABEL expenditures could decrease due to the time change for the Baltimore City election. SABEL currently prepares campaign reports and materials and provides computer programming specifically for the Baltimore City election. If the election was held at the same time as the gubernatorial election, the election materials and reports would be the same as prepared for the county elections. As a result, SABEL could experience a savings in staff time and material costs.

Although the volume of materials and reports that are filed with SABEL in a gubernatorial

election year would increase due to the addition of Baltimore City, SABEL could handle the additional volume with existing personnel.

The Maryland Constitution requires proposed amendments to the Constitution be publicized in at least two newspapers in each county, if available, and in at least three newspapers in Baltimore City once a week for four weeks immediately preceding a general election. The costs associated with these requirements are borne by the State. Any additional expenditures would be minimal and could be absorbed within SABEL's budget.

**Local Effect:** County expenditures could increase depending upon whether a county chooses to conduct elections on behalf of a municipal corporation and the number of municipal corporations in the county. Any expenditure increase could be offset by cost recovery fees which would vary by jurisdiction. For instance, in Prince George's County, which has many municipal corporations, expenditures could significantly increase if it chose to conduct municipal elections. On the other hand, in Charles County, which has few municipal corporations, expenditures could increase only by a minimal amount.

If Wicomico County conducted the municipal elections for their municipal corporations, county expenditures could increase by \$106,515 per election. This amount does not reflect the costs for the City of Salisbury's elections since the county currently conducts the city's elections.

Baltimore City estimates it would save approximately \$1 million during the four-year election cycle due to the realignment of the city's elections. Fiscal Services, however, believes the savings would be lower due to the additional costs of a combined State and city ballot.

Several counties currently provide voting machines to municipalities to conduct their elections. While the counties may charge rent on the machines, any amount is minimal. Under the bill's provisions, many municipal corporations would conduct one less election per four-year election period. As a result, municipal corporations expenditures could decrease. For example, in the City of Bowie it costs approximately \$8,000 to conduct a municipal election. Accordingly, the city could save \$8,000 per four-year election period. Similarly, the City of Takoma Park would save approximately \$16,000 per four-year period, while the Town of Elkton would save only a very minimal amount.

If a county chooses not to conduct municipal elections, municipal corporations may need to purchase or rent voting machines and rent additional polling places. These costs cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

Any additional costs associated with changing a municipal or Baltimore City charter could be handled with the entity's existing resources.

If approved by the General Assembly, this constitutional amendment will be submitted to the voters at the 1996 general election. It should not require additional costs for the county election boards to administer the election.

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**Information Source(s):** State Administrative Board of Election Laws; towns of Elkton and Thurmont; cities of Annapolis, Bowie, and Takoma Park; Allegany and Wicomico counties; Baltimore City; and Department of Fiscal Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 22, 1996

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