

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 740 (Delegate Zirkin. *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters

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**Elections - Distribution of Applications for Absentee Ballots**

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This bill provides that absentee ballot applications may be made available: (1) at a local or State board of elections office; (2) by mail; (3) in high schools; (4) at institutions of higher education; (5) in public libraries; (6) in State or local offices that serve the public; or (7) on the Internet. Any individual may obtain absentee ballot applications for distribution. An application for an absentee ballot may only be made on a form produced by a local board of elections or on a form provided under federal law.

Under current law, a written request may be substituted for an official form if it includes the voter's name, address, and the reason for the request. An official application form may only be obtained from a local board upon request by a voter. In addition, an application may only be requested or obtained by the individual voter.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Potential minimal increase in State Board of Elections' expenditures. No effect on revenues.

**Local Effect:** Indeterminate impact on local election boards' finances and operations.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential minimal.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**State Expenditures:** Should local boards of election use new methods of making absentee ballots available to voters, State Board of Elections' expenditures could increase for the development and distribution of forms and possible training of other agency personnel. Any expenditure increase is assumed to be minimal.

**Local Effect:** To the extent that local boards of election make applications for absentee voting more widely available, expenditures could increase. Any increase would depend upon the number of places or methods by which applications are made available. The increased expenditures would be for printing, distribution, mailing, or computer programming costs. Personnel expenditures could also increase if the volume of applications for absentee voting increases. Should the number of absentee ballots cast increase, additional staff may be needed to tabulate election results. Any increase in expenditures cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

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**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections, Prince George's County, University System of Maryland, Somerset County, St. Mary's College, Department of Human Resources, Charles County

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 24, 1999  
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