

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 653 (Delegate Glassman)

Commerce and Government Matters

Election Law - Ballot Questions - Plain English

This bill requires each question that appears on a ballot to be written in “plain English.” The bill defines plain English as language that can be interpreted by a person who has no more than a ninth grade level of proficiency in English. The language used in a ballot question should be straightforward, avoid technical terms to the extent possible, and be easily readable. If it is not feasible to draft a ballot question in plain English, due to the technical nature of an issue, a summary using plain English is required to be made widely available to the public.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. Requiring plain English to be used in ballot questions would not directly affect the State Board of Elections’ operations or finances.

Local Effect: Potential minimal. Printing and publishing expenses could increase if a summary is necessary to explain a technical ballot question.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Information Source(s): Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Somerset counties;
State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 1999

ncs/jr

Analysis by: Thomas P. Hickey

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 946-5510

(301) 970-5510