

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 531 (Senator Green)

Select Committee No. 7

Prince George's County - Straw Poll - Education, Water and Sewer, and Park and Planning Issues

This bill requires nine questions to be placed on the ballot in Prince George's County at the November 2000 general election. The questions relate to county revenues for schools and police services, establishment of a county education department, appointment of school board members, appointment of the superintendent of schools, authority of the school board to raise revenue, termination of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, regulation of water and sewer services, termination of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), and the sale of WSSC assets to a private corporation.

This bill takes effect July 1, 2000.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The Prince George's County Board of Elections could place the questions on the ballot at the November 2000 general election with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The following is a brief overview of the current law pertaining to the questions that must be placed on the general election ballot in Prince George's County.
Revenues for Schools and Police Services

Prince George's County is subject to the Tax Reform Initiative by Marylanders (TRIM). This charter provision initially limited property taxes to a fixed dollar amount and later was amended to a ceiling of \$2.40 on the county real property tax rate.

Education Department/School Board Members/School Superintendent

The Prince George's County Board of Education consists of nine elected members and one student member. The county school system is a separate entity from the county government, with the school superintendent being appointed by the school board (not elected by the voters as mentioned in the bill). In other counties, school board members are either elected or appointed by the Governor. Local boards of education are a separate entity from the county government in all counties with the school superintendent being appointed by the local school board.

Authority of the School Board to Raise Revenues

Local school districts in Maryland do not have taxing authority with funding for school construction projects coming from the State and the county government.

Parks and Recreation Department

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bi-county agency responsible for providing park, recreation, and planning services for Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The commission is funded with a separate property tax rate that is not subject to TRIM.

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

The WSSC provides water and sewer services in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. The WSSC's service area includes 1,000 square miles and 1.5 million customers. It operates on a \$446 million annual operating budget and employs more than 2,000 people. The sale of WSSC assets would bring in an estimated \$3 billion.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Prince George's County, Department of Legislative Services

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