

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 892 (Delegate Weir. *et al.*)

Commerce and Government Matters

Legislative Districting - Districts and Subdistricts

This bill proposes an amendment to the Constitution of Maryland to require that, unless otherwise provided by law and to the extent practicable, each legislative district must be contained wholly within a county. If a legislative district is configured so that a majority of its population resides in one county and the remaining portion in another county, the legislative district must be subdivided into delegate districts so that the lesser population is contained within a single-member delegate district. A single-member delegate district may contain population from both counties.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Costs associated with redistricting are anticipated with or without the bill's provisions and therefore could be handled with existing resources. Costs associated with the advertisement of amendments to the Constitution of Maryland have been budgeted for FY 2001.

Local Effect: There could be a minimal increase in costs to some of the local boards of elections due to the redistricting plan, depending on the number of new district breaks in the counties.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Each legislative district elects one Senator and three Delegates. All districts must consist of adjoining territory, be compact in form, and be of substantially equal populations. Nothing in the Constitution of Maryland prohibits the subdivision of a legislative district into three one-delegate districts or one two-delegate district and one one-delegate district.

Background: Of Maryland's 47 legislative districts, there are currently 28 districts that include only one county (or Baltimore City), 15 two-county districts, and four districts that are made up of three or more counties. Three districts are subdivided into three one-delegate districts and ten are divided into a two-delegate district plus a one-delegate district. The remaining 34 districts have three-member districts. Districts are due to be redrawn in 2002 based on population figures from the 2000 U.S. Census.

State Fiscal Effect: The State Board of Elections will be required to reprogram computer systems following the redistricting process whether or not the bill's provisions are enacted. Any changes required by the bill could be accomplished under the normal costs budgeted for redistricting.

The Maryland Constitution requires that 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 State is responsible for the costs associated with these requirements. The proposed fiscal 2001 budget of the State Board of Elections contains funding for publishing constitutional amendments for the 2000 general election.

Local Expenditures: The bill's provisions may require the local boards of elections to create additional polling places, hire additional election judges, purchase additional voting machines, and design and print additional ballot styles. However, changes to the elections process are expected following redistricting regardless of this bill. Therefore, any increase in costs to the local boards would be minimal.

If approved by the General Assembly, this constitutional amendment will be submitted to the voters at the 2000 general election. It should not result in additional costs for the county election boards.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: The bill was introduced previously as HB 498 in the 1999 session, HB 536 in the 1998 session, and HB 859 in the 1997 session. All three prior introductions received unfavorable reports from the House Commerce and Government Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Mark Collins

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510