

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 178 (Senator Ruben. *et al.*)

Economic and Environmental Affairs

Charter Counties - Proposed Charter Amendments - Number of Petition Signatures

This bill proposes to amend the Constitution of Maryland to authorize Baltimore City and the charter counties to alter by charter amendment the number of signatures needed on a petition proposing charter amendments. The amended charter could require any number of signatures, though not more than 20% nor less than 5% of the number of registered voters in the jurisdiction.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: 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 FY 2001 budget of the State Board of Elections contains funding for publishing constitutional amendments for the 2000 general election.

Local Effect: The placement of a constitutional amendment and potentially a later charter amendment on local ballots could be absorbed within the existing resources of the local boards of elections.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Amendments to charters may be proposed by a resolution of the Mayor and

City Council of Baltimore City or by the county councils in charter counties. Citizens may also propose charter amendments through a petition signed by 20% of the registered voters in the jurisdiction, or by at least 10,000 registered voters. Charter amendments proposed by resolution or petition are submitted to city or county residents at the next general or congressional election. If a majority of voters submit ballots for the amendment, it is adopted.

Background: The charter counties are Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, and Wicomico. Baltimore City also operates under the charter form of local government.

Local Fiscal Effect: 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. Likewise, the addition of a charter amendment to the local ballots in Baltimore City and the charter counties could be supported with the resources of the local boards of elections. The bill's provisions have no other impact on local governments.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: An identical bill was cross filed in 1998 as SB 216 and HB 540. Both bills received unfavorable reports from the committees to which they were initially assigned, Economic and Environmental Affairs and Commerce and Government Matters respectively. In 1997, the bill was introduced as SB 638 and HB 1205. SB 638 passed the Senate but, along with HB 1205, was reported unfavorably from the House Commerce and Government Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Talbot County, 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