

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1003
Ways and Means

(Delegate F. Turner)

Election Law - Voting - Bulk Mailing - Application for an Absentee Ballot

This bill requires the State Board of Elections to establish guidelines for the bulk mailing of an application for an absentee ballot. The bill prohibits the bulk mailing of an application to registered voters within 30 days of an election, and requires that a sample application be submitted to the State or local board of election prior to a bulk mailing to ensure that the application is in compliance with statutory requirements. Local boards may reject any application in a bulk mailing from a person that fails to comply with bulk mailing requirements. Persons not complying with bulk mailing requirements are liable for the costs incurred by a local board to advise a voter of a rejected application and provide a replacement application. Bulk mailing is defined as one or more mailings of at least 500 items.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The bill's provisions would reduce any extra costs associated with an increase in absentee ballot requests as a result of large, late bulk mailings and noncompliant applications that must be rejected and replaced with accurate applications.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A registered voter may vote by absentee ballot if the voter is unable to go to the polls on election day because of an accident, illness, disability, confinement, or

death or serious injury in the immediate family, or if the voter is a full-time student in an institution of higher education, an election official working on election day, or authorized under federal law to vote by absentee ballot. Also, a voter who may be absent on election day from the county in which the voter is registered can vote using an absentee ballot. An application for an absentee ballot must include: (1) the voter's name and residence address; (2) the address to which the ballot is to be mailed if different from the residence address; and (3) the reason for absentee voting.

There are no provisions restricting the bulk mailing of an application for absentee ballots to registered voters.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Allegany County, Montgomery County, Wicomico County, Maryland State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

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ncs/jr

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