

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 747 (Senator Miller)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Maryland's Presidential Primary Election

This bill would alter the date of the presidential primary election to the second Tuesday of February in the year that the President of the United States is elected.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential significant increase in general fund expenditures by the State Board of Elections for overtime and temporary staff workers to certify ballots and prepare absentee ballots within a reduced time schedule in FY 2004 and FY 2008. The actual impact cannot be reliably quantified because the board has not previously experienced such a compressed pre-election time schedule.

Local Effect: Significant increase in local board expenditures due to a compressed time schedule for software programming of voting equipment.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The presidential primary is held in the year that the President of the United States is elected, on the first Tuesday in March. The primary was held in May from 1948 to 1988, when it was moved to the second Tuesday in March so as to fall on "Super Tuesday," which was the presidential primary day for a block of southern U.S. states. In 1992 the primary date was moved to its present date.

State Expenditures: The bill would compress the time within which the State and local boards would have to prepare for the presidential primary. There is an internal Democratic party rule that prohibits its presidential candidates and nominating convention delegates from filing for an office before the beginning of the calendar year of the national convention. This rule, in conjunction with the bill's requirements, would decrease the time period between the filing and withdrawal deadline for Democratic candidates and delegates and the actual primary by approximately 20 days. Since election officials on both the State and local levels cannot initiate the ballot design and voting equipment programming process until all potential candidates have filed or withdrawn, the remaining preparation time is significantly reduced by the earlier primary date. The State board would incur increased expenditures either for additional staff or significant overtime for most of its employees, although the exact amount cannot be determined.

Local Fiscal Effect: In addition to the costs that would be incurred by most local boards of election as a result of the compressed time schedule created by the bill, Montgomery County advises that it will have to hold its two training classes concurrently in order to train at least 1,800 election poll workers. The local board would have to rent an additional training facility and hire two additional trainers to run 40 additional training classes in the month of January. Accordingly, Montgomery County estimates that its expenditures would increase by \$15,800 in fiscal 2004 as a result of the bill.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Washington County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Kent County, Worcester County, Maryland State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

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