

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 735

(Delegate Patterson, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Election Law – Voter’s Change of Party Affiliation

This bill changes the period in which a voter may change party affiliation or their registration status from or to a decline, from 9 p.m. on the Monday (or the next regular business day if the Monday is a legal holiday) that is 12 weeks before a primary election, to 21 days before a primary election. The bill repeals a provision that limits the amount of times a registered voter who has moved from one county to another since the last general election may change party affiliation or change their status from or to decline. The bill also repeals the requirement that a local board submit a report of registration to the State Board of Elections (SBE) within 15 days after the start of the moratorium period during which party affiliation changes cannot be made. A local board must submit the report when directed to do so by SBE.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State governmental operations or finances.

Local Effect: Local boards could reduce expenditures slightly due to overtime savings as a result of a repealed provision requiring local boards to remain open until 9 p.m. on the last day to change party affiliation.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Background: Under the bill, the deadline for changing party affiliation (or one’s status to or from a decline) before a primary election would correspond with the deadline to

register to vote. “Decline” status refers to a voter who is not affiliated with a political party.

Current Law: A registered voter may change party affiliation or change their registration status to or from a decline with a signed request to the local election board any time that registration is open up until 12 weeks before the primary election. The registration period is closed from 21 days before an election to 11 days after an election.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Carroll County, Cecil County, Harford County, Montgomery County, Maryland State Board of Elections, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 17, 2004
mh/mdr Revised - House Third Reader - March 31, 2004

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