

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1527 (Delegate Sossi)
Environmental Matters and Ways and Means

Transportation - Third Chesapeake Bay Bridge Crossing - Straw Ballot

This bill requires the State Board of Elections to include a question on the November 2004 general election ballot that asks voters, "Do you favor the construction and commitment of State resources to fund a third Chesapeake Bay Crossing?" The bill also directs county boards of elections to assist with placing the question on the ballot so that each voter in the State may participate in the straw ballot. The vote on this question is only advisory.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's requirements can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None. Local election boards can implement the bill with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: State law specifies procedures for placing questions on election ballots, including notification of voters and the order in which the questions must appear.

Background: The Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) operates and maintains the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial (Chesapeake Bay) Bridge that connects Anne

Arundel County to Queen Anne's County through two spans, and charges a one-way toll to finance bridge costs. The bridge is the main route that links the western shore of Maryland with the Eastern Shore; traffic congestion on the bridge has increased by 23% between 1994 and 2001.

The State will hold a general election on November 2 for certain State and federal offices, including the U.S. Presidency.

State Effect: The State Board of Elections advises that the straw ballot will not require additional resources.

The results of the poll are not binding on MdTA and, therefore, the agency would not be required to build another bridge. MdTA estimates that a third bridge will cost \$1.5 to \$3 billion to construct.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 159 (Senator Pipkin) – Finance.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 16, 2004
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