

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 561 (Senator Ruben, *et al.*)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Charter Counties - Proposed Charter Amendments - Number of Petition Signatures

This constitutional amendment authorizes Baltimore City and the charter counties to alter by charter amendment the number of signatures needed on a petition proposing a charter amendment. The amended charter could require any number of signatures, not exceeding 20%, but not less than 5%, of the registered voters in the jurisdiction.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: None. The bill's requirements could be handled with existing resources.

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 not less than 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, the amendment is adopted and becomes part of the charter on the thirtieth day after the election.

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

Local Fiscal Effect: The Maryland Constitution requires that proposed amendments to the constitution be publicized either: (1) 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 the general election; or (2) by order of the Governor in a manner provided by law. State law requires local boards of elections to publicize proposed amendments to the constitution either in newspapers or on specimen ballots; local boards of elections are responsible for the costs associated with these requirements. It is anticipated that the fiscal 2007 budgets of local election boards will contain funding for notifying qualified voters about proposed constitutional amendments for the 2006 general election in newspapers or on specimen ballots.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 178 of 2000, an identical bill, was unfavorably reported from the Senate Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Cross File: HB 648 (Delegate Barkley, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 2005
mll/hlb

Analysis by: Michelle L. Harrison-Davis

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510