

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1480
Ways and Means

(Delegate Zirkin, *et al.*)

Election Law - Baltimore County - Polling Places on College Campuses

This emergency bill requires the Baltimore County Board of Elections to establish a separate precinct at each public or private institution of higher education in Baltimore County with a residential campus, to serve the students, faculty, and staff who attend or work at the institution and are registered voters in the precinct in which the institution is located. A State-funded institution must provide to the board at no charge a facility that meets all applicable requirements of State law and State Board of Elections (SBE) regulations for use as a polling place, and must provide assistance to the local board in recruiting election judges to staff the polling place.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures would increase by \$16,000 (representing half the cost of three voting machines for four polling places). The State would also be responsible for half of any additional technical support, software installation, maintenance, and storage costs associated with the voting machines. Any expenses incurred by the affected public universities associated with providing a facility for a polling place and assisting with election judge recruiting would be minimal.

Local Effect: Baltimore County expenditures would increase by \$16,000 representing half the cost of three voting machines and \$9,980 for additional expenses (excluding possible additional costs associated with the voting machines). **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Creation or Alteration of Precincts

A local board may create and alter precinct boundaries, designate polling place locations in any election district, ward, or precinct in the county, and combine or abolish precincts. A local board may not create or change a precinct boundary or polling place during the period beginning the Tuesday, 13 weeks prior to a primary election, through the day of the general election. The board must adopt a written resolution to create a new precinct or change a precinct boundary stating the purpose of the change, containing a written description of precinct boundaries, and accompanied by a map of the area involved. The resolution must be filed with SBE within five days of its adoption. Voters affected by the change must be notified by mail at least 30 days after the change.

Polling Places

Polling places are designated by local boards according to statutory guidelines, including that polling places be located as conveniently as practicable for the majority of registered voters assigned to that polling place. A public official responsible for a building requested by a local board for an election must make the space available at no charge.

Election Funding

Chapter 564 of 2001, which required SBE to select, certify, and acquire a uniform statewide voting system for both polling places and absentee voting, provides, in uncodified language, that each county must pay its share, based on its voting age population, of one-half of the State's cost of acquiring and operating the uniform statewide voting systems. Operating costs include the cost of maintenance, storage, printing of ballots, technical support and programming, related supplies and materials, and software licensing fees.

Under codified State law, in existence prior to the enactment of Chapter 564 of 2001, counties are required to appropriate funds for the local boards' overall operational expenses and expenses for supplies and equipment necessary for voter registration and elections.

Background: Four higher education institutions located in Baltimore County have been identified as having residential campuses: Towson University; Goucher College;

University of Maryland, Baltimore County; and Villa Julie College. **Exhibit 1** shows the institutions' approximate combined student, faculty, and staff populations.

Exhibit 1
Approximate Student/Faculty Populations

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Student/Faculty/Staff Population</u>
Towson University	20,000
Goucher College	2,900
UMBC	14,100
Villa Julie College	3,100

Exhibit 2 shows the number of registered voters assigned to the precincts in which the four institutions are located.

Exhibit 2
Relevant Precinct Populations

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Precinct</u>	<u>Precinct Population</u>
Towson University	09-04 Dumbarton Middle School	3,204
Goucher College	09-10 Cromwell Valley Elementary	2,894
UMBC	03-13 Fort Garrison Elementary School	2,140
Villa Julie College	01-14 Catonsville High School	2,242

State Fiscal Effect: Presumably, pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001, the State would be responsible for one-half of the cost of additional voting machines needed for precincts at the four higher education institutions. Based on the total number of registered voters assigned to the relevant precincts, it is assumed a relatively small percentage of the

student, faculty, and staff population at each institution will be registered in the precinct in which the institution is located. Assuming three additional voting machines would be needed per precinct (SBE requires one machine per 200 registered voters), general fund expenditures would increase by \$16,000. The State would also bear half of any additional costs associated with the voting machines for technical support, software installation, maintenance, and storage.

SBE estimates the cost of creating and running a polling place to be between \$30,000 and \$50,000. This presumably includes the costs of the voting machines and costs of running the polling place (that local boards will bear – discussed below), and may include the above-mentioned additional costs associated with the voting machines.

Local Fiscal Effect: Assuming three voting machines would be needed per polling place and that Baltimore County would bear half of the cost of the machines, Baltimore County expenditures would increase by roughly \$16,000 for the additional voting machines. The Baltimore County Board of Elections estimates additional costs associated with supplies and equipment delivery, hiring additional election judges, and notification of voters will be approximately \$9,980.

Baltimore County would also bear half of any additional costs associated with the voting machines for technical support, software installation, maintenance, and storage. As mentioned above, SBE estimates the cost of creating and running a polling place to be between \$30,000 and \$50,000, which may include the additional costs associated with the voting machines.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Board of Elections, Baltimore County, University System of Maryland, Department of Legislative Services

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