

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 991 (Montgomery County Delegation)
Environmental Matters

**Montgomery County - Proposed Charter Amendments - Number of Petition
Signatures
MC 604-06**

This bill proposes to amend the Maryland Constitution to authorize Montgomery County to modify, by charter amendment, the number of petition signatures required to propose a charter amendment within certain parameters.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The bill's requirements could be handled with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Amendments to any charter adopted by Baltimore City or by any county may be proposed by (1) a resolution of the Baltimore City Mayor and the city council, or a county council; or (2) a petition signed by at least 20% of the registered voters of Baltimore City or the county, provided that 10,000 signatures are sufficient to complete a petition. If the second process is used, the petition must be filed with the Mayor of Baltimore or the president of the county council.

A proposed charter amendment must be submitted to the voters of Baltimore City or the county at the next general or congressional election occurring after the passage of the

resolution or filing of the petition. Passage of the amendment requires a majority of votes cast in favor of the amendment in the election. The amendments must be published once a week for five successive weeks prior to the election in at least one newspaper published in either Baltimore City or the county, as appropriate.

Background: Article XI-A of the Maryland Constitution allows the voters of each county and Baltimore City to adopt a charter form of government under which a locally elected council is authorized to legislate on local matters, to the extent authorized by a grant of express powers from the General Assembly. Baltimore City and nine counties, including Montgomery County, currently operate under the charter home rule form of government.

Additional Comments: Assuming the amendment is approved by both the General Assembly and the voters, and the Montgomery County charter is amended to require fewer signatures on a petition to amend the Montgomery County Charter, the State Board of Elections advises that it could potentially increase the number of questions appearing on future ballots in Montgomery County. If the number of questions increases, both State and local election officials would require more time to develop and proof ballots. Furthermore, if the length of the ballots increases, there may be increased costs associated with printing and mailing absentee, provisional, and specimen ballots. Depending on how many new questions appear on the ballot, voters may need to spend more time at the voting units, creating longer lines at the polling places.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 24, 2006
ncs/hlb

Analysis by: Joshua A. Watters

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