Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 942   (Senator Greenip, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Election Law - Early Voting - Delayed Implementation

This bill delays the implementation of early voting until the primary and general elections of 2008. The State Board of Elections must adopt regulations and guidelines for the conduct of early voting on or before January 1, 2008 and the Governor must allocate resources required to implement the bill, with the exception of funds received under the Help America Vote Act 2002, by fiscal 2009 and each fiscal year thereafter.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not directly affect State expenditures in that there currently is no money set aside in the Governor's proposed FY 2007 budget or supplemental budget No. 1 to implement early voting. It is assumed future year expenditures would also not be directly affected by the bill.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Pursuant to Chapter 5 of 2006, beginning with the 2006 election, a voter may vote in the voter's assigned precinct on election day or in an early voting polling place during an eight-hour period each day between the Tuesday before a primary or general election and the Saturday before each election.

Each local board must establish early voting polling places in its county. The City of Baltimore and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties must establish at least three early voting polling places, and every other county must establish at least one. Early voting polling places must meet requirements applicable to election day polling places. A voter may vote at any early voting polling place in the voter's county of residence and each local board must ensure that every ballot style used in the county is available at each polling place. Any provision of State election law that applies to election day also applies to early voting.

SBE is required to adopt regulations and guidelines for the conduct of early voting on or before January 1, 2006 and the Governor must allocate resources required to implement the bill, with the exception of funds received under the Help America Vote Act 2002, by fiscal 2007 and each fiscal year thereafter.

Additional Comments: SBE has estimated the cost of implementing early voting for the 2006 elections as being roughly $13.4 million in fiscal 2007, $11.5 million of which reflects a portion of the cost of a lease purchase of e-poll books used to check-in early voters. SBE has proposed financing the purchase of the e-poll books through the State Treasurer's Office, the total cost of which is estimated at $28 million. Though SBE advises they are an absolute necessity, implementation of early voting without the use of e-poll books would result in a significantly lower cost to the State.

The fiscal 2007 budget, as amended by the Senate, includes $21.8 million to implement early voting and support a paper trail for voting machines.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1580 (Delegate Myers, *et al*.) – Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Caroline County, Calvert County, Howard County, Maryland State Board of Elections, Baltimore City, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 20, 2006
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