

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 855
Ways and Means

(Delegate Ross, *et al.*)

Election Law - Voting Opportunity Enhancements

This bill requires a local election board, when establishing early voting polling places, to select a geographically central and easily accessible site if only one location is being used in the county. If more than one site is being used, the local board selects sites from recommendations provided by the chairmen of the local central committees of the recognized political parties. The State Administrator of Elections and the Office of the Attorney General must conduct a review regarding election day voter registration starting with the 2010 primary and report findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State operations or finances. The review conducted by the State Administrator of Elections and the Office of the Attorney General could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: Expenditures could increase if a local board has to lease early voting polling places. These costs would not be substantial.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Each local board must establish early voting polling places in its county, and the City of Baltimore and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties must have at least three early voting polling places. Early

voting polling places must meet requirements applicable to election day polling places. A voter may vote at any early voting polling place in their county of residence and each local board must ensure that every ballot style used in the county is available at each polling place. Early voting polling places are open eight hours each day between the Tuesday before a primary or general election and the Saturday before the election.

Background:

- Early voting was enacted into Maryland law pursuant to Chapter 5 of 2006.
- Election day registration is currently available to some extent (not necessarily in all counties) in Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Local Fiscal Effect: The bill's changes could increase local expenditures to the extent smaller counties that will only use one early voting polling place need to lease a geographically central polling place where they would otherwise have conducted early voting at the election board office or other public venue. *For illustrative purposes,* Garrett County pays a maximum of \$100 a day for the privately-owned polling places it uses, which would amount to \$500 for five days of early voting.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Garrett County, Maryland State Board of Elections, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Office of the Attorney General, Department of Legislative Services

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