

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 948 (Delegate Carter)
Ways and Means

Election Law - Task Force on Instant Voter Registration and Voting by Mail

This bill establishes a Task Force on Instant Voter Registration and Voting by Mail.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2007 and terminates December 31, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. Staffing could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force will study and assess the viability of directing Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) personnel to process voter registration applications and changes in a manner that gives the registration or change instant effect. The task force must also study and assess the viability of conducting an election in the State exclusively by mailed ballots. The task force is staffed jointly by the Department of Legislative Services, the State Board of Elections, and the MVA. Members do not receive compensation, but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses. The task force's findings and any legislative recommendations are due to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2008.

Current Law: An individual may apply to become a registered voter or update a voter registration through a number of means, including when applying to the MVA for the issuance, renewal, or modification of a driver’s license or identification card, or when applying for services at public and nongovernmental agencies designated by the State Board of Elections (SBE) as voter registration agencies. The MVA and voter registration agencies must forward a voter registration application to SBE within five days of its receipt. Voter registration applications received from the MVA and voter registration agencies are considered timely for the purposes of the next election if received by MVA or a voter registration agency by the registration deadline (21 days prior to an election).

Absentee voting is conducted by mail (or in-person) in Maryland and is available to any registered voter except to the extent preempted under an applicable federal law.

Background: Oregon and 34 of 39 counties in Washington (with one more planning to transition) conduct “vote-by-mail” elections.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 758 is identified as a cross file although it is not identical.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation (Motor Vehicle Administration), State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 28, 2007
ncs/jr

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