

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 239

(Senator Stone, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Administrative Procedure Act - Exemption - Death Penalty Protocols

This bill exempts from the requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act the protocols of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services governing the administration of the death penalty, including any execution operations manual.

The bill is effective June 1, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's requirements could be met with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act apply to each unit in the Executive Branch of State government, and each unit that is created by public general law and operates in at least two counties. The Administrative Procedures Act does not apply to a unit in the Legislative or Judicial branches, the Injured Workers' Insurance Fund, a board of license commissioners, or the Rural Maryland Council.

The Administrative Procedure Act sets forth the requirements for the review of regulations adopted by units of government under the jurisdiction of the Act, including requirements for notice, hearing, review, and publication. A "regulation" is a statement,

amendment, or repeal of a statement that has general application and future effect. It is a statement adopted by a unit of government to detail or implement a law administered by the unit, or to govern its organization, procedures, and practices. A regulation may be in any form including a guideline, rule, standard, or statement of interpretation or policy. A regulation is not effective unless it is authorized by statute, therefore it must contain a citation of the statutory authority for the regulation.

A unit of the Executive Branch that proposes a regulation must submit it for preliminary review by the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review (AELR Committee) at least 15 days before the proposed regulation is submitted for publication in the *Maryland Register*. The AELR Committee consists of 10 senators and 10 delegates and is charged by statute with the review of all regulations proposed by units of the Executive Branch.

A proposed regulation may not be adopted until after it is submitted to the AELR Committee and at least 45 days after its first publication in the *Maryland Register*. The unit must permit public comment on the proposed regulation for at least 30 days of the 45-day period after it is first published in the *Maryland Register*. Failure by the AELR Committee to approve or disapprove the proposed regulation during the period of review may not be construed to mean that the AELR Committee approves or disapproves the proposed regulation. However, the unit may proceed with adoption of the proposed regulation if the AELR Committee has not taken action to either approve or disapprove it.

An Executive Branch unit may adopt a proposed regulation on an emergency basis if the unit declares that emergency adoption is necessary, the proposed regulation and its fiscal impact are submitted to the AELR Committee, and the AELR Committee approves the emergency adoption. A public hearing must be held on the emergency adoption of the proposed regulation if requested by a member of the AELR Committee. The Administrative Procedure Act also sets forth procedures that must be followed if the AELR Committee opposes adoption of a proposed regulation, and for the notice and publication of regulations once they are adopted.

Background: This bill is in response to rulings by the Court of Appeals in *Evans v. State*, Nos. 107, 123, & 124, Sept. Term 2005 (Opinion filed: December 19, 2006) and *Evans, et al. v. State*, No. 122, Sept. Term 2005 (Opinion filed: December 19, 2006). In these four cases, the Court of Appeals ruled that the protocols of the Division of Correction (DOC) in the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services directing administration of lethal injection are ineffective until either (1) the protocols are adopted as regulations according to the Administrative Procedure Act or (2) the General Assembly statutorily exempts the protocols from the requirements of the Act.

The Evans Cases: Vernon Evans was convicted of killing two people in Baltimore County in 1983 who were scheduled to testify in a federal narcotics case. The State sought the death penalty based on two aggravating factors – the crime was a contract killing and more than one person was killed during the same incident. Evans was sentenced to death in 1984. He appealed his conviction and also submitted several petitions for post conviction relief. In 1991, a new sentencing proceeding was ordered, and that proceeding resulted in a death sentence. Evans appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to review the case. After the most recent denial, the Baltimore County circuit court issued a warrant of execution.

After the signing of the death warrant, Evans initiated additional petitions for postconviction relief including a demand for an injunction against the use of the current execution protocol used by DOC. These petitions were consolidated on appeal and were the subject of the four decisions by the Court of Appeals.

Court of Appeals Ruling: Among the allegations addressed by the court included whether:

- the DOC execution protocol materially conflicts with the Maryland death penalty statute, in that the statute only requires the use of two of the three drugs currently used in the lethal injection process; and
- the DOC execution protocol conforms to the Administrative Procedure Act, since it was not properly published in the Maryland Register and sent to the AELR Committee for review.

The Court of Appeals found merit in the defendant's challenge to the DOC execution protocol. The court held that the DOC execution protocol, specifically the lethal injection checklist, must be adopted as a regulation in accordance with the Act, as it is not simply a decision made in the course of routine internal management. Moreover, the court found that the number and type of drugs identified in the protocol is an issue affecting inmates, correctional personnel, witnesses to the execution, and the public through its perception of the execution process. By identifying the protocol as a regulation, the court stated that the protocol should have been published for comment as a proposed regulation in the *Maryland Register* and submitted to the AELR Committee before it became effective. The court held that the DOC protocols directing the administration of lethal injection are ineffective until either (1) the protocols are adopted as regulations or (2) the General Assembly statutorily exempts the protocols from the requirements of the Act.

Adherence to the court's decision necessitates a *de facto* moratorium on all executions that would be implemented through lethal injection in Maryland. DOC advises that there are six people currently on death row.

Lethal Injection Controversy: In 11 states, executions have been effectively halted due to concerns over the use of lethal injection, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Of the 38 states that impose the death penalty, 37 states use lethal injection. Nebraska uses the electric chair. Most states, including Maryland, use the same three-drug combination for lethal injections: sodium pentothal (anesthetic property), pancuronium bromide (paralytic property), and potassium chloride (stops heart and causes death). Seven of the 37 states using lethal injection do not specify which drugs are used. **Appendix 1** shows the states that impose the death penalty and the method of execution used. It also lists the states that have halted executions over concerns about lethal injection.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 690 (Delegate McComas, *et al.*) – Judiciary.

Information Source(s): State's Attorneys' Association, Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Office of the Public Defender, Department of State Police, Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy, Office of the Attorney General (Consumer Protection Division), Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Death Penalty Information Center, *stateline.org*, *The Baltimore Sun*, Department of Legislative Services

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Appendix 1

States that Impose the Death Penalty and Method of Execution Lethal Injection Moratorium States

Lethal Injection

Three-drug Combination

Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, New Mexico, New York, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

Drugs Not Specified

Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia

Other

New Jersey (uses only sodium pentothal and pancuronium bromide)
North Carolina (current usage involves three drugs, though only two drugs required by statute)

Electric Chair

Nebraska

Lethal Injection Moratorium

Arkansas (federal court/2006)	New Jersey (state court/2004)
California (federal court/ 2006) in 2006	North Carolina (state court/2007)*
Delaware (federal court/2006)	Ohio (federal court/2006)
Florida (gubernatorial hold 2006)	South Dakota (gubernatorial hold/2006)
Maryland (state court/2006)	Tennessee (gubernatorial hold/2007)
Missouri (federal court/2006)	

* State judge stayed three upcoming executions in 2007

Source: Death Penalty Information Center