

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1355  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Dwyer, *et al.*)

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Election Law - Identification of Voters

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This bill specifies that, for each individual who seeks to vote, an election judge must establish the identity of the voter by requiring the voter to present a current and valid photo identification or one of a number of other documents as provided under the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA).

The bill takes effect July 1, 2008.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures could increase significantly prior to the 2008 general election and 2010 primary and general elections due to the cost of conducting a voter outreach campaign. No effect on revenues.

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures could increase due to costs associated with modification of election judge procedures, voter outreach, and a potential increase in provisional voting as a result of the bill's identification requirement.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** For each individual who seeks to vote, an election judge has to • locate the voter's name in the precinct register or inactive list; • establish the voter's identity by requesting that the voter state their month and day of birth and comparing it to the information in the precinct register; • verify the address of the voter's residence (unless

the voter's personal information has been deemed confidential by the local board, in which case an alternative verification method established by the State Board of Elections must be conducted); and • have the voter sign a voting authority card. Upon completion of those procedures, a voter is entitled to vote a regular ballot. If a voter's name is not found on the precinct register or the inactive voter list, the voter is referred to vote a provisional ballot.

All states are subject to federal requirements under HAVA that identification generally be required of first-time voters who register by mail. HAVA specifies the documents, in addition to current and valid photo identification, that may be provided by a first-time voter in instances when such identification is required because sufficient identification information was not provided with the registration application.

**Background:** A number of states require or request some form of identification from voters before they may vote a regular ballot in an election.

Florida, Georgia, and Indiana currently require some form of photo identification in order to cast a regular ballot; otherwise, a voter must cast a provisional ballot. Hawaii, Louisiana, Michigan, and South Dakota request photo identification, although if a voter cannot provide identification the voter may sign an affidavit and cast a regular ballot.

A number of legal challenges were made to voter identification laws – primarily involving photo identification requirements – prior to the November 2006 elections. As a result, photo identification requirements in Missouri and Georgia were struck down or enjoined from enforcement. On the other hand, challenges to voter identification requirements in Arizona (which allows several identification options) and Indiana (which allows photo identification only) were not successful in stopping their implementation during the November 2006 elections.

Since then, Georgia's photo identification requirement has been restored after the state supreme court reversed on jurisdictional grounds a lower court determination that the requirement was unconstitutional. In addition, a previously unenforced photo identification requirement in Michigan, which requires voters to provide photo identification or sign an affidavit prior to voting, was upheld by the Michigan Supreme Court and is now required of voters. A court challenge over Indiana's photo identification requirement that began prior to the 2006 elections has been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard arguments regarding the appeal in January 2008 and is expected to issue a ruling by July.

**State Expenditures:** SBE indicates a voter outreach campaign would need to be conducted to inform voters of the new identification requirement prior to the 2008

general election and the 2010 primary and general elections. After those elections, information on the photo identification requirement could be included in normal election outreach efforts. The campaign would likely include advertising through television, radio, and print media, direct mailing, and staff outreach to various organizations. The total cost of conducting such a campaign cannot be reliably estimated at this time, but is expected to be significant. The cost would depend, at least in part, on the magnitude of the campaign chosen to be conducted (*e.g.*, the number of media outlets used and number of times the message is heard).

Efforts to redevelop election judge procedures and training materials and to train local board staff are expected to be handled with existing resources.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Expenditures could increase for local boards prior to the 2008 general election to account for modifications to election judge procedure and training related to the identification requirement and costs of supplementing SBE's statewide voter outreach campaign. Assuming voters who are not able to present accepted identification would be referred to vote a provisional ballot, costs could also increase for some local boards to account for additional provisional ballots voted by those not able to present accepted identification. Based on information provided by local boards, the impact on local boards would vary by county. It is assumed voter outreach and provisional voting-related costs resulting from the bill's requirement could also be incurred in future election years.

#### *Election Judge Procedure and Training*

SBE indicates that changes made under the bill would require redevelopment of election judge procedures and training material. As a result, local boards would incur costs to supplement or reprint election judge manuals prior to the 2008 general election, and some local boards may incur costs associated with training election judges that might not otherwise be retrained prior to the election.

Prince George's County and Baltimore City, for example, estimate the cost of reprinting election judge manuals to be \$12,000 and approximately \$20,000, respectively, while Harford County could supplement existing manuals at a minimal cost. Baltimore City and Harford County expect to retrain all election judges prior to the 2008 general election and therefore would not incur additional training costs as a result of the bill. Frederick County costs could increase by at least \$15,500, reflecting compensation for 500 "check-in" election judges (who would not otherwise be retrained) to attend the training and estimated staff overtime costs to conduct the training (costs could be higher to account for additional time of voting system vendor trainers and the possibility of more than 500 judges needing to be trained). Cecil County costs could also increase by

approximately \$13,000 to train roughly 300 election judges. These costs would be more significant in larger counties with more election judges if all judges would not otherwise be retrained prior to the 2008 general election in the absence of the bill (*e.g.*, if only new and chief election judges would be trained/retrained).

### *Voter Outreach*

Costs could increase by \$30,000 in Prince George's County, \$6,000 to \$10,000 in Baltimore City, and approximately \$33,000 in Frederick County (to add information to specimen ballots) for voter outreach, based on information provided by those local boards. Montgomery County indicates it could cost \$78,000 (not including copying costs) to reissue a polling place instructional video for voters, if necessary, and approximately \$8,000 for polling place signs. It is expected Harford County, however, would not incur any significant voter outreach-related costs.

### *Potential Increase in Provisional Voting*

To account for a possible increase in the number of provisional ballots being voted as a result of an identification requirement, Frederick County costs could increase by \$100,000, accounting for additional election judges, additional part-time staff, overtime costs for current staff, printing of additional provisional ballot envelopes, and additional computer equipment to process the ballots. Prince George's County costs could increase by \$17,440 to increase the amount of provisional ballots and applications ordered by 10%. Harford County, on the other hand, would likely not incur a significant increase in costs as a result of any possible increase in provisional ballots voted.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** SB 677 of 2005, a bill including a similar identification requirement, was introduced but was later withdrawn. SB 597 of 2007 and SB 803 and HB 1194 of 2006, bills including a photo identification requirement, received hearings in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee, respectively, but no further action was taken.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Allegany County, Cecil County, Frederick County, Harford County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Talbot County, Baltimore City, State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

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