

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 947 (Senators Harris and Raskin)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Elections - New Political Party - Petition Signatures

This bill reduces, from 10,000 to 5,000, the number of signatures of specified registered voters required to be included with a petition filed with the State Board of Elections (SBE) in order to form a new political party.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not substantively change State activities or operations; however, to the extent the reduction in the number of signatures required for a new political party petition increases the number of petition filings and political parties formed, State general fund and Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures may increase by a minimal amount to account for a new political party on printed materials and in computer systems. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Any group of registered voters may form a new political party by filing a petition with the State Board of Elections that includes:

- specified information regarding the partisan organization forming the political party; and
- papers bearing the signatures of at least 10,000 registered voters who are eligible to vote in the State as of the first day of the month in which the petition is submitted.

A petition for the formation of a new political party, or any additional signatures to a petition may generally be filed at any time, with the exception of specified periods surrounding statewide and congressional special elections.

The group of voters must also adopt and file an interim constitution and bylaws. If a petition is certified in accordance with State law and the constitution and bylaws are determined to meet applicable requirements, the partisan organization is then considered a State political party.

State Fiscal Effect: The bill does not substantively change State activities or operations; however, to the extent the bill's reduction of the number of signatures required for a new political party petition increases the number of petition filings and political parties formed, State general fund and TTF expenditures may increase by a minimal amount due to costs associated with accounting for a new political party in printed materials and computer systems.

SBE indicates costs would be incurred to account for a new political party in the statewide voter registration system and SBE's election management system. New voter registration applications may also need to be printed. Motor Vehicle Administration TTF expenditures may be incurred to revise/print forms to account for a new political party and to make internal computer programming changes. Presumably economies of scale would possibly be realized if changes to account for a new political party were made in conjunction with other necessary changes.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections, Maryland Department of Transportation, Carroll County, Montgomery County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 11, 2009
ncs/hlb

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