

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 825
Rules

(Senator Madaleno)

General Assembly - Start of Legislative Session and Presentation of Budget

This proposed constitutional amendment delays the start of the regular session of the General Assembly, and the introduction of the Governor's proposed budget, by three or four weeks beginning in 2014. As currently required, the General Assembly still convenes on the second Wednesday in January of each year, but only to swear in members, elect leadership, and organize its affairs. It then stands in recess until the first Wednesday of February, when the regular 90-day legislative session begins. The Governor's proposed budget is introduced a week later.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: If approved by the General Assembly, this constitutional amendment will be submitted to the voters at the 2010 general election. It should not result in additional costs for local boards of elections.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The State constitution requires the General Assembly to convene on the second Wednesday in January for a 90-day legislative session. The Governor is required to introduce his/her proposed budget for the next fiscal year by the third Wednesday in January. If the budget is not completed by the eighty-third day of the legislative session, the Governor must issue a proclamation extending the legislative session until the budget is adopted.

The Governor is authorized to cut up to 25% of an appropriation through the Board of Public Works (BPW) in order to bring State spending into balance.

Background: The Board of Revenue Estimates within the Comptroller's Office issues three projections of annual revenues each year: in September to guide the Governor's budget formation, in December to allow the Governor to balance the budget submitted to the legislature based on the most recent revenue information, and in March to help the Governor and the General Assembly make final adjustments before final adoption of the budget. Often, the March report requires modest adjustments to the budget by the General Assembly or by the Governor through supplemental budgets. However, the recent economic downturn has resulted in dramatic reductions in revenue forecasts between December and March. The March 2009 revenue forecast, for instance, reduced combined projected revenues for fiscal 2009 and 2010 by \$1.1 billion from the December forecast. A continuation of this trend required BPW to make further cuts to both budgets several months after the 2009 legislative session.

Local Fiscal Effect: The Maryland Constitution requires that proposed amendments to the constitution be publicized either (1) in at least two newspapers in each county, if available, and in at least three newspapers in Baltimore City once a week for four weeks immediately preceding the general election; or (2) by order of the Governor in a manner provided by law. State law requires local boards of elections to publicize proposed amendments to the constitution either in newspapers or on specimen ballots; local boards of elections are responsible for the costs associated with these requirements. It is anticipated that the budgets of local election boards will contain funding for notifying qualified voters about proposed constitutional amendments for the 2010 general election in newspapers or on specimen ballots.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Budget and Tax Policy Institute, Department of Legislative Services

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