

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1263 (Delegate Glenn)
 Ways and Means

Elections - Early Voting Centers - Establishment

This bill expands the number of early voting centers required to be established in a county with more than 300,000 registered voters from five to six.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$7,300 in FY 2012 for costs associated with conducting early voting at additional early voting centers for the 2011 Baltimore City general election and the 2012 presidential primary election. General fund expenditures increase by \$2,300 in FY 2013, for costs associated with the 2012 presidential general election, and by similar per election amounts for future elections. Capital costs of at least \$50,000, and associated operating costs, will be incurred at some point in the future for “ballot-on-demand” printers (expected to be needed to conduct early voting using an optical scan voting system) for the additional early voting centers.

(in dollars)	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	7,300	2,300	0	4,700	3,300
Net Effect	(\$7,300)	(\$2,300)	\$0	(\$4,700)	(\$3,300)

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: Local government expenditures will increase in the five jurisdictions with more than 300,000 registered voters (Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties) by a total of \$220,150 in FY 2012 for costs associated with the 2011 Baltimore City general election and the 2012 presidential primary election. Similar costs will be incurred for future elections. Capital costs totaling at least \$50,000 collectively for the five jurisdictions, and associated operating costs, will be incurred at some point in the future for ballot-on-demand printers. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The State Board of Elections (SBE) is required to designate each early voting center in collaboration with the local board of elections in each county. The number of early voting centers in each county is dependent on the number of registered voters in the county. A county with fewer than 150,000 registered voters has one early voting center; a county with more than 150,000 but fewer than 300,000 registered voters has three early voting centers; and a county with more than 300,000 registered voters has five early voting centers. A voter may vote at any early voting center in the voter's county of residence.

Background: Early voting was implemented for the first time in Maryland during the 2010 gubernatorial elections for six days prior to both the primary and general elections at 46 early voting centers across the State. Statewide early voting turnout was relatively light in comparison to levels of participation in a number of other states in past elections, likely due in part to 2010 being the State's first experience with early voting.

According to unofficial SBE statistics, of Maryland voters that cast regular ballots in person at early voting centers or election day polling places (excluding provisional and absentee voters), 10.2% cast their ballots at early voting centers during the 2010 primary election and 12.6% did so at the general election. Among the individual counties, the percentage of in-person voters that voted early ranged from 4.2% in Washington County to 20.7% in Kent County for the primary election and from 4.8% in Allegany County to 24.2% in Talbot County for the general election.

Exhibit 1 shows the number of registered voters and early voting centers for each county.

Exhibit 1
Registered Voters and Early Voting Centers in Maryland

County	Registered Voters¹	Early Voting Centers	Listing by Number of Early Voting Centers	
Allegany	42,485	1	Allegany	1
Anne Arundel	334,019	5	Calvert	1
Baltimore City	368,412	5	Caroline	1
Baltimore	481,938	5	Carroll	1
Calvert	55,506	1	Cecil	1
Caroline	17,374	1	Charles	1
Carroll	105,168	1	Dorchester	1
Cecil	60,208	1	Frederick	1
Charles	92,205	1	Garrett	1
Dorchester	19,495	1	Harford	1
Frederick	134,343	1	Kent	1
Garrett	18,074	1	Queen Anne's	1
Harford	149,356	1	St. Mary's	1
Howard	179,086	3	Somerset	1
Kent	11,968	1	Talbot	1
Montgomery	578,030	5	Washington	1
Prince George's	523,069	5	Wicomico	1
Queen Anne's	30,110	1	Worcester	1
St. Mary's	59,832	1	Howard	3
Somerset	13,240	1	Anne Arundel	5
Talbot	25,306	1	Baltimore City	5
Washington	83,397	1	Baltimore	5
Wicomico	54,898	1	Montgomery	5
Worcester	35,306	1	Prince George's	5
Total	3,472,825			

¹Active register voters as of February 28, 2010.

Source: State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

State Fiscal Effect: General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$7,300 in fiscal 2012 for additional transportation costs shared with the counties, the cost of a modem and associated networking equipment for each additional center, and network service costs associated with establishing a sixth early voting center for the 2011 Baltimore City general election and a sixth early voting center in each of the five affected jurisdictions for the 2012 presidential primary election. General fund expenditures increase by \$2,300 in fiscal 2013, for continuing transportation and network service costs for the 2012 presidential general election, and by similar per election amounts for future elections.

This estimate does not include costs for additional voting equipment as SBE indicates that, in general, the existing voting machines should be able to be used for the additional early voting centers. To the extent additional voting equipment may be needed, SBE rented additional voting machines in 2008 for approximately \$270 per unit (including transportation costs), per election. Any additional voting equipment costs would be shared by the State and counties, pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001, which requires the counties to pay one-half of the State's cost of acquiring and operating the State's voting system.

Future Capital/Operating Costs

A new optical scan voting system is expected to be implemented in the future pursuant to Chapters 547 and 548 of 2007 (as amended by Chapter 428 of 2009), but funding for the new system was not included in the fiscal 2011 State budget and funding has not been included in the proposed fiscal 2012 State budget. When an optical scan voting system is implemented, "ballot-on-demand" printers are expected to be needed at early voting centers in order to print out various ballot styles for voters coming from various parts of each county.

A voting system study conducted in 2010 for the Department of Legislative Services by RTI International indicated that ballot-on-demand printers designed by the dominant national vendor of the printers for use in higher-volume locations range from \$20,000 to \$40,000. Assuming that at least one additional printer would be needed for each additional early voting center, the cost for the printers for the five additional early voting centers would be at least \$100,000, likely to be financed along with printers acquired for all other early voting centers over a number of years. The State would only be responsible for half of that cost – at least \$50,000 – pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001.

In addition to the capital cost of purchasing the printers, the RTI study indicated there is also a per ballot operating cost for the printers, which the State will share with the counties. The vendor mentioned above charges \$0.45 per ballot, according to RTI.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local government expenditures increase by a total of \$220,150 in fiscal 2012 (consisting of \$61,700 for the 2011 Baltimore City general election and \$158,450 for the 2012 presidential primary election) for Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties – the jurisdictions in the State with more than 300,000 registered voters that are required to add an early voting center under the bill. These counties cumulatively spent approximately \$1.9 million on early voting for the 2010 elections.

The amount and type of costs incurred by the 24 local boards of elections in the State to conduct early voting for the 2010 elections varied, with election judge compensation being the one cost that every local board incurred and most boards incurring staff overtime and voter outreach costs. Other categories of costs included election judge training costs, early voting center rental and maintenance, costs for early voting center communications, sample ballots, provisional ballot supply carts, security, and transportation. The overall cost for the 24 local boards of elections to conduct early voting for the 2010 elections was \$2.6 million.

Exhibit 2 shows the approximate cost increases for each of the five affected boards of elections to conduct early voting at an additional early voting center. Each jurisdiction will incur those costs over the course of fiscal 2012 and 2013 for the 2012 presidential elections and similar costs in future election years. Because of the effective date of the bill (October 1, 2011), Baltimore City will also, in addition, incur costs to conduct early voting at an additional early voting center for the 2011 Baltimore City general election. The early voting period for the 2011 Baltimore City elections is not specified in statute, but this estimate assumes it will be six days, similar to the early voting periods specified in statute for the 2010 and 2012 statewide elections.

Exhibit 2
Approximate Costs for an Additional Early Voting Center

<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Primary and General</u>	<u>Per Election</u>
Anne Arundel	\$51,000	\$25,500
Baltimore City	123,400	61,700
Baltimore	32,800	16,400
Montgomery	34,700	17,350
Prince George’s	75,000	37,500
Total	\$316,900	\$158,450

Source: Baltimore City; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties; State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

Future Capital/Operating Costs

As mentioned above, when an optical scan voting system is implemented, ballot-on-demand printers are expected to be necessary to conduct early voting. Assuming at least one additional printer would be needed for each additional early voting center, capital costs for each affected county will increase by at least \$10,000 (reflecting the counties' responsibility for half of the cost of the printers, pursuant to Chapter 564 of 2001). Counties will also bear half of the operating costs of the printers (an amount charged by one vendor of \$0.45 per ballot).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections; Baltimore City; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties; RTI International; Department of Legislative Services

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mc/hlb

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