

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2011 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 436  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Clagett)

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**Election Law - Early Voting Centers**

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This bill expands the number of early voting centers that can be established in a county with fewer than 150,000 registered voters. The bill specifies that those counties must have between one and three early voting centers, replacing the current requirement that the counties have one early voting center.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase minimally in FY 2012 and 2013 and future election years to the extent counties with fewer than 150,000 registered voters add early voting centers. The State cost per additional early voting center for the 2012 presidential elections is expected to be approximately \$1,500. This estimate does not include minimal network service costs.

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures will increase in counties with fewer than 150,000 registered voters that add early voting centers. *For illustrative purposes*, if all 17 counties with fewer than 150,000 registered voters added an early voting center, local government expenditures cumulatively increase by approximately \$376,000 over the course of FY 2012 and 2013.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**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 State Board of Elections 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.

**State Fiscal Effect:** General fund expenditures increase minimally in fiscal 2012 and 2013 and future election years to the extent more than one early voting center is established in counties with less than 150,000 registered voters. For the 2012 presidential elections, general fund expenditures are expected to increase by approximately \$1,500 for each additional early voting center. This estimate accounts for transportation costs shared with the counties and the cost of a modem and associated networking equipment for each early voting center; however, it does not include minimal network service costs.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Local government expenditures increase in counties with less than 150,000 registered voters to the extent additional early voting centers are added. Counties that currently have less than 150,000 registered voters cumulatively spent just over \$500,000 on early voting for the 2010 elections, approximately \$376,000 of which accounted for expenses that would be increased if additional early voting centers are established (election judge compensation; staff overtime pay; early voting center rental and communications, provisional ballot supply carts, security, transportation, and other supplies).

Therefore, if every county with fewer than 150,000 registered voters added an early voting center for the 2012 presidential elections, local government expenditures as a whole should increase by approximately \$376,000 over the course of fiscal 2012 and 2013. Of a small number of counties with fewer than 150,000 registered voters contacted, however, a couple indicated that additional early voting centers would not be added and presumably others would also continue with one early voting center. **Exhibit 1** shows the number of early voting centers and registered voters for each county.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Registered Voters and Early Voting Centers in Maryland**

<b>County</b>	<b>Registered Voters<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Early Voting Centers</b>	<b>Listing by Number of Early Voting Centers</b>	
Allegany	42,657	1	Allegany	1
Anne Arundel	334,442	5	Calvert	1
Baltimore City	367,321	5	Caroline	1
Baltimore	496,150	5	Carroll	1
Calvert	56,855	1	Cecil	1
Caroline	18,081	1	Charles	1
Carroll	105,947	1	Dorchester	1
Cecil	60,267	1	Frederick	1
Charles	91,794	1	Garrett	1
Dorchester	19,847	1	Kent	1
Frederick	138,209	1	Queen Anne's	1
Garrett	18,391	1	St. Mary's	1
Harford	150,334	3	Somerset	1
Howard	179,587	3	Talbot	1
Kent	12,059	1	Washington	1
Montgomery	578,158	5	Wicomico	1
Prince George's	520,679	5	Worcester	1
Queen Anne's	29,872	1	Harford	3
St. Mary's	59,662	1	Howard	3
Somerset	13,234	1	Anne Arundel	5
Talbot	25,363	1	Baltimore City	5
Washington	83,968	1	Baltimore	5
Wicomico	54,753	1	Montgomery	5
Worcester	35,890	1	Prince George's	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,493,520</b>			

<sup>1</sup> Active register voters as of December 31, 2010.

Source: State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 443 (Senator Young, *et al.*) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Calvert, Garrett, Frederick, Howard, and Montgomery counties; Baltimore City; Department of Legislative Services

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