

# HOUSE BILL 173

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By: **Delegates Cardin and George**

Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2012

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Election Law – Voter Registration Agencies – Electronic Signatures**

3 FOR the purpose of authorizing an applicant registering to vote at a voter registration  
4 agency to consent to the use of an electronic copy of the applicant's signature  
5 that is on file with the voter registration agency as the applicant's signature for  
6 the application being submitted; requiring a voter registration agency to  
7 transmit an electronic copy of the signature of certain applicants for voter  
8 registration to the State Board within a certain period of time; and generally  
9 relating to the use of electronic signatures for voter registration at voter  
10 registration agencies.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
12 Article – Election Law  
13 Section 3–204  
14 Annotated Code of Maryland  
15 (2010 Replacement Volume and 2011 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
17 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 **Article – Election Law**

19 3–204.

20 (a) (1) The State Board shall designate public agencies and  
21 nongovernmental agencies as voter registration agencies where qualified individuals  
22 may apply to register to vote.

23 (2) The State Board shall designate the following offices as voter  
24 registration agencies:

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



- 1 (i) all offices in the State that provide public assistance;
- 2 (ii) all offices in the State that provide State-funded programs  
3 primarily engaged in providing services to individuals with disabilities; and
- 4 (iii) all public institutions of higher education in the State.
- 5 (3) The State Board and the Secretary of Defense shall jointly develop  
6 and implement procedures for persons to apply to register to vote at recruitment  
7 offices of the armed forces of the United States, which shall be deemed voter  
8 registration agencies.
- 9 (b) Except for a public institution of higher education in the State, which  
10 institution shall comply with the requirements of subsection (c) of this section, each  
11 voter registration agency, as provided in subsection (a)(2) and (3) of this section, shall:
- 12 (1) distribute a voter registration application approved by the State  
13 Board or the Federal Election Commission with each application for service or  
14 assistance it renders and with each recertification, renewal, or change of address form  
15 relating to such service or assistance;
- 16 (2) provide a document to prospective registrants that includes:
- 17 (i) the question, “If you are not registered to vote where you live  
18 now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today?”;
- 19 (ii) if the agency provides public assistance, the statement,  
20 “Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of  
21 assistance that you will be provided by this agency.”;
- 22 (iii) boxes for the applicant to check to indicate whether the  
23 applicant would like to register or declines to register to vote together with the  
24 statement (in close proximity to the boxes and in prominent type), “If you do not check  
25 either box, you will be considered to have decided not to register to vote at this time.”;
- 26 (iv) the statement, “If you would like help in filling out the voter  
27 registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept  
28 help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private.”;
- 29 (v) the statement, “If you believe that someone has interfered  
30 with your right to register or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in  
31 deciding whether to register or in applying to register to vote, or your right to choose  
32 your own political party or other political preference, you may file a complaint with the  
33 State Board of Elections.”; and
- 34 (vi) the address and toll free telephone number of the State  
35 Board;

1           (3) provide each applicant who does not decline to register to vote and  
2 who accepts assistance the same degree of assistance with regard to completion of the  
3 registration application as is provided by the office with regard to the completion of its  
4 own applications, unless the applicant refuses such assistance; and

5           (4) accept the completed voter registration application for transmittal  
6 to the appropriate election board.

7           (c) At the time that an individual enrolls, registers, or pays for course work  
8 provided by a public institution of higher education in the State, the institution shall  
9 provide the individual with an opportunity to request a voter registration application.  
10 If the individual requests a voter registration application, the institution shall provide,  
11 or cause to be provided, an application to the individual.

12           (d) An applicant may mail the voter registration application to the  
13 appropriate State election official or return it to the voter registration agency for  
14 transmittal to the appropriate election official.

15           (e) Within 5 days from the acceptance of a voter registration application, the  
16 voter registration agency shall forward the application to the appropriate State  
17 election official.

18           **(F) (1) AN APPLICANT REGISTERING TO VOTE AT A VOTER**  
19 **REGISTRATION AGENCY MAY AFFIRMATIVELY CONSENT TO THE USE OF AN**  
20 **ELECTRONIC COPY OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S SIGNATURE THAT IS ON FILE WITH**  
21 **THE VOTER REGISTRATION AGENCY AS THE INDIVIDUAL'S SIGNATURE FOR THE**  
22 **APPLICATION BEING SUBMITTED.**

23           **(2) IF AN APPLICANT SIGNS A VOTER REGISTRATION**  
24 **APPLICATION AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE**  
25 **VOTER REGISTRATION AGENCY SHALL TRANSMIT AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THE**  
26 **APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE TO THE STATE BOARD WITHIN 5 DAYS AFTER THE DAY**  
27 **ON WHICH THE AGENCY ACCEPTED THE APPLICATION.**

28           **[(f)](G)** If a voter registration agency is an office described in subsection  
29 (a)(2)(ii) of this section, which provides services to an individual with a disability at  
30 the individual's home, the agency shall provide the services described in subsection (b)  
31 of this section at the individual's home.

32           **[(g)](H)** (1) An individual who provides any service described in  
33 subsection (b) of this section may not:

34           (i) seek to influence an applicant's political preference or party  
35 registration;

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1 (ii) display any political preference or party allegiance; or

2 (iii) make any statement to an applicant or take any action the  
3 purpose or effect of which is to lead the applicant to believe that a decision to register  
4 or not to register has any bearing on the availability of services or benefits.

5 (2) No information relating to a declination to register to vote in  
6 connection with an application made at an office designated as a voter registration  
7 agency may be used for any purpose other than the maintenance of voter registration  
8 statistics.

9 (3) Notwithstanding § 3–501 of this title and § 10–611 of the State  
10 Government Article, the identity of a voter registration agency through which a  
11 particular voter has registered may not be disclosed to the public.

12 **[(h)](I)** Regulations necessary to carry out the requirements of this section  
13 and § 3–203 of this subtitle, including provisions for training the employees of voter  
14 registration agencies and the Motor Vehicle Administration, shall be adopted by the  
15 State Board in cooperation with each agency.

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
17 June 1, 2012.