

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 181 (Senator Raskin)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Task Force to Study the Public Financing of Judicial Elections

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study the Public Financing of Judicial Elections. The Maryland Judicial Conference and the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) are required to provide staffing. The task force must report its findings and proposals to the General Assembly by December 31, 2012.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2012, and terminates June 30, 2013.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DLS and the Judiciary are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill establishes a Task Force to Study the Public Financing of Judicial Elections, which must:

- study the feasibility of adopting a public finance system for judicial elections in the State;
- review best practices for publicly financing judicial elections; and

- develop a proposal to institute a public finance system for judicial elections in the State.

Current Law/Background: State law does not provide for public funding of candidates in a judicial election.

Circuit court judges are appointed by the Governor and, after at least 1 year's service, must stand for election to a 15-year term. Unlike their colleagues on the Court of Appeals and the Court of Special Appeals, circuit court judges may face a contested election in which qualified members of the Maryland Bar challenge the incumbent judges by filing as candidates.

As previously referenced, judges on the Court of Appeals and the Court of Special Appeals do not run in a contested election after appointment, but instead face retention elections every 10 years. District Court Judges, after appointment by the Governor and confirmation by the Senate, serve 10-year terms. They are not subject to election and are instead reappointed by the Governor, with the Senate's consent.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Department of Legislative Services,

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 3, 2012
mc/kdm

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