

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 322 (Senators Young and Brinkley)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Frederick County - Election Law - Early Voting Centers

This bill expands the number of early voting centers that can currently be established in Frederick County. The bill specifies that if Frederick County has fewer than 150,000 registered voters, the county must have at least one early voting center and may have not more than two additional early voting centers if the county commissioners provide funding for the additional early voting centers, rather than only one center under the current requirement applicable to counties with fewer than 150,000 registered voters.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances. The State cost per additional early voting center for each primary or general election is expected to be approximately \$400.

Local Effect: Frederick County expenditures increase by approximately \$19,200 in FY 2014 and \$19,200 in FY 2015 if the number of registered voters in the county remains under 150,000 when early voting centers are designated for the 2014 elections and an additional early voting center is established.

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 no later

than six months before a primary election. 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. The number of registered voters and early voting centers (for the 2012 presidential elections) in each county is shown in **Exhibit 1**.

According to SBE statistics, early voters were 9.6% of the total number of voters that turned out for the 2010 primary election and 11.7% of the total number of voters that turned out for the 2010 general election. Among the individual counties, the percentage of voters that turned out that voted early ranged from 4.0% in Washington County to 19.7% in Kent and Talbot counties for the primary election and from 4.6% in Allegany County to 22.2% in Talbot County for the general election. In Frederick County, 4.8% of voters that turned out for the primary voted early and 7.6% of voters that turned out for the general election voted early.

Early voting was also recently implemented for the 2011 Baltimore City Elections at five early voting centers for six days prior to each election. Information on total turnout for the general election is not yet available; however, according to unofficial statistics, of the Baltimore City voters that cast regular ballots in person at early voting centers or election day polling places (excluding provisional and absentee voters) during the primary election, 10.6% cast their ballots at early voting centers.

Exhibit 1
Registered Voters and Early Voting Centers in Maryland

County	Registered Voters¹	Early Voting Centers for 2012 Elections	Listing by Number of Early Voting Centers	
Allegany	41,615	1	Allegany	1
Anne Arundel	329,370	5	Calvert	1
Baltimore City	367,838	5	Caroline	1
Baltimore	482,600	5	Carroll	1
Calvert	55,644	1	Cecil	1
Caroline	17,653	1	Charles	1
Carroll	106,226	1	Dorchester	1
Cecil	58,681	1	Frederick	1
Charles	91,055	1	Garrett	1
Dorchester	19,234	1	Harford	1
Frederick	139,595	1	Kent	1
Garrett	18,284	1	Queen Anne's	1
Harford ²	150,796	1	St. Mary's	1
Howard	181,174	3	Somerset	1
Kent	12,122	1	Talbot	1
Montgomery	571,878	5	Washington	1
Prince George's	529,013	5	Wicomico	1
Queen Anne's	30,486	1	Worcester	1
St. Mary's	59,232	1	Howard	3
Somerset	13,123	1	Anne Arundel	5
Talbot	24,655	1	Baltimore City	5
Washington	82,552	1	Baltimore	5
Wicomico	53,515	1	Montgomery	5
Worcester	34,862	1	Prince George's	5
Total	3,471,203	46		

¹Active register voters as of December 2011.

²The determination of the number of early voting centers in each county was made August 2, 2011, when the number of registered voters in Harford County was 149,954, just below the 150,000 threshold.

Source: State Board of Elections, Department of Legislative Services

Local Fiscal Effect: Frederick County expenditures may increase by approximately \$19,175 in fiscal 2014 and \$19,175 in fiscal 2015 if the number of registered voters in the county remains under 150,000 when early voting centers are designated for the 2014 elections and an additional early voting center is established for the primary and general elections. As shown in Exhibit 1, as of December 2011, the county had 139,595 registered voters. The \$19,175 estimated cost of an additional early voting center accounts for election judge salaries, supplies, contractual services, equipment replacement, building rent, advertising, cell phone charges, postage, and travel and food expenses.

It is assumed that, despite the fact that the bill takes effect June 1, 2012, an additional early voting center will not be able to be established in Frederick County for the 2012 presidential general election due to the fact that under current law, early voting centers are required to be designated in each county no later than six months before a primary election.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: Although HB 380 (Frederick County Delegation - Ways and Means) is designated as a cross file, it is different.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections, Frederick County, Department of Legislative Services

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mlm/hlb

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