

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2012 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 173  
Ways and Means

(Delegates Cardin and George)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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**Election Law - Voter Registration Agencies - Electronic Signatures**

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This bill specifies that an applicant registering to vote at a voter registration agency may affirmatively consent to the use of an electronic copy of the individual's signature that is on file with the agency as the individual's signature for the application. If an applicant signs a voter registration application in that manner, the voter registration agency must transmit the electronic copy of the applicant's signature to the State Board of Elections (SBE) within five days after the agency accepts the application.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2012.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. The bill does not directly affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** An individual may apply to become a registered voter through a number of means including (1) visiting an election board office; (2) by mail; (3) when applying for services at a voter registration agency (specified public and nongovernmental agencies designated by SBE, including agencies providing public assistance and services for individuals with disabilities, public higher education institutions, and military recruiting offices); (4) when applying to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) for

issuance, renewal, or modification of a driver's license or identification card; and (5) through SBE's online voter registration system (currently under development).

In general, voter registration agencies are required to provide materials offering individuals an opportunity to register to vote with each application for service or assistance the agencies render and with each recertification, renewal, or change of address form relating to each service or assistance. Public higher education institutions are required to provide an individual with an opportunity to request a voter registration application when an individual enrolls, registers, or pays for course work. An applicant may mail the voter registration application to the appropriate State election official or return it to the voter registration agency for transmittal to the appropriate election official. Within five days of accepting a voter registration application, a voter registration agency must forward the application to the appropriate State election official.

Similar requirements of voter registration agencies exist in federal law under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.

**Background:** Voter registration, to date, has been accomplished through paper applications, though an online voter registration system is currently under development as well as improvements to MVA's and SBE's computer systems to allow for voter registration applications to occur at MVA, and be transmitted to SBE, entirely electronically. An MVA driver's license or identification card number will be required in order to register through the online voter registration system, though absent uniformed services or overseas voters can register online with a Social Security number.

This bill allows for individuals to also apply to register to vote electronically at voter registration agencies if the agencies develop electronic systems similar to MVA's, by being able to consent to the use of an electronic copy of their signature on file with the agency as the signature for their application.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Disabilities, Baltimore City Community College, Howard County, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 30, 2012  
mlm/hlb

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Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510