

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 498 (Wicomico County Delegation)
Ways and Means

Wicomico County - Election Law - Challengers and Watchers

This bill prohibits a candidate from being designated as a challenger or watcher at a polling place in Wicomico County for an election in which the candidate's name appears on the ballot.

The bill takes effect January 1, 2013.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's change can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: State election law allows for challengers and watchers who are registered voters and designated by the State Board of Elections; a local board; a candidate; a political party; or any other group of voters supporting or opposing a candidate, principle, or proposition on the ballot, to be present at a polling place.

Challengers and watchers may enter a polling place a half hour before polls open, enter or be present at the polling place at any time when the polls are open, and remain in the polling place until the polls are closed and election judges leave the polling place. A challenger or watcher is positioned near the election judges and inside the voting room, so as to see and hear each person as the person offers to vote, and may maintain a list of

registered voters who have voted, or individuals who have cast provisional ballots. Challengers and watchers generally may not interact with voters in the polling place or handle any original election documents.

Other provisions apply, including that an election judge must protect a challenger or watcher in the exercise of the rights of a challenger or watcher and if election results are produced in the polling place, watchers must be admitted to hear the announced results.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 420 (Senator Mathias) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 13, 2012
ncs/hlb

Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

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