

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

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 69 (Senator Brochin, *et al.*)  
 Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Elections - Early Voting - Dates**

This bill replaces the early voting period established in State law for the 2012 presidential general election with a shorter early voting period closer to election day that will apply to any future regularly scheduled primary or general election. The newly established early voting period is from the Thursday before a regularly scheduled primary or general election through the Sunday before the election, during the hours between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday during the early voting period, and the hours between 12 noon and 6 p.m. on the Sunday during the early voting period.

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures may increase by at least \$10,000 in FY 2013 and future years, accounting for the State’s share of additional contractual services costs resulting from the compressed timeframe between early voting and election day created by the bill.

(in dollars)	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Net Effect	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)	(\$10,000)

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect*

**Local Effect:** Certain local government costs will decrease in FY 2013 due to the reduced number of early voting days under the bill, potentially by \$300,000; but other costs are expected to increase, due to the compressed timeframe between the end of early voting and election day. It is uncertain at this time what overall net fiscal impact the bill will have on county finances, though at least two counties contacted expect a net increase in costs.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** For the 2012 presidential primary and general elections, each early voting center must be open from the second Saturday before a primary or general election through the Thursday before the elections. The early voting centers must be open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on each day of the early voting period, except for Sunday, when the centers must be open from 12 noon to 6 p.m.

Early voting periods for other future elections are not specified in statute.

**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. For the 2012 presidential elections, there will again be 46 early voting centers across the State.

According to State Board of Elections (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.

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.

**State Fiscal Effect:** General fund expenditures may increase by at least \$10,000 in fiscal 2013 and future years, accounting for the State's share of additional contractual services costs associated with the compressed timeframe between early voting and election day created by the bill. County technicians that assist with the election process (including early voting) in many counties may need to work additional hours, or additional technicians may be needed. A relatively involved process needs to be accomplished between the end of early voting and election day with respect to the epollbooks, including uploading of early voting information from epollbooks at early

voting centers to the statewide voter registration database, downloading the updated voter registration information back to the counties, and then uploading the information to all of the epollbooks that will be used at election day polling places and preparing and transporting the epollbooks.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** Certain local government costs are expected to decrease, due to the reduction in the number of days of early voting in the bill, but other costs are expected to increase due to the compressed time period between early voting and election day. It is uncertain at this time what overall net fiscal impact the bill will have on counties. SBE and certain counties contacted have indicated, however, that the bill will have a significant adverse operational impact on local boards of elections, having to accomplish the transition from early voting to election day in such a short timeframe. As discussed above, a relatively involved process of updating voter registration information after early voting and preparing and delivering epollbooks containing the updated information to election day polling places must be accomplished between a Sunday night and early Tuesday morning under the bill.

During the 2010 elections, the amount and type of costs incurred by the various local boards varied, with election judge compensation being the one cost that every local board incurred and most boards incurring staff overtime and voter outreach costs. Other categories of costs included early voting center rental and maintenance, costs for early voting center communications, provisional ballot supply carts, security, and other supplies. The overall cost for the 24 local boards of elections to conduct early voting for the 2010 primary and general elections was \$2.6 million.

The categories of costs that are affected by the number of days of early voting are election judge compensation, staff overtime, early voting center rental and maintenance, security, and other supplies costs. These costs totaled \$1.9 million for the 2010 primary and general elections combined. If it was assumed that similar costs will be incurred for early voting during the 2012 elections and that those costs affected by the number of days of early voting would be reduced proportionally to the reduction in the number of days of early voting, local government expenditures for the 24 local boards of elections would decrease by approximately \$300,000 in fiscal 2013 to conduct early voting for the 2012 presidential general election. Some of these costs, however, may not decrease entirely proportionally to the reduction in the number of days. Additional election judges may be needed per day, for example, to handle an increased daily volume of voters during the shorter early voting period, which would lessen the amount of savings.

Due to the compressed timeframe between early voting and election day, however, personnel and transportation costs associated with the preparation and delivery of epollbooks to election day polling places will increase. It is difficult to determine at this time to what extent those costs will increase in all cases and therefore to what extent

savings from a reduced number of days of early voting might be reduced or erased by these increased costs. At least two counties, Montgomery and Wicomico, expect a net increase in costs, but it is not clear whether that would be the case in all jurisdictions.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Harford, Montgomery, Talbot, and Wicomico counties; Baltimore City; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 15, 2012  
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