

SENATE BILL 5

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5lr0543

(PRE-FILED)

By: ~~Senator Getty~~ Senator Bates

Requested: November 3, 2014

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2015

Assigned to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: February 17, 2015

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Election Law – Canvass of Votes – Public Observation**

3 FOR the purpose of clarifying the definition of “canvass” as it applies to votes cast during
4 early voting; providing that a board of canvassers and the staff of a local board may
5 be observed as they complete each part of the canvass by authorized observers;
6 specifying certain individuals or entities who have the right to designate a registered
7 voter as an observer at each counting center; authorizing the State Board of Elections
8 to adopt regulations prohibiting public observation of the canvass only if necessary
9 to accomplish certain purposes; requiring the State Board to ensure that the
10 requirements of this Act are implemented uniformly and consistently by each local
11 board; making conforming changes; and generally relating to public observation of
12 the canvass of votes.

13 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
14 Article – Election Law
15 Section 11–101 and 11–301
16 Annotated Code of Maryland
17 (2010 Replacement Volume and 2014 Supplement)

18 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
19 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

20 **Article – Election Law**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 11–101.

2 (a) In this title the following words have the meanings indicated.

3 (b) “Board of canvassers” means the local board of elections in a county after the
4 local board organizes itself for the purpose of canvassing the vote after an election in that
5 county.

6 (c) (1) “Canvass” means the entire process of vote tallying, vote tabulation,
7 and vote verification or audit, culminating in the production and certification of the official
8 election results.

9 (2) For absentee ballots, the “canvass” includes the opening of any envelope
10 accompanying an absentee ballot and the assembly and review of absentee ballots in
11 preparation for vote tallying.

12 (3) For provisional ballots, the “canvass” includes the review of the
13 provisional ballot applications described in § 11–303 of this title and the assembly and
14 review of provisional ballots in preparation for vote tallying.

15 **(4) FOR VOTES CAST DURING EARLY VOTING, THE “CANVASS”**
16 **INCLUDES THE TABULATION OF VOTES CAST DURING EARLY VOTING.**

17 (d) “Counting center” means one or more central locations designated by a local
18 board to conduct the canvass.

19 (e) “Removable data storage device” means a read–only memory device that is
20 programmed to record votes as they are cast on an electronic voting system.

21 (f) (1) “Unofficial returns” means a vote tabulation reported on election night
22 after the polls close.

23 (2) “Unofficial returns” does not include the absentee ballot count or the
24 provisional ballot count.

25 (g) “Vote tabulation” or “vote counting” means the aggregation of the votes cast
26 by individual voters to produce vote totals at any level.

27 (h) “Vote tallying” means the recording of votes cast by individual voters on a
28 certified voting system whether done by:

29 (1) a mechanical lever voting machine;

30 (2) an electronic voting device; or

31 (3) making marks manually on a tally sheet.

1 11-301.

2 (a) A board of canvassers shall:

3 (1) convene at the designated counting center for that county on or before
4 the day of the election, but not later than 5 p.m. on that day, and be sworn in; AND

5 (2) meet only in public session[; and

6 (3) subject to regulations adopted by the State Board to ensure the
7 integrity of the electoral process and that the accuracy of the vote tabulation is not impeded
8 or compromised, provide for observation and understanding of the canvass by those
9 individuals in attendance].

10 **(A-1) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (3) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A BOARD OF**
11 **CANVASSERS AND THE STAFF OF A LOCAL BOARD MAY BE OBSERVED AS THEY**
12 **COMPLETE EACH PART OF THE CANVASS BY AUTHORIZED OBSERVERS DESIGNATED**
13 **UNDER PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION.**

14 **(2) THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES HAVE THE RIGHT TO**
15 **DESIGNATE A REGISTERED VOTER AS AN OBSERVER AT EACH COUNTING CENTER:**

16 **(I) A CANDIDATE;**

17 **(II) A POLITICAL PARTY; AND**

18 **(III) ANY OTHER GROUP OF VOTERS SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING**
19 **A CANDIDATE, PRINCIPLE, OR PROPOSITION ON THE BALLOT.**

20 **(3) THE STATE BOARD MAY ADOPT REGULATIONS PROHIBITING**
21 **PUBLIC OBSERVATION OF A PART OF THE CANVASS ONLY IF PROHIBITING PUBLIC**
22 **OBSERVATION IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE:**

23 **(I) THE INTEGRITY OR ACCURACY OF THE CANVASS; OR**

24 **(II) THAT THE CANVASS PROCESS IS NOT IMPEDED.**

25 **(4) THE STATE BOARD SHALL ENSURE THAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF**
26 **THIS SUBSECTION ARE IMPLEMENTED UNIFORMLY AND CONSISTENTLY BY EACH**
27 **LOCAL BOARD.**

28 (b) Each board of canvassers shall elect by majority vote a chairman and secretary
29 from among its members.

1 (c) Each member of the board of canvassers shall take an oath, administered and
2 recorded by the clerk of the circuit court, to canvass and declare the votes cast truthfully
3 and to perform other duties required by law.

4 (d) (1) At the first meeting of the board of canvassers for the purpose of
5 canvassing, a majority of the whole board of canvassers shall be a quorum.

6 (2) If a quorum is not present, the members present shall adjourn until the
7 next day.

8 (e) Except as otherwise provided in this article, all decisions shall be reached by
9 a majority vote of the members present.

10 (f) If a member is not present at the scheduled time for vote canvassing, a
11 substitute member of the board of canvassers may be sworn in.

12 (g) At least one member of the board of canvassers present shall be a registered
13 voter of the principal minority party.

14 (h) Once the board has satisfied the requirements of subsections (a) through (g)
15 of this section, it may proceed with the canvass in accordance with the regulations of the
16 State Board.

17 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
18 1, 2015.

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.