

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 409
Ways and Means

(Delegate Parrott, *et al.*)

Election Law - Primary Elections and Early Voting - Dates

This bill requires that a primary election be held seven days later if the primary election date otherwise would fall on any one of the following holidays: (1) Purim; (2) Passover; (3) Good Friday; (4) Easter; (5) the first day of Ramadan; (6) Rosh Hashanah; or (7) Yom Kippur. In addition, an early voting center may not be open for voting on any of those holidays.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: Local government expenditures decrease collectively by approximately \$300,000 for each day that is eliminated from the early voting period prior to a primary election. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: A primary election is held on the last Tuesday in June in a gubernatorial election year and on the first Tuesday in April in a presidential election year. For all regular primary and general elections, early voting centers are open from the second Thursday before the election through the Thursday before the election.

In 2016, the bill reduces the number of days that early voting centers are open prior to the primary election, from eight to five, due to Purim, Good Friday, and Easter falling during the early voting period.

See the **Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting** for more information on early voting and early voting centers.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local government expenditures decrease collectively by approximately \$300,000 for each day that is eliminated from the early voting period prior to a primary election. This estimate is based on early voting cost information collected from local boards of elections following the 2012 elections, adjusting for subsequent changes in the early voting law and for inflation. The estimate only accounts for savings on costs of running the number of early voting centers mandated by law based on the number of registered voters in each county (currently 59 centers).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections; Dorchester, Garrett, Howard, and Montgomery counties; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 23, 2015
min/hlb

Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

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

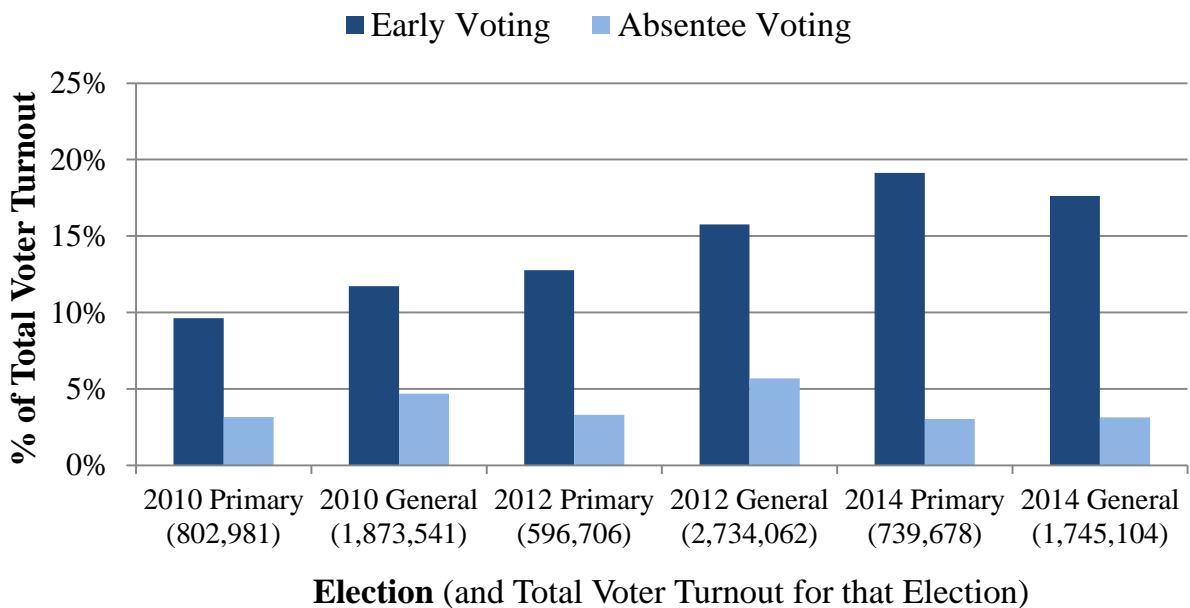
Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting

In Maryland

Maryland voters have the option of voting at an early voting center prior to election day or by absentee ballot, as alternatives to voting at a polling place on election day. In-person early voting at early voting centers was first implemented in 2010 and “no excuse” absentee voting (not requiring a reason that a voter cannot vote in person) was first allowed in 2006.

Exhibit 1 shows that, as a percentage of overall turnout in the 2010 through 2014 elections, use of early voting has been generally increasing, from just under 10% in the 2010 primary election to over 15% in recent elections, and use of absentee voting has been relatively consistent, between 3% and 6%.

Exhibit 1
Maryland Early and Absentee Voting Turnout
2010-2014



Source: State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

There were additional early voting centers and a longer early voting period for the 2014 elections pursuant to Chapters 157 and 158 of 2013. **Exhibit 2** and **Exhibit 3** show the changes made by Chapters 157 and 158. The number of early voting centers in each county for the 2014 elections is shown in **Exhibit 4**. A voter may vote at any early voting center in the voter's county of residence. In addition, pursuant to Chapters 157 and 158, an individual will be able to both register to vote and vote at an early voting center beginning in 2016.

Chapters 157 and 158 also expanded and clarified the methods by which a voter may request and receive an absentee ballot. An absentee ballot must be requested in writing (there are State and federal forms that can be used) or, pursuant to Chapters 157 and 158, a request can be submitted online through the State Board of Elections website. The available methods for a voter to receive an absentee ballot are (1) by mail; (2) by facsimile transmission; (3) through the Internet; or (4) by hand during an in-person transaction. To return an absentee ballot, a voter may either mail in the completed ballot, postmarked on or before election day, or deliver it to the local board of elections in person by the close of polls on election day.

In Other States

Research by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) indicates that 33 states and the District of Columbia offer in-person early voting, and 27 states and the District of Columbia permit no excuse absentee voting. In addition, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington conduct all elections by mail.

The timing and length of early voting periods varies among the early voting states. According to NCSL, the average starting time for early voting, across the 33 states, is 22 days before an election. NCSL indicates that the average length of early voting periods across the states is 19 days and early voting typically ends just a few days before election day, somewhere between the Thursday and the Monday before election day.

**Exhibit 2
Early Voting Centers**

Prior to Chs. 157/158		Under Chs. 157/158	
<u>Registered Voters in a County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers</u>	<u>Registered Voters in a County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers*</u>
< 150,000	1	< 125,000	1
150,000-300,000	3	125,000-300,000	3
> 300,000	5	300,000-450,000	5
		> 450,000	8

*In addition to these required centers, each county may establish one additional early voting center if the State Board of Elections, in collaboration with the local board of elections, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional center.

**Exhibit 3
Early Voting Days and Hours**

Prior to Chs. 157/158		Under Chs. 157/158
<u>2010 Elections</u>	<u>2012 Elections</u>	<u>2014 and Future Elections</u>
<i><u>Days (6)</u></i>	<i><u>Days (6)</u></i>	<i><u>Days (8)</u></i>
Second Friday before the election through Thursday before the election, excluding Sunday	Second Saturday before the election through Thursday before the election	Second Thursday before the election through Thursday before the election
<i><u>Hours</u></i>	<i><u>Hours</u></i>	<i><u>Hours</u></i>
10 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)	10 a.m.-8 p.m. (Saturday; Monday-Thursday) 12 noon-6 p.m. (Sunday)	Presidential general election: 8 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day) All other elections: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. (each day)

Exhibit 4
Early Voting Centers in Each County

Jurisdiction	Registered Voters (December 2013)	Early Voting Centers in 2012	Early Voting Centers in the 2014 General Election*
Montgomery	625,030	5	9
Prince George's	567,823	5	8
Baltimore	512,686	5	8
Baltimore City	376,738	5	6
Anne Arundel	351,794	5	5
Howard	194,938	3	3
Harford	162,170	1	4
Frederick	147,538	1	3
Carroll	113,430	1	1
Charles	98,353	1	2
Washington	88,336	1	1
St. Mary's	64,148	1	1
Cecil	61,087	1	1
Calvert	59,606	1	1
Wicomico	58,216	1	1
Allegany	42,223	1	1
Worcester	36,758	1	1
Queen Anne's	32,278	1	2
Talbot	25,705	1	1
Dorchester	20,475	1	1
Garrett	19,001	1	1
Caroline	18,463	1	1
Somerset	13,160	1	1
Kent	12,652	1	1
Total	3,702,608	46	64

*There were 63 early voting centers for the 2014 primary election. One center was added, in Charles County, prior to the general election.