

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 204
 Ways and Means

(Montgomery County Delegation)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Montgomery County - Elections - Early Voting Centers
 MC 14-16

This emergency bill increases the required number of early voting centers in Montgomery County from 8 to 10. The bill applies to the 2016 election cycle, and the tenth early voting center must be located at the Potomac Community Recreation Center, if available, or, if not, at another facility that serves the Potomac area community.

The bill terminates December 31, 2016.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$2,800 in FY 2016 and 2017 due to additional voting system costs. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	2,800	2,800	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$2,800)	(\$2,800)	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: Montgomery County expenditures increase by \$28,300 in FY 2016 and 2017 due to additional voting system and other early voting center costs. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: The number of required early voting centers in a county is based on the number of registered voters in the county, as shown in **Exhibit 1**. Montgomery County, which had 631,981 active registered voters as of December 2015, is required to have eight early voting centers. In addition to the required early voting centers, each county may establish one additional 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 early voting center. For the 2014 elections, that provision was used in Montgomery County, so that the county had nine early voting centers. For further background information on early voting see the attached **Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting**.

Exhibit 1 Current Law – Required Early Voting Centers

<u>Registered Voters in a County</u>	<u>Early Voting Centers*</u>
< 125,000	1
125,000-300,000	3
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.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$2,761 in fiscal 2016. This accounts for the State's share of voting system costs associated with one additional early voting center in Montgomery County. Chapter 564 of 2001 requires that the State and counties share costs of the State's voting system.

While the bill increases the number of required early voting centers in the county by 2, from 8 to 10, the county established 9 centers for the 2014 elections under the existing authorization under the law, which allows for an additional center in a county beyond the required number of centers. Those same nine centers have been approved by the Montgomery County and State Boards of Elections for the 2016 elections. Therefore, it is assumed this bill requires the county to establish just one additional center that it otherwise would not have established.

The costs include:

- voting equipment (\$1,261);
- ballots (\$1,050); and
- voting equipment transportation (\$450).

In fiscal 2017, expenditures similarly increase to implement a tenth early voting center in Montgomery County for the 2016 general election. The voting equipment costs are ongoing lease costs.

Local Expenditures: Montgomery County expenditures increase by \$28,322 in fiscal 2016. This accounts for Montgomery County's share of voting system costs associated with one additional early voting center in the county as well as additional costs to operate the center, primarily compensation of election judges.

The costs include:

- voting equipment (\$1,261);
- ballots (\$1,050);
- voting equipment transportation (\$450);
- election judges (\$23,390); and
- other costs (\$2,171).

In fiscal 2017, expenditures similarly increase to operate a tenth early voting center for the 2016 general election.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): State Board of Elections, Montgomery County, National Conference of State Legislatures, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 25, 2016
md/hlb Revised - House Third Reader/Updated Information - February 17, 2016

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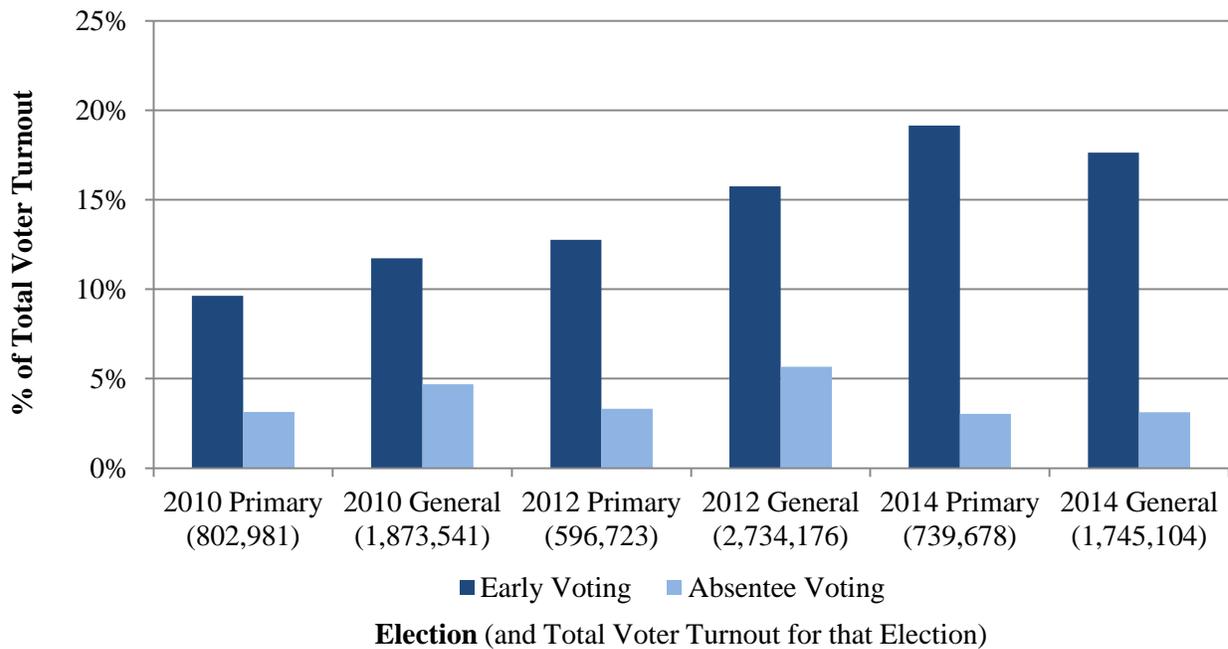
Appendix – Early and Absentee Voting

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 2016 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 (or change his/her voter registration address) and vote at an early voting center 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 37 states and the District of Columbia offer some form of in-person early voting, and 27 states and the District of Columbia permit no excuse absentee voting. 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 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.

Exhibit 2
Early Voting Centers

Prior to Chs. 157/158		Under Chs. 157/158	
Registered Voters <u>in a County</u>	Early Voting <u>Centers</u>	Registered Voters <u>in a County</u>	Early Voting <u>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 2015)	Early Voting Centers in the 2016 Elections
Montgomery	631,981	9
Prince George's	551,143	8
Baltimore	536,220	9
Baltimore City	369,051	6
Anne Arundel	362,933	5
Howard	201,297	3
Harford	169,209	4
Frederick	157,108	3
Carroll	118,077	1
Charles	103,480	2
Washington	91,387	1
St. Mary's	66,363	1
Cecil	62,297	1
Calvert	61,103	1
Wicomico	57,793	1
Allegany	42,709	1
Worcester	36,708	1
Queen Anne's	33,686	2
Talbot	26,254	1
Dorchester	20,738	1
Garrett	19,300	2
Caroline	19,041	1
Somerset	13,076	1
Kent	12,884	1
Total	3,763,838	66

Source: State Board of Elections
