

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 747
Ways and Means

(Delegate W. Fisher, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Election Law – Links to Online Voter Registration

This bill requires the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to (1) include a link to the State Board of Elections' (SBE) online voter registration system in the standard website template used by State agencies; (2) collaborate with as many State agencies as possible to include a link to the online voter registration system on the websites of those agencies; and (3) submit a specified report on those efforts by January 1, 2020. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any costs incurred by DoIT and/or other State agencies to implement the bill are not expected to materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill requires DoIT to (1) include a link to SBE's online voter registration system in the standard website template used by State agencies and (2) collaborate with as many State agencies as possible to include a link to the online voter registration system on the websites of those agencies. A link to the online voter registration system must be (1) on the homepage or in another prominent location on an agency's website and (2) designed to be conspicuous to individuals visiting the website.

By January 1, 2020, DoIT must submit a report to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee that:

- describes the efforts of the department to implement the above provisions regarding links to the online voter registration system;
- provides a complete list of all State agencies that (1) include a link to the online voter registration system on the agency's website and (2) do not include a link to the online voter registration system on the agency's website; and
- for each agency that does not include a link to the online voter registration system on its website, the reason a link is not feasible or appropriate.

Current Law/Background:

Automatic Voter Registration Agencies

Chapter 287 of 2016 designated the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE), local departments of social services, and the Mobility Certification Office (MCO) in the Maryland Transit Administration as “electronic voter registration agencies” and required each to implement an electronic voter registration system.

Chapter 19 of 2018 modified those provisions to make the agencies instead “automatic voter registration agencies” that are required to each implement an automatic voter registration system. An automatic voter registration system, instead of offering an applicant the opportunity to register to vote or update a voter registration record as an integral part of each applicable transaction at the agency (as an “electronic voter registration system” would), informs the applicant that the applicant will be registered to vote or have a voter registration record updated, if applicable, unless the applicant declines to register to vote or update a voter registration record or if the applicant is not eligible to register to vote.

MVA, MHBE, and MCO must implement an automatic voter registration system by July 1, 2019, and local departments of social services must implement an automatic voter registration system by December 1, 2019.

Links to the Online Voter Registration System

Chapter 287 established requirements for certain agencies (the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Human Services) to jointly develop and implement, with SBE, procedures for individuals served by the agencies through specified online services or other outreach to be offered the opportunity to register to vote through a link to SBE's online voter registration system.

Chapter 19 also required SBE and the State Comptroller to jointly develop and implement procedures for individuals who file a Maryland resident individual income tax return electronically to be offered the opportunity to register to vote through a link to SBE's online voter registration system.

DoIT/SBE 2017 Report

Chapter 287 required DoIT and SBE to complete a study that, among other things, identified additional agencies for which it would be beneficial to the public to include a link on the agency's website to the SBE online voter registration system. The study recommended various agencies to whose websites a link should be added and discussed the possibility of adding a voter registration link or button to the standard website template used by the majority of Executive Branch agencies.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Information Technology; Department of Legislative Services

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