

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2022 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 925

(Senator Patterson)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Prince George's County - Special Elections Conducted by Mail - Voting Centers

This bill modifies requirements regarding the number, location, and days and hours of operation of in-person voting centers during a special election conducted by mail in Prince George's County. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: Prince George's County expenditures may be affected, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill makes provisions that are specific to Montgomery County, with respect to the number, location, and days and hours of operation of in-person voting centers during a special election conducted by mail, also applicable to Prince George's County. Under those provisions (1) in a special election held in a single county council district, at least one voting center must be established in the county council district where the special election is being held and (2) in a countywide special election, at least one voting center must be established in each county council district. In addition, a voting center must be open for voting during the days and for the hours that the county council directs in the resolution that establishes that the special election will be conducted by mail.

Current Law: Chapter 677 of 2012 authorized county council special elections in Montgomery County to be conducted by mail, and Chapters 197 and 198 of 2013 expanded those provisions to apply to special elections to fill a vacancy in the office of representative in Congress, special elections to fill a vacancy in a county council, and other specified local special elections statewide. Pursuant to a constitutional amendment (Chapter 261 of 2014) adopted by the voters at the November 2014 general election, special elections for a county executive vacancy may also be conducted by mail.

In a special election conducted by mail, a vote by mail ballot is mailed to each registered voter who is eligible to vote in the special election. The completed ballot must be mailed by the voter on or before the day of the special election or returned to the local board of elections office in person by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the special election.

Each local board must establish at least one voting center for the use of any eligible voter who chooses to cast a ballot in person.

A voting center must be located at a local board office or another location within the constituency where the special election is being held. However, in Montgomery County, (1) in a special election held in a single county council district, at least one voting center must be established in the county council district where the special election is being held and (2) in a countywide special election, at least one voting center must be established in each county council district.

Unless otherwise specified in a proclamation issued by the Governor that directs that a special election be conducted by mail, a voting center must be open for voting each day beginning six days before the day of a special election through the day of a special election during the hours between (1) 10:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and (2) 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. However, in Montgomery County, a voting center must be open for voting during the days and for the hours that the county council directs in the resolution that establishes that the special election will be conducted by mail.

Local Fiscal Effect: Prince George's County expenditures for voting centers in any future special elections conducted by mail may be affected to the extent the bill's modifications, and choices by the county council in a resolution establishing that a special election will be conducted by mail, result in a different number and/or different days and hours of operation of early voting centers for a given special election conducted by mail, under the bill, in comparison to the number and days and hours of operation of early voting centers that would otherwise be implemented under current law.

For illustrative purposes, the staffing costs (including costs of election judges, technicians, and regular staff overtime) for one voting center during a special election conducted by mail, in the county, are estimated to be approximately \$13,000 per day. Staffing costs are

the primary additional cost associated with running a voting center during a special election conducted by mail, since existing equipment and supplies are readily available for a voting center (or centers).

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Prince George's County; State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 15, 2022
fnu2/hlb Third Reader - March 22, 2022

Analysis by: Scott D. Kennedy

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