

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2022 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

House Bill 538  
Ways and Means

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**Voters' Rights Protection Act of 2022**

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This bill modifies the days during which early voting centers are open for voting, so that the centers are open from the second Thursday before a primary or general election through the *Sunday* (replacing Thursday) before the election. **The bill takes effect January 1, 2023.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures increase by \$380,000 annually, from FY 2024 through 2026, and by \$140,000 annually thereafter. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	0	380,000	380,000	380,000	140,000
Net Effect	\$0	(\$380,000)	(\$380,000)	(\$380,000)	(\$140,000)

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

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures increase by at least \$1.4 million annually, from FY 2024 through 2026, and by at least \$1.1 million annually thereafter. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** Each early voting center must be open for voting beginning the second Thursday before a primary or general election through the Thursday before the election. Early voting centers are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. each early voting day.

**State and Local Fiscal Effect:** Increasing the number of days early voting centers are open is expected to increase the State and local boards of elections' costs beginning in fiscal 2024.

Both the State and local boards of elections' costs increase for (1) additional compensation of personnel, under the State Board of Elections' (SBE) staffing contract, that assist with early voting; (2) increased voting equipment transportation costs (resulting from equipment being returned from the early voting centers on a weekend rather than during the week); and (3) additional routers, and associated data plans, needed to be able to network all electronic pollbooks on Election Day. Because of the shortened timeframe between early voting and Election Day, updated voter information, reflecting early voting activity, will need to be transmitted to the electronic pollbooks at polling places through a network (requiring the additional routers for counties that do not already have them at polling places). This would replace a more time-intensive process currently used, that updates voter information in the electronic pollbooks, between early voting and Election Day, before they are transported to Election Day polling places.

It is assumed, for the purposes of this fiscal and policy note, that the above costs are shared by SBE and the local boards of elections, with general fund expenditures and local government expenditures each increasing by approximately \$380,000 each fiscal year from fiscal 2024 through 2026, primarily reflecting financed payments for the routers (along with the data plan, personnel, and transportation costs), and by approximately \$140,000 annually thereafter, reflecting ongoing data plan, personnel, and transportation costs.

Local board of elections costs also increase, collectively, by approximately \$1 million annually beginning in fiscal 2024, representing the cost of additional election judge compensation for the three additional days of early voting. This estimate is based primarily on past information collected by SBE on numbers of election judges, and associated election judge compensation rates, that counties had planned to use for early voting during the 2020 primary election (prior to changes in the format of that election due to the pandemic) and adjusting that information to account for increases in the number of early voting centers since then.

Local boards of elections, in at least some counties, are also expected to incur additional temporary staff or other costs to support the additional days of early voting, but a statewide estimate of these costs has not been quantified.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections; Harford and Montgomery counties; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 13, 2022  
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