

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 18 (Senator Muse)
 Education, Energy, and the Environment

Election Law - Early Voting - Number of Days

This bill decreases, from eight to five, the number of days during which early voting centers are open for regular primary and general elections, so that early voting centers are open from the second Thursday before a primary or general election through the second Monday before the election.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures decrease by approximately \$221,700 annually beginning in FY 2026. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	(221,700)	(221,700)	(221,700)	(221,700)	(221,700)
Net Effect	\$221,700	\$221,700	\$221,700	\$221,700	\$221,700

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

Local Effect: Local government expenditures decrease annually beginning in FY 2026, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Early voting centers are open, in a regular primary or general election, from the second Thursday before the election through the Thursday before the election during the hours between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. each early voting day.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: Decreasing the number of days early voting centers are open is expected to decrease the State and local boards of elections' costs beginning in fiscal 2026.

State and local boards' costs each decrease by \$221,700 from a reduction in:

- **Returning Election Judge Extra Compensation (\$160,000)** – pursuant to Chapter 157 of 2023, each returning election judge is entitled to at least \$100 more per day than the compensation paid to an election judge who is not a returning election judge. The State Board of Elections (SBE) must reimburse each local board for \$50 of the extra compensation paid to each returning election judge. General fund expenditures and local government (collective) expenditures are each expected to decrease by approximately \$160,000 each year, beginning in fiscal 2026. This estimate (1) assumes that local boards do not provide more than the minimum \$100 extra compensation to returning election judges and (2) assumes all chief election judges are paid the extra compensation and 50% of all other judges are paid the extra compensation.
- **Voting Support Personnel Expenses (\$61,700)** – under the SBE staffing contract, support personnel are used in many, but not all, early voting centers (some counties separately hire their own voting system support personnel). In accordance with the State's cost-sharing structures with the local boards, these expenses are shared 50/50 by the State and the counties. General fund expenditures and local government expenditures each decrease by approximately \$61,700 each year, beginning in fiscal 2026.

Local boards of elections' costs also decrease, collectively, by approximately \$1.7 million annually beginning in fiscal 2026, representing the cost savings from the remaining, regular election judge compensation that is not paid by local boards due to the three fewer days of early voting. This estimate is based on information provided by SBE and the local boards of elections on election judge salaries in each county and assumptions about the number of election judges needed to staff early voting centers.

Local boards of elections, in at least some counties, are also expected to experience reductions in other costs of administering early voting, but a statewide estimate of those costs has not been quantified.

As illustrative examples of potential cost savings, of a small number of counties contacted about their overall reduction in early voting costs (including costs for election judges) as a result of the bill:

- Calvert County estimates a decrease in expenditures of approximately \$50,000 in fiscal 2026, and ongoing savings in future years, consisting of cost savings from election judge compensation and staff overtime;
- Carroll County estimates a decrease in expenditures of approximately \$65,000 in fiscal 2026, and ongoing savings in future years, consisting of cost savings from election judge and staff compensation, staff mileage reimbursement and dinners, and rental of one voting center;
- Harford County estimates a decrease in expenditures of approximately \$120,000 in fiscal 2026, and ongoing savings in future years, consisting of cost savings from election judge, board member, and staff compensation as well as rental of one voting center; and
- Howard County estimates a decrease in expenditures of approximately \$220,000 in fiscal 2026, and ongoing savings in future years, consisting of cost savings from election judge compensation, staff overtime, and rental space.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Calvert, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

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