

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 488

(Delegate Wilson, *et al.*)

Rules and Executive Nominations

Rules

Election Districts - General Assembly and Representatives in Congress

This emergency bill alters the boundaries of the State's eight congressional districts for the 2026 election of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill also proposes a constitutional amendment to (1) establish that specified provisions of the State Constitution regarding legislative districts apply explicitly for the election of a member of the Senate and members of the House of Delegates and (2) establish that the General Assembly has the power to grant original jurisdiction to the Supreme Court of Maryland to review the congressional districting of the State. The bill also proposes a temporary constitutional amendment to establish the boundaries of the eight congressional districts for the State proposed by the bill in the State constitution for statewide elections that occur between 2026 and the effective date of legislation establishing districts for the election of the State's representatives in Congress following the 2030 decennial census.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase significantly for FY 2026, potentially by more than \$3.0 million, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The operations of local boards of elections are likely to be significantly affected, and expenditures for local boards of elections increase in FY 2026 and potentially in FY 2027 due to overtime and other costs, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Congressional district boundaries must be redrawn every 10 years following the decennial census to adjust for population changes. Congressional districts must comply with the U.S. Constitution and the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. The U.S. Supreme Court has held that congressional districts are subject to a strict population equality standard under Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution. Accordingly, the populations of congressional districts must be as close to mathematical equality as practicable.

Chapters 66 and 67 of 2010 require that population counts used to create the State's congressional district plan exclude individuals incarcerated in State or federal correctional facilities, as determined by the decennial census, who were not State residents prior to their incarceration. Individuals incarcerated in State or federal correctional facilities who were residents of the State prior to their incarceration must be counted at their last known residence.

The State's current congressional districting plan was enacted as Chapter 16 of 2022. The enacted congressional district map can be found [here](#).

State/Local Expenditures: Early voting for the 2026 State primary election begins June 11, 2026, and continues through June 18, 2026. The State primary election is June 23, 2026, and the State general election is November 3, 2026. Ballots for the primary election must be finalized 64 days before the election (April 20). As such, the State Board of Elections (SBE) and local boards of elections must implement the new congressional districting plan, as established under the bill, within a significantly compressed timeframe.

SBE advises that in order to meet this deadline it requires an estimated \$3.5 million in fiscal 2026 to (1) print and mail new voter identification cards to affected voters; (2) procure mapping software services to identify the precincts affected by the change in congressional district boundaries; (3) hire temporary staff to assist local boards of elections with changes related to redistricting; (4) potentially locate and prepare new polling places for redrawn precincts and hire new election judges to staff those locations; (5) procure additional provisional ballot applications; and (6) conduct a public outreach and media campaign to alert the public to the changes in voter registrations. The Department of Legislative Services cannot independently verify SBE's estimate; however, significant funding is likely needed. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by *at least* \$3.0 million in fiscal 2026 for SBE to conduct the aforementioned activities and implement the congressional district boundaries established under the bill in time for the June 2026 primary. Some expenses for the general election may carry over into fiscal 2027 as well. It is also assumed that SBE can handle future elections with resources that are normally budgeted following a decennial census for redistricting and related costs.

Associated preliminary implementation work by local boards of elections for both the primary and general elections can each take up to several weeks, likely resulting in increased expenditures for the local boards, but a reliable estimate is not feasible at this time. *For illustrative purposes only*, SBE estimates total costs for each large county, including Montgomery and Baltimore counties, to be approximately \$300,000 to implement provisions of the bill in time for the June 2026 primary. These costs include overtime for local board of elections staff.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Governor's Office; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Maryland Department of Planning; Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

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