



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE**

**SB 534 – Election Law – Election Judges - Compensation**

**POSITION: Informational and Support**

**BY: Linda Kohn, LWVMD President**

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**Election Judge Training Program and Compensation Requirement of SB 534**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland believes that every voter should be able to have an easy and efficient experience at the polls. We also acknowledge that to create a more inclusive democracy that represents the diverse needs of its people, we must empower young voters.

Elections officials across the state continue to work through the challenge of hiring election workers, even after implementation of pay increases in 2024. In addition, many counties still struggle to recruit an equal number of Republican and Democratic workers to administer the vote and count ballots.

SB 534 proposes that an election judge who completes the required training may only be compensated for receiving that instruction after serving as an election judge on early voting or election day.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland neither supports nor opposes this portion of the SB 534 and presents the following as informational.

It creates frustration and additional work for Board of Elections staff to recruit and train election judges, only to lose them prior to early voting or election day. In addition, there is no return on the dollar for those who are paid for training and do not work on early voting or election day.

While every dollar counts, especially in a tight budget year, the cost savings to Maryland's budget would be de minimis.

Of concern is this restriction could disengage future, potential election judges when it continues to be a challenge to recruit the number and party affiliation needed. It is likely many will not make the commitment for fear of an event or situation arising that is out of their control and prevents them from working on early voting or election day.

Training is mandatory for election workers, who become employees of the county and complete W-2 forms prior to receiving their instruction. Afterwards, workers receive W-4 forms for tax filing purposes. Not compensating workers if unable to serve as an election judge *may* be a violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which states, “time spent in required training is considered "hours worked" and must be compensated, regardless of the employee's performance following the training”.

### **Informational only – we neither support nor oppose this portion of SB 534**

#### Student Learning Service Requirement of SB 534

SB 534 also proposes that public school students may receive both compensation for working as an election judge and earn hours towards their service learning requirement. Currently they may select one, but not both.

In addition to providing students a hands-on introduction to the democratic process, serving as an election judge can have additional significant benefits.

Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life – Tufts University, partnered with Minneapolis to study the benefits of young people serving as poll workers. The major findings of their study, released June 7, 2021, found:

- Nearly 70% of student election judges said the experience helped them understand the voting process “a great deal” and nearly 100% of those respondents who were at least 18 years old said they planned to vote in 2020.
- Two thirds of young poll workers felt they were improving things in their community, 76% said they felt they were ensuring that all members of their community could vote, and 59% said they gained practical skills from the experience.
- The number of youth election judges at a given Minneapolis precinct was significantly correlated with estimated voter turnout among 18 to 24 year-olds, and may have been especially important in more diverse precincts.

Supporting students financially with both civic engagement and service learning is a win – win for Maryland.

**We support this portion of SB 534.**