

SB 534 Election Law - Election Judges - Compensati

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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

Date: February 26, 2025

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.

David Naimon MoCo Board of Elections on SB 534 at

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**TESTIMONY BY BOARD PRESIDENT DAVID A. NAIMON ON SENATE BILL 534
REGARDING ELECTION JUDGE COMPENSATION
SENATE ENERGY, EDUCATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 2-26-2025**

Chair Feldman and Vice Chair Kagan, for the record, my name is David Naimon, and I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'd also like to thank Senators Kagan and Gallion for introducing this important legislation. I'm the President of the Montgomery County Board of Elections and I'm testifying today on behalf of our county board, which unanimously on a bipartisan basis supports this legislation and urges a favorable report. We always need more election judges than we have, and this bill would take two important steps to help us recruit and retain election judges and get them to serve at Early Voting and/or Election Day. First, it would only allow local Boards to pay election judges if they actually serve at Early Voting and/or Election Day. Second, it would allow public school students who serve as election judges to receive *both* student service learning (SSL) hours and the election judge compensation that other election judges receive, rather than requiring the students to pick between the two.

The problem this bill is addressing is real, not hypothetical. In 2022 in Montgomery County alone, we had almost 300 people for the primary election and more than 200 people for the general election who completed and got paid for election judge training without serving either at Early Voting or on Election Day. Those hundreds of election judges not only didn't show up for their service but also took up training slots that could have been used by others. We assume other jurisdictions have a proportionally similar number.

Section 10-205(b) of the Election Law currently requires local boards to pay at least \$50 to any election judge who completes required training. We're happy to pay election judges for completing mandatory training, but it doesn't make sense to pay them if they don't go on to serve at either Early Voting or Election Day.

We're very proud of the roughly 10% of our Montgomery County election judges who are ages 16 or 17 – they are among our most dedicated and hard-working election judges, and they are the election judges for in-person voting for the future. By increasing their incentives to serve, this bill would help us to recruit even more young election judges and help us to continue to have election judges of all ages.

We urge a favorable report on SB 534. Thank you for the opportunity to share our views with you today.

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Position: FAV



Senate Bill 534

Election Law - Election Judges - Compensation

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Committee

Date: February 26, 2025

From: Kevin Kinnally

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 534, which ensures election judges receive training compensation only if they serve on Election Day or during early voting. The bill also expands opportunities for student participation by allowing public school students to earn service-learning credit while receiving election judge pay, removing an unnecessary restriction that limits recruitment.

Counties rely on qualified election judges to staff polling places and ensure smooth election administration. Current law requires counties to pay election judges for completing training, even if they fail to serve. As such, local boards expend limited public funds on individuals who do not fulfill their role, creating staffing shortages and unnecessary costs. This bill remedies this issue by ensuring election judges complete at least one day of service before receiving training pay, which promotes accountability and improves election workforce reliability.

This bill also supports student recruitment efforts. Maryland law requires students to complete service-learning hours to graduate, but current rules force them to choose between earning credit and receiving election judge pay. This outdated restriction discourages students from serving and limits a critical pipeline for future election workers. SB 534 eliminates this barrier, allowing more students to gain hands-on civic experience while satisfying academic requirements.

SB 534 provides a commonsense solution that supports efficient election operations, reduces wasteful spending, promotes civic engagement, and enhances recruitment efforts. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 534.

Testimony - Election Judge No Show SB534.pdf

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB534: Election Judge No Show

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 1:00 PM

Election judges currently receive at least \$50 for each training course they complete, regardless of whether they ultimately serve. Around the State, prospective judges have taken part and been paid for training-- but failed to fulfill their duty at the polls. According to the Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO), in the most recent General Election alone, tens of thousands of dollars were paid to people who participated in the training, but never served.

[SB534](#) would clarify that LBEs can make payments only after service has been completed and verified, saving taxpayer money; judges who only report for training would not be compensated.

This bill also permits public school students to receive both Student Service Learning hours and compensation when they work at the polls. This would help to recruit and retain young election judges, thereby fostering civic engagement in the next generation. This body has already passed Civic Excellence ([SB8](#)) unanimously this session, and this portion of the bill would further engage young people in public service.

Sen. Gallion is a co-sponsor of this bipartisan bill.

I urge a favorable report on SB534.

SB534 - 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Stephen Feryus

Position: FAV



Maryland Association of Election Officials

Representing the Local Election Boards of the State of Maryland

February 26, 2025

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

SB534 - Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members,

The Maryland Association of Election Officials (MAEO) is the professional membership organization representing local election officials and Election Boards across all 24 jurisdictions in Maryland. Our members are committed to ensuring the smooth and effective administration of elections, and to making Maryland elections accessible, secure, and fair.

Senate Bill 534 addresses an ongoing issue faced by our local boards by ensuring that compensation for training is provided only after an election judge has served on election day or during early voting. This provision is designed to ensure that only those who fulfill their commitment are compensated for training, addressing the issue of “no-show” judges who have cost local boards significant amounts of money.

MAEO fully supports the provision allowing public school students to receive both service-learning credit and election judge compensation. It's essential to recognize that when students serve as election judges, they are fulfilling a portion of their service-learning requirement. Receiving state mandated compensation should not diminish that service. We want to ensure that students do not have to choose between getting credit for fulfilling their service requirement and being paid for their time. Both should be available to them, as they are performing a valuable civic duty, just as other election judges are.

The compensation provided to students should be viewed in the same way as it is for all election judges—an important incentive and reward for their participation. Ensuring students are compensated appropriately reinforces the value of their contribution to the democratic process, while also encouraging future participation in civic duties.

We are grateful for your attention to this important issue and for your continued support of election officials in Maryland. Thank you for your time and consideration, and we respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 534.