



Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
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The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chairman
and Members of the Ways and Means Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Annapolis, Maryland

Dear Chairman Atterbeary and Members:

RE: **HB1280** – Affiliating with a Party and Voting – Unaffiliated Voters -- **OPPOSE**

The 1,154 members of the Maryland Federation of Republican Women are opposed to HB1280.

The purpose of a Primary Election is for each political party to choose a nominee for the General Election who best represents their values and beliefs. Allowing an unaffiliated voter at an Early Voting center to affiliate that day and vote a Party ballot dilutes the votes of the members of that political party.

Especially egregious would be allowing a last-minute change of affiliation in gubernatorial election years when Central Committee offices are on the ballot.

The bill does not address how an election judge would confirm residency – what is acceptable evidence – will that information be readily available, etc. – or how the Board of Elections can determine how many ballots will be needed.

This opportunity could be manipulated to advance the least qualified candidate on the Party's Primary ballot to the General Election. Primary Election voter turnout is often low; and it wouldn't take much to impact a county or municipal election. The wishes of the members of a political party could be subverted by an influx of last-minute party registrants.

Changing one's party affiliation is quick and easy. Party affiliation can be changed up to 3 weeks prior to the election -- electronically via the Maryland Board of Elections website or in writing by submitting a new voter registration application or a signed written request to one's local Board of Elections. An individual who realizes that their political views have changed and now wishes to affiliate with a political party will not wait until they arrive at an Early Voting location to change their party affiliation.

This legislation is unnecessary and presents an opportunity for manipulation.

Please give **HB1280** an **UNFAVORABLE** report.

Sincerely,
Ella Ennis, Legislative Chairman
Maryland Federation of Republican Women