

SB0005

EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE | 21 JAN 2026

Good Morning. I am Mike Pellittiere, a Navy veteran, resident of Odenton, and volunteer state leader of Veterans for Maryland Voters. We are the state chapter of Veterans for All Voters, a diverse community of veterans—constitutional conservatives, progressives, and everything in between—united by a shared belief that the American people deserve better than our current politics. As veterans, we took an oath to serve and protect our nation. Now, we're leading the charge to make elections more fair, functional, and free of partisan gridlock, ensuring that every American's voice is heard.

This seems very straightforward. Voters should choose their own representatives. As veterans, we took an oath to support and defend a system of self-governance. In the military, we understand the "Chain of Command." That chain starts with the American citizen. When a legislative seat is filled by a party committee for nearly a full four-year term, that chain is broken. It feels less like a representative democracy and more like a private appointment process.

We certainly appreciate the need to fill vacancies promptly so that residents aren't left without a voice in Annapolis. However, that appointment should be a temporary, caretaker position. In the military, an "Acting" commander holds the position until a permanent leader is selected. The advice I was given: "You're acting, don't rearrange the furniture."

This proposal is a simple solution and strikes an appropriate balance. A special election at the same time as the presidential election just makes sense. This will not cause voter fatigue and, per last year's fiscal note, not impose additional costs on the state.

We fought for the right of people to choose their leaders. We ask you to honor that principle by giving Marylanders the right to vote for theirs.

Veterans for Maryland Voters strongly urges a favorable recommendation to this bill as written. Thank you.