

HOUSE BILL 1001

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6lr1951
CF SB 670

By: **Delegate D. Jones**
Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2026
Assigned to: Government, Labor, and Elections

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Election Law – Local ~~Board~~ Election Directors and State Administrator of Elections ~~Employees –~~
3 **Authority at Polling**
4 **Places****

4 FOR the purpose of requiring a police officer who is on duty at a polling place to obey the
5 authority of a local ~~board of elections employee~~ election director or the State
6 Administrator of Elections; providing that local ~~board employees~~ election directors and
7 the State Administrator,
8 while serving a polling place, have the authority to keep the peace and order the
9 arrest of certain persons; authorizing local ~~board employees~~ election directors, while
10 serving in a
11 polling place, to protect certain rights of, deny admission of, and eject certain
12 challengers and watchers from a polling place under certain circumstances; and
13 generally relating to the authority of local ~~board employees~~ election directors and the
14 State Administrator of Elections at polling places.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
12 Article – Election Law
13 Section 10–304 and 10–311(d) and (e)
14 Annotated Code of Maryland
15 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

16 BY adding to
17 Article – Election Law
18 Section 10–307.1
19 Annotated Code of Maryland
20 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

21 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
22 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

23 **Article – Election Law**

24 10–304.

2 REPRINT OF HOUSE BILL 1001 as amended by HB1001/723822/1 02/23/26 at 12:27 PM

1 (a) (1) A police officer who is on duty at a polling place shall obey the order of
 2 an election judge for that polling place, ~~OR A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION DIRECTOR, OR
 3 THE STATE ADMINISTRATOR.

3 (2) A police officer making an arrest under an order of an election judge, ~~OR~~
 4 ~~A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION DIRECTOR, OR THE STATE ADMINISTRATOR is fully protected in
 5 so doing as if the police officer received
 6 a valid warrant to make the arrest.

6 (b) A police officer who is on duty at a polling place shall protect a challenger or
 7 watcher in the discharge of the duties of the challenger or watcher.

8 **10-307.1.**

9 (A) WHILE SERVING IN A POLLING PLACE, ~~A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE HAS~~ ELECTION
 10 DIRECTOR AND THE STATE ADMINISTRATOR HAVE
 11 THE AUTHORITY TO:

11 (1) KEEP THE PEACE; AND

12 (2) ORDER THE ARREST OF ANY PERSON WHO:

13 (i) BREACHES THE PEACE;

14 (ii) BREACHES ANY PROVISION OF THIS ARTICLE; OR

15 (iii) INTERFERES WITH THE WORK OF THE ELECTION JUDGES IN
 16 CONDUCTING THE ELECTION AND CARRYING OUT THEIR ASSIGNED TASKS.

17 (B) (1) WHILE SERVING IN A POLLING PLACE, ~~A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION
 18 DIRECTOR

18 MAY PROTECT A CHALLENGER OR WATCHER IN THE EXERCISE OF THE RIGHTS OF A
 19 CHALLENGER OR WATCHER AS PROVIDED IN § 10-311 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

20 (2) (i) ~~A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION DIRECTOR IS NOT REQUIRED TO
 21 ADMIT A

21 CHALLENGER OR WATCHER TO A POLLING PLACE BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN IF THE
 22 CHALLENGER OR WATCHER WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE POLLING PLACE AT LEAST 30
 23 MINUTES BEFORE ITS OPENING.

24 (ii) ~~A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION DIRECTOR MAY REQUIRE CHALLENGERS
 25 AND WATCHERS TO LEAVE A POLLING PLACE BEFORE IT OPENS IF THE LOCAL ~~BOARD~~
 26 ~~EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION DIRECTOR HAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE CHALLENGERS
 27 AND WATCHERS WILL PREVENT THE TIMELY OPENING OF THE POLLING PLACE.

28 (C) ~~A THE LOCAL BOARD EMPLOYEE~~ ELECTION DIRECTOR MAY EXERCISE THE AUTHORITY UNDER
 29 SUBSECTIONS (A) AND (B) OF THIS SECTION INDEPENDENT OF AN ELECTION JUDGE
 30 ASSIGNED TO THE POLLING PLACE.

3 REPRINT OF HOUSE BILL 1001 as amended by HB1001/723822/1 02/23/26 at 12:27 PM

1 10-311.

2 (d) (1) A challenger or watcher may not attempt to:

3 (i) ascertain how a voter voted or intends to vote;

4 (ii) converse in the polling place with any voter;

5 (iii) assist any voter in voting; or

6 (iv) physically handle an original election document.

7 (2) An election judge ~~OR THE LOCAL BOARD-EMPLOYEE ELECTION DIRECTOR~~ may eject
8 a challenger or watcher who violates the prohibitions under paragraph (1) of this subsection.

9 (e) (1) Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3) of this subsection, an
10 election judge shall [permit] **ALLOW** an individual other than an accredited challenger or
11 watcher who desires to challenge the right to vote of any other individual to enter the
12 polling place for that purpose.

13 (2) A majority of the election judges ~~OR THE LOCAL BOARD-EMPLOYEE ELECTION~~
14 DIRECTOR may
15 limit the number of nonaccredited challengers and watchers allowed in the polling place at
any one time for the purpose of challenging the right of an individual to vote.

16 (3) A nonaccredited challenger or watcher shall leave the polling place as
17 soon as a majority of the election judges ~~OR THE LOCAL BOARD-EMPLOYEE ELECTION DIRECTOR~~
18 decides the right
to vote of the individual challenged by the challenger or watcher.

19 (4) In addition to restrictions provided under this subsection, all
20 restrictions on the actions of an accredited challenger or watcher provided under this
21 subtitle apply to a nonaccredited challenger or watcher.

22 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
23 1, 2026.