
HB 830 - UNFAVORABLE

GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTION COMMITTEE | 18 FEB 2026

We are the Maryland chapter of Veterans for All Voters, a non-partisan organization of veterans and supporters dedicated to ensuring that those who have served our country are not sidelined by the very democratic processes they swore to defend. Our mission is to advocate for a voting system that is competitive, transparent, and—above all—accessible to every eligible citizen. It is with this mission in mind that we respectfully request an **unfavorable** report on HB 830.

The core of our opposition is simple: signature verification creates a subjective barrier that disproportionately impacts the military and overseas community. To understand why, one only needs to look at the reality of service.

For much of my career, I was a "mobile" voter. Whether I was in college away from my home state of New York, or later assigned to a Florida-based ship with a schedule that never guaranteed I'd be in port on a Tuesday in November, I relied on absentee voting. When the Navy moved me here to Maryland, that didn't change. Even after leaving active duty, life's unpredictability remained. In 2020, with my wife due to give birth around Election Day, we opted to vote absentee. It's a good thing we did—the day we dropped off our ballots, she went into labor.

If HB 830 had been law then, our ballots could easily have been discarded. My signature is, at best, inconsistent; at worst, atrocious. I am far from alone in this. States with these requirements routinely invalidate thousands of ballots for the same reason.

This policy specifically harms our youngest service members. Many currently serving grew up in an era where cursive instruction was limited or non-existent. Their signatures change, they are messy, and they often do not match a static

government file from years prior.¹ Furthermore, for a sailor on a ship or a soldier at a forward operating base, the "cure" process is often a mathematical impossibility. They simply cannot receive a rejection notice and resolve it within the legal window.

We understand the desire to validate the legitimacy of absentee ballots, but we must weigh these efforts against the actual levels of fraud they seek to counteract. A review of the Heritage Foundation's voter fraud database shows only two convictions for "fraudulent use of absentee ballots" in Maryland, both in 2013.²

Furthermore, HB 830 mandates a new witness requirement for absentee ballots. While there is an exception for overseas service members, it leaves behind domestic-stationed troops, their spouses, and the entire veteran community. This effectively forces a voter to find a second person to sign off on their private ballot, adding a layer of bureaucracy that serves no documented security purpose. When combined with the estimated hundreds of thousands of dollars in new local spending required to purchase verification software, the cost to both our privacy and our treasury far outweighs any perceived benefit.

We should not be implementing a system that we know will disenfranchise thousands of legitimate, hardworking voters to chase a problem that is statistically microscopic. In the absence of a widespread threat to election integrity, the state's compelling interest must remain in favor of the voter.

Veterans for Maryland Voters requests an unfavorable report on HB 830.

Mike Pellittiere

Volunteer State Leader
Odenton, MD

Veterans for All Voters

veteransforallvoters.org
8816 Manchester Road, Suite #101
Brentwood, MO 63144

¹ Fortune, **Gen Z voters lack the basic skill of signing their names and it's thrown vote counting into chaos, election official says**, <https://fortune.com/2024/11/07/gen-z-voters-basic-skill-signing-names-vote-counting-chaos-election-official/>

² Heritage Foundation, **Voter Fraud Map**, <https://electionfraud.heritage.org/search?state=MD>

