

HB0221

GOVERNMENT, LABOR, AND ELECTION COMMITTEE | 4 FEB 2026

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 written testimony for information only to provide a veteran's perspective on the implications of HB0221.

In the military, we were taught that our primary loyalty is to the Constitution and the American people, not a political party. We were not the military of one party or the other, but the military of the citizens, directed by a commander-in-chief selected by those citizens. We operated above the fray of politics despite the direct impact it had on our lives. For many veterans, the decision to remain unaffiliated with a party is a continuation of that oath.

We often see modern politics resembling a sports rivalry where the focus is on ensuring the "other side" loses. While it is perfectly appropriate to root against the Steelers, that mentality is a poor framework for governance. Our priority is country over party, yet the current system often forces a choice between the two.

As of December, approximately 985,000 Marylanders have chosen not to affiliate with a political party. For many, this is a serious and principled decision. Some are frustrated that their former party isn't representing them, while others refuse to pick a side because they believe their voice should be heard regardless of a private organization's membership.

HB0221 proposes a constitutional amendment to allow voters to change their affiliation leading up to an election. While this provides more flexibility, it is important to note that this bill acts as a temporary fix for a permanent problem. By locking this "band-aid"

approach into our state constitution, we risk stifling future, more comprehensive reforms that actually address the long-term challenges of voter exclusion. This measure treats a procedural symptom, but it does not address the root cause: nearly one million voters remain effectively excluded from the most consequential parts of our elections.

Veterans for Maryland Voters provides this information to highlight that while procedural flexibility is a step forward, the broader challenge remains: ensuring a system that honors the independent service and voices of all Marylanders without requiring them to join a private organization to have a meaningful vote.

We stand ready to support the committee's work and answer any questions you may have regarding the veteran community's perspective on election reform and this constitutional proposal.