

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 308

(Senator Simonaire, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Ways and Means

Election Law – Chief Election Judges – Party Affiliation

This bill modifies provisions governing the party affiliation of chief election judges and other election judges assigned to a polling place. The bill requires that a polling place have an equal number of chief judges and other election judges from the majority party and principal minority party to the extent practicable; however, if an election director designates two chief judges for a polling place and is unable to designate one from each party at least 45 days before early voting, the election director must designate one chief judge from the majority or principal minority party and one chief judge who is not registered with either party.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect local government finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill modifies an existing requirement that each polling place have an equal number of election judges from the majority party and principal minority party (which is subject to an exception for judges not registered with either party and judges who are minors). The bill modifies the requirement by (1) clarifying that it applies to chief judges in addition to other election judges and (2) requiring the number of judges from the majority party and principal minority party to be equal *to the extent practicable*.

The bill also repeals a provision that prohibits the number of election judges – in a precinct where there are six or more election judges – who are not registered with the majority party or principal minority party from exceeding the lesser of the number of election judges who belong to the majority party or the number of election judges who belong to the principal minority party.

The bill finally establishes that if an election director that designates two chief judges for a polling place is unable to designate one chief judge from the majority party and one chief judge from the principal minority party at least 45 days before the start of early voting, the election director must designate one chief judge from the majority party or principal minority party and one chief judge who is not registered with either party.

Current Law: Each local election director, with the approval of the local board of elections, must appoint election judges for each polling place for a term that begins on the Tuesday that is 13 weeks before each statewide primary election.

One or two election judges in each precinct must be designated chief election judge and supervise the staff at the polling place.

Each local board must provide at least four election judges to be the staff for each polling place, but in a precinct with fewer than 200 registered voters, the local board may provide two election judges for that precinct’s polling place.

Each polling place must have an equal number of election judges from the majority party and the principal minority party; however, if the total number of election judges for a precinct is six or more, a local board may provide (1) one or more election judges who are not registered with either the majority party or principal minority party and (2) one or more election judges who are minors. The number of election judges provided to a polling place who are not registered with either the majority party or principal minority party, or who are minors, may not exceed the lesser of (1) the number of election judges who belong to the majority party or (2) the number of election judges who belong to the principal minority party.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Charles, Garrett, and Howard counties; Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 25, 2025
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