

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1344  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Arentz)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Queen Anne's County - County Commissioners Election Method - Straw Ballot

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This bill requires the Queen Anne’s County Board of Elections, in consultation with the State Board of Elections, to prepare and include on the ballot for the November 2016 general election a specified question to determine the sense of the voters of the county on the method of electing the members of the Board of County Commissioners. The question must be proposed, presented, tallied, and reported in general accordance with State election law. The vote is only advisory.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2016.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill is not expected to affect State finances.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not expected to affect Queen Anne’s County finances.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The question to be prepared and included on the ballot is:

“Do you favor changing the method of selection of four of the five members of the Queen Anne’s County Board of County Commissioners from the current method of being elected at large by the voters of Queen Anne’s County, with one member residing in each of the four election districts, to a new method where each of the four members is elected by only the voters of the district in which the member resides and the fifth member is elected at large and may reside in any district of the County?”

**Current Law:** State election law contains various requirements relating to the preparation, content, and arrangement of ballots, including that all voting be by ballot in an election conducted under the Election Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and that a ballot not be used for any purpose not authorized by the article.

**Background:** Since 1990, Queen Anne’s County has operated as a code home rule county, governed by five county commissioners. Pursuant to the county code, there are five county commissioners, all elected at large. Four of the commissioners must reside in each of the four county commissioner districts and the fifth may reside in any area of the county. The commissioners are elected at the gubernatorial elections and serve four year terms.

In a code home rule county, the board of county commissioners exercises both legislative and executive authority. The number of commissioners and method of election are controlled by public local law and the county commissioners may alter the composition of the board, subject to applicable restrictions of the Maryland Constitution.

Subject to exceptions for Cecil County and members of any elective local board of education, the Maryland Constitution requires that State and county elected officers hold office for terms of four years and be elected every four years during the gubernatorial elections.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** State Board of Elections, Queen Anne’s County, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 7, 2016  
min/hlb Revised - House Third Reader - April 6, 2016

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