

# HOUSE BILL 548

D1

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

5lr0611

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By: **Delegates Kramer, Barkley, Dumais, Fraser–Hidalgo, and Morales**

Introduced and read first time: February 11, 2015

Assigned to: Judiciary and Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Circuit Court Judges – Election**

3 FOR the purpose of proposing an amendment to the Maryland Constitution relating to the  
4 selection and tenure of circuit court judges; altering the method of filling vacancies  
5 in the office of a judge of a circuit court; providing for retention elections following  
6 an appointment to fill a vacancy in the office of a judge of a circuit court; providing  
7 for a transitional period under which the terms of certain amendments are to become  
8 effective; making stylistic changes; generally relating to the selection, election,  
9 appointment, and tenure for judges of the circuit courts; and submitting this  
10 amendment to the qualified voters of the State for their adoption or rejection.

11 BY proposing an amendment to the Maryland Constitution  
12 Article IV – Judiciary Department  
13 Section 3, 5, 5A, and 11

14 BY proposing an addition to the Maryland Constitution  
15 Article XVIII – Provisions of Limited Duration  
16 Section 6

17 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
18 (Three–fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses concurring), That it be  
19 proposed that the Maryland Constitution read as follows:

20 **Article IV – Judiciary Department**

21 3.

22 [Except for the Judges of the District Court, the Judges of the several Courts other  
23 than the Court of Appeals or any intermediate courts of appeal shall, subject to the  
24 provisions of Section 5 of this Article of the Constitution, be elected in Baltimore City and

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 in each county, by the qualified voters of the city and of each county, respectively, all of the  
2 said Judges to be elected at the general election to be held on the Tuesday after the first  
3 Monday in November, as now provided for in the Constitution. Each of the said Judges  
4 shall hold his office for the term of fifteen years from the time of his election, and until his  
5 successor is elected and qualified, or until he shall have attained the age of seventy years,  
6 whichever may first happen, and be reeligible thereto until he shall have attained the age  
7 of seventy years, and not after.] In case of the inability of any [of said Judges] **CIRCUIT**  
8 **COURT JUDGE** to discharge [his] **THE JUDGE'S** duties with efficiency, by reason of  
9 continued sickness, or of physical or mental infirmity, it shall be in the power of the General  
10 Assembly, two-thirds of the members of each House concurring, with the approval of the  
11 Governor to retire said [Judge] **JUDGE** from office.

12 5.

13 [Upon every occurrence or recurrence of a vacancy through death, resignation,  
14 removal, disqualification by reason of age or otherwise, or expiration of the term of fifteen  
15 years of any judge of a circuit court, or creation of the office of any such judge, or in any  
16 other way, the Governor shall appoint a person duly qualified to fill said office, who shall  
17 hold the same until the election and qualification of his successor. His successor shall be  
18 elected at the first biennial general election for Representatives in Congress after the  
19 expiration of the term of fifteen years (if the vacancy occurred in that way) or the first such  
20 general election after one year after the occurrence of the vacancy in any other way than  
21 through expiration of such term.] Except in case of reappointment of a judge, **SUBJECT TO**  
22 **THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE**, upon expiration of [his] **THE JUDGE'S** term of  
23 [fifteen] **15** years, no person shall be appointed who will become disqualified by reason of  
24 age and thereby unable to continue to hold office until the prescribed time when [his] **THE**  
25 **JUDGE'S** successor would have been elected.

26 5A.

27 (a) A vacancy in the office of a judge of **A CIRCUIT COURT OR OF** an appellate  
28 court, whether occasioned by the death, resignation, removal, retirement, disqualification  
29 by reason of age, or rejection by the voters of an incumbent, the creation of the office of a  
30 judge, or otherwise, shall be filled as provided in this section.

31 (b) Upon the occurrence of a vacancy the Governor shall appoint, by and with the  
32 advice and consent of the Senate, a person duly qualified to fill [said office] **THE VACANCY**  
33 who shall hold the [same] **OFFICE** until the election for continuance in office as provided  
34 in subsections (c) [and], (d), **AND (E) OF THIS SECTION**.

35 (c) The continuance in office of a judge of the Court of Appeals, **FOLLOWING AN**  
36 **APPOINTMENT TO FILL A VACANCY**, is subject to approval or rejection by the registered  
37 voters of the appellate judicial circuit from which [he] **THE JUDGE** was appointed at the  
38 next general election following the expiration of [one] **1** year from the date of the occurrence

1 of the vacancy which [he] **THE JUDGE** was appointed to fill, and at the general election  
2 next occurring every [ten] **10** years thereafter.

3 (d) The continuance in office of a judge of the Court of Special Appeals,  
4 **FOLLOWING AN APPOINTMENT TO FILL A VACANCY**, is subject to approval or rejection  
5 by the registered voters of the geographical area prescribed by law at the next general  
6 election following the expiration of [one] **1** year from the date of the occurrence of the  
7 vacancy which [he] **THE JUDGE** was appointed to fill, and at the general election next  
8 occurring every [ten] **10** years thereafter.

9 (E) **THE CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE OF A JUDGE OF A CIRCUIT COURT,**  
10 **FOLLOWING AN APPOINTMENT TO FILL A VACANCY, IS SUBJECT TO APPROVAL OR**  
11 **REJECTION BY THE REGISTERED VOTERS OF THE CITY OR COUNTY FROM WHICH THE**  
12 **JUDGE WAS APPOINTED AT THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION FOLLOWING THE**  
13 **EXPIRATION OF 1 YEAR FROM THE DATE OF THE OCCURRENCE OF THE VACANCY**  
14 **THAT THE JUDGE WAS APPOINTED TO FILL, AND AT THE GENERAL ELECTION NEXT**  
15 **OCCURRING EVERY 15 YEARS THEREAFTER.**

16 [(e)] (F) The approval or rejection by the registered voters of a judge as provided  
17 for in subsections (c) and (d) shall be a vote for the judge's retention in office for a term of  
18 [ten] **10** years or [his] **THE JUDGE'S** removal. The judge's name shall be on the appropriate  
19 ballot, without opposition, and the voters shall vote yes or no for [his] **THE JUDGE'S**  
20 retention in office. If the voters reject the retention in office of a judge, or if the vote is tied,  
21 the office becomes vacant [ten] **10** days after certification of the election returns.

22 (G) **THE APPROVAL OR REJECTION BY THE REGISTERED VOTERS OF A**  
23 **JUDGE AS PROVIDED FOR IN SUBSECTION (E) SHALL BE A VOTE FOR THE JUDGE'S**  
24 **RETENTION IN OFFICE FOR A TERM OF 15 YEARS OR THE JUDGE'S REMOVAL. THE**  
25 **JUDGE'S NAME SHALL BE ON THE APPROPRIATE BALLOT, WITHOUT OPPOSITION,**  
26 **AND THE VOTERS SHALL VOTE YES OR NO FOR THE JUDGE'S RETENTION IN OFFICE.**  
27 **IF THE VOTERS REJECT THE RETENTION IN OFFICE OF A JUDGE, OR IF THE VOTE IS**  
28 **TIED, THE OFFICE BECOMES VACANT 10 DAYS AFTER CERTIFICATION OF THE**  
29 **ELECTION RETURNS.**

30 [(f)] (H) An appellate **OR CIRCUIT** court judge shall retire when [he] **THE**  
31 **JUDGE** attains [his seventieth birthday] **THE AGE OF 70 YEARS.**

32 [(g)] (I) A member of the General Assembly who is otherwise qualified for  
33 appointment to judicial office is not disqualified by reason of his membership in a General  
34 Assembly which proposed or enacted any constitutional amendment or statute affecting the  
35 method of selection[. Continuance], **CONTINUANCE** in office, or retirement or removal of a  
36 judge, the creation or abolition of a court, an increase or decrease in the number of judges  
37 of any court, or an increase or decrease in the salary, pension, or other allowances of any  
38 judge.

1 11.

2 The election for [Judges] **JUDGES**, hereinbefore provided, and all elections for  
3 Clerks, Registers of Wills, and other officers, provided in this Constitution, except State's  
4 Attorneys, shall be certified, and the returns made, by the Clerks of the Circuit Courts of  
5 the Counties, and the Clerk of the Superior Court of Baltimore City, respectively, to the  
6 Governor, who shall issue commissions to the different persons for the offices to which they  
7 shall have been, respectively, elected; and in all such elections for officers other than judges  
8 of an appellate **OR CIRCUIT** court, the person having the greatest number of votes, shall  
9 be declared to be elected.

10 **Article XVIII – Provisions of Limited Duration**

11 **6.**

12 **(A) FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPLEMENTING THE AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLE**  
13 **IV OF THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION PROPOSED BY HOUSE BILL \_\_\_\_\_ OF 2015**  
14 **(5LR0611) CONCERNING THE SELECTION AND TENURE OF CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES,**  
15 **THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONS SHALL GOVERN. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE XIV,**  
16 **SECTION 1A OF THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, THIS SECTION SHALL EXPIRE**  
17 **WHEN ALL OF THE JUDGES OF THE CIRCUIT COURTS HAVE COMPLETED ALL OF THE**  
18 **TERMS FOR WHICH THE JUDGES ARE RETAINED IN OFFICE UNDER SUBSECTIONS (B)**  
19 **AND (C) OF THIS SECTION OR HAVE VACATED THEIR OFFICES FOR ANY REASON.**

20 **(B) EACH JUDGE OF A CIRCUIT COURT WHO IS IN OFFICE FOR AN ELECTED**  
21 **TERM ON THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THESE AMENDMENTS, UNLESS THE JUDGE DIES,**  
22 **RESIGNS, RETIRES, OR IS OTHERWISE LAWFULLY REMOVED, SHALL CONTINUE IN**  
23 **OFFICE UNTIL THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION AFTER THE END OF THE ELECTED**  
24 **TERM OR UNTIL THE JUDGE ATTAINS THE AGE OF 70 YEARS, WHICHEVER OCCURS**  
25 **FIRST. CONTINUANCE OF THE JUDGE IN OFFICE IS THEN SUBJECT TO THE**  
26 **PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE IV, SECTION 5A OF THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, BUT**  
27 **IN NO EVENT SHALL ANY JUDGE CONTINUE IN OFFICE AFTER ATTAINING THE AGE**  
28 **OF 70 YEARS.**

29 **(C) EACH JUDGE OF A CIRCUIT COURT WHO IS IN OFFICE ON THE EFFECTIVE**  
30 **DATE OF THESE AMENDMENTS, BUT WHO HAS NOT BEEN ELECTED TO THAT OFFICE**  
31 **BY THE VOTERS, SHALL, WITHIN 15 DAYS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THESE**  
32 **AMENDMENTS, BE REAPPOINTED TO THAT OFFICE. CONTINUANCE OF THE JUDGE IN**  
33 **OFFICE IS THEN SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE IV, SECTION 5A OF THE**  
34 **MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, BUT IN NO EVENT SHALL ANY JUDGE CONTINUE IN**  
35 **OFFICE AFTER ATTAINING THE AGE OF 70 YEARS.**

1           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly  
2 determines that the amendment to the Maryland Constitution proposed by this Act affects  
3 multiple jurisdictions and that the provisions of Article XIV, § 1 of the Maryland  
4 Constitution concerning local approval of constitutional amendments do not apply.

5           SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the foregoing section  
6 proposed as an amendment to the Maryland Constitution shall be submitted to the  
7 qualified voters of the State at the next general election to be held in November 2016 for  
8 their adoption or rejection pursuant to Article XIV of the Maryland Constitution. At that  
9 general election, the vote on this proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be by  
10 ballot, and upon each ballot there shall be printed the words “For the Constitutional  
11 Amendment” and “Against the Constitutional Amendment,” as now provided by law.  
12 Immediately after the election, all returns shall be made to the Governor of the vote for and  
13 against the proposed amendment, as directed by Article XIV of the Maryland Constitution,  
14 and further proceedings had in accordance with Article XIV.