

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 958 (Delegate Buckel, *et al.*)
Rules and Executive Nominations

Legislative Districts - Single-Member Delegate Districts (One Person One Vote Act)

This proposed constitutional amendment, if approved by the voters at the next general election, requires each legislative district in the State to be subdivided into three single-member delegate districts.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any increase in State expenditures can be absorbed within existing resources, as discussed below. State revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Any increase in local expenditures can be absorbed within existing resources, as discussed below. Local revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law: Article III of the Maryland Constitution sets forth requirements for State legislative districts and procedures for legislative redistricting. The boundaries of the State's 47 legislative districts must be redrawn after each decennial census to adjust for population changes. State legislative districts must consist of adjoining territory, be compact in form, and be of substantially equal population. Additionally, due regard must be given to natural boundaries and the boundaries of political subdivisions. Legislative districts may be subdivided into single-member and/or multi-member districts for the purpose of electing delegates. Chapters 66 and 67 of 2010 address the allocation of the State's prison population among legislative districts.

State legislative boundaries are also governed by the U.S. Constitution, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and applicable case law. State legislative districts must be “substantially equal in population.” *Reynolds v. Sims* 377 U.S. 533 (1964).

Background: Of the 47 legislative districts under the current plan, 31 are three-member delegate districts, 12 are divided into 2 subdistricts (with two and one delegate members, respectively), and 4 are divided into three single-member delegate subdistricts.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in 2018, West Virginia, 1 of 10 states that elected members of their state legislatures from multi-member districts, enacted legislation requiring that, following the 2020 census, members of the West Virginia House of Delegates must be elected from single-member districts.

State Expenditures: To the extent that the bill necessitates a significantly greater number of unique ballot styles, expenditures for the State Board of Elections may increase due to printing costs. However, for the purposes of this fiscal and policy note, it is assumed that any such costs are absorbable within existing resources.

Local Expenditures: To the extent that the bill necessitates a significantly greater number of unique ballot styles, expenditures for some local boards of elections may increase due to printing costs. However, it is assumed that any such costs are absorbable within existing resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 724 of 2019 received an unfavorable report from the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. HB 1362 of 2018, a similar bill, received an unfavorable report from the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. HB 535 of 2017, HB 1270 of 2016, and HB 921 of 2015, all similar bills, received hearings in the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee, but no further action was taken on these bills.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Board of Elections; National Conference of State Legislatures; Department of Legislative Services

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mr/mcr

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