

# SENATE BILL 23

G1, N2  
SB 195/23 – JPR

(PRE-FILED)

4lr0783  
CF HB 677

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By: **Senator West**

Requested: September 29, 2023

Introduced and read first time: January 10, 2024

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: February 4, 2024

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## CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Orphans' Court Judges – Elections**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring that candidates for judge of the orphans' court appear on the  
4 ballot without party designation; and generally relating to judges of the orphans'  
5 court.

6 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
7 Article – Election Law  
8 Section 5–203, 5–706, and 9–210(a)(6) and (7) and (g)  
9 Annotated Code of Maryland  
10 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

11 BY adding to  
12 Article – Election Law  
13 Section ~~8–901~~ through ~~8–905~~ 8–904 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 9.  
14 Orphans' Court Judges”  
15 Annotated Code of Maryland  
16 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

17 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
18 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

19 **Article – Election Law**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 5–203.

2 (a) (1) This subsection does not apply to a candidate for:

3 (i) President or Vice President of the United States; or

4 (ii) any federal office who seeks nomination by petition.

5 (2) Unless the individual is a registered voter affiliated with the political  
6 party, an individual may not be a candidate for:

7 (i) an office of that political party; or

8 (ii) except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, nomination  
9 by that political party.

10 (b) The requirements for party affiliation specified under subsection (a) of this  
11 section do not apply to a candidate for:

12 (1) a judicial office, **INCLUDING A JUDGE OF THE ORPHANS' COURT**; or

13 (2) a county board of education.

14 5–706.

15 (a) This section does not apply to:

16 (1) a candidate selected by a political party to fill a vacancy in nomination  
17 under Subtitle 9 or Subtitle 10 of this title; or

18 (2) a candidate defeated in a presidential preference primary.

19 (b) (1) Except as provided in subsection (c) of this section, the name of a  
20 candidate who is defeated for the nomination for a public office may not appear on the ballot  
21 at the next succeeding general election as a candidate for any office.

22 (2) A candidate who is defeated for the nomination for a public office may  
23 not file a certificate of candidacy as a write-in candidate at the next succeeding general  
24 election as a candidate for any office.

25 (c) The name of a candidate for the office of judge of the circuit court **OR JUDGE**  
26 **OF THE ORPHANS' COURT** who is defeated in the primary election in each contest for the  
27 office of circuit court judge **OR JUDGE OF THE ORPHANS' COURT** in which the candidate  
28 appears on the ballot may not appear on the ballot at the succeeding general election as a  
29 candidate for any office.

30 **SUBTITLE 9. ORPHANS' COURT JUDGES.**

1 ~~8-901.~~

2 EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE PROVIDED IN THIS SUBTITLE AND ARTICLE IV OF THE  
3 MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ARTICLE RELATING TO THE  
4 ELECTION OF CANDIDATES TO PUBLIC OFFICE SHALL GOVERN THE ELECTION OF  
5 ORPHANS' COURT JUDGES.

6 ~~8-902.~~

7 CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION AS AN ORPHANS' COURT JUDGE SHALL, WITHOUT  
8 PARTY DESIGNATION OR REGARD TO PARTY AFFILIATION:

- 9 (1) FILE CERTIFICATES OF CANDIDACY;
- 10 (2) BE CERTIFIED TO BE ON THE BALLOT;
- 11 (3) APPEAR ON THE BALLOT;
- 12 (4) BE VOTED ON; AND
- 13 (5) BE ELECTED.

14 ~~8-903.~~

15 ~~(A) (1) IF A CANDIDATE FOR ORPHANS' COURT JUDGE DIES OR BECOMES~~  
16 ~~DISQUALIFIED MORE THAN 65 DAYS BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTION, THE NAME~~  
17 ~~OF THE CANDIDATE MAY NOT APPEAR ON THE BALLOT.~~

18 ~~(2) IF THE NUMBER OF REMAINING CANDIDATES IS LESS THAN THE~~  
19 ~~NUMBER OF OFFICES TO BE FILLED, THE OFFICE SHALL BE DEEMED VACANT AND~~  
20 ~~SHALL BE FILLED AS IF THE VACANCY OCCURRED DURING THE TERM OF OFFICE.~~

21 ~~(B) (1) IF A CANDIDATE DIES OR IS DISQUALIFIED 65 DAYS OR LESS~~  
22 ~~BEFORE THE GENERAL ELECTION, THE NAME OF THE CANDIDATE SHALL REMAIN ON~~  
23 ~~THE BALLOT.~~

24 ~~(2) IF THAT CANDIDATE RECEIVES SUFFICIENT VOTES TO HAVE BEEN~~  
25 ~~ELECTED, THE OFFICE SHALL BE DEEMED VACANT AND SHALL BE FILLED AS IF THE~~  
26 ~~VACANCY OCCURRED DURING THE TERM OF OFFICE.~~

27 ~~8-904. 8-903.~~

28 (A) EACH CANDIDATE FOR JUDGE OF THE ORPHANS' COURT SHALL APPEAR  
29 ON THE BALLOT IN A PRIMARY ELECTION.



1 (7) public offices for which the voters of a county may vote, in the following  
2 order:

- 3 (i) county treasurer;
- 4 (ii) State's Attorney;
- 5 (iii) clerk of the circuit court;
- 6 (iv) register of wills;
- 7 (v) [judge of the orphans' court;
- 8 (vi)] sheriff; and

9 [(vii)] **(VI)** other offices filled by partisan election;

10 (g) (1) Except for contests for judicial office or an office to be filled by  
11 nonpartisan election, the party affiliation of a candidate who is a nominee of a political  
12 party shall be indicated on the ballot.

13 (2) (i) A candidate who is not a nominee of a political party or affiliated  
14 with a partisan organization shall be designated as an "unaffiliated".

15 (ii) A candidate who is affiliated with a partisan organization shall  
16 be designated under "other candidates".

17 (3) The names of candidates for judge of the circuit court, **JUDGE OF THE**  
18 **ORPHANS' COURT**, or [for] a county board of education, and the names of incumbent  
19 appellate justices, shall be placed on the ballot without a party label or other distinguishing  
20 mark or location which might indicate party affiliation.

21 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
22 October 1, 2024.