



TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SB 6 – General Assembly – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy in Office

POSITION: Support

BY: Lois Hybl and Richard Wilson, Co-Presidents

DATE: February 4, 2021

The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports SB 6 because we believe legislative representatives should be elected by their constituents. This bill proposes an amendment to the Maryland Constitution requiring a special election to fill a vacancy in the office of Delegate or Senator in the General Assembly, if the vacancy occurs more than 55 days before the candidate filing deadline for the statewide election that is held in the second year of the term.

Since 1985, the League has supported the use of special elections to fill vacancies in the office of Senator or Delegate. In particular, we favor the provision to hold special elections at the same time as the next regularly scheduled statewide elections, whether Gubernatorial or Presidential. This is the most cost-effective option and has the added benefit of increasing voter turnout.

We are pleased that this legislation provides for a requirement for special elections to fill a Senator or Delegate vacancy that is uniform across jurisdictions in the state. Where appointments by the Governor rather than special elections are used to fill legislative vacancies, the League also supports additional statewide standards regulating the central committee nominating process to fill vacancies, including:

- public notice of meetings within the vacated district for public input;
- the public announcement of candidates prior to that meeting; and
- a publicly recorded vote of each committee member.

The LWVMD urges a favorable report on SB 6.