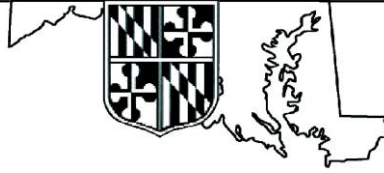


STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

P.O. BOX 6486, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401-0486 PHONE (410) 269-2840

Robert L. Walker, Chairman  
Bobbie S. Mack, Vice Chairman  
Rachel T. McGuckian  
David J. McManus, Jr.  
Charles E. Thomann



Linda H. Lamone  
Administrator  
  
Ross Goldstein  
Deputy Administrator

Memorandum

**To:** Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Subcommittee on Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment  
February 27, 2012  
  
House Appropriations Committee  
Subcommittee on Public Safety and Administration  
February 22, 2012

**From:** Linda Lamone, State Administrator of Elections

**Subject:** Response to Department of Legislative Services' Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Analysis

**Introduction**

The Maryland State Board of Elections (SBE) is pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the Department of Legislative Services' fiscal year 2013 Budget Analysis. Before responding to specific questions raised in the analysis, there are a few issues I would like to highlight.

SBE is busy preparing for the upcoming Presidential Election. The primary election will be held on April 3<sup>rd</sup> with early voting taking place March 24<sup>th</sup> through March 29<sup>th</sup>. The general election will be held on November 6<sup>th</sup> with early voting taking place October 27<sup>th</sup> through November 1<sup>st</sup>. It should be noted that this year, early voting now includes Sundays from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m.

As you know, in addition to changing the date of the primary elections last year, the candidate filing deadlines were also changed from 70 to 83 days before the primary election. This was done to provide sufficient time to develop, certify and print ballots and still meet the requirement under the federal MOVE Act to mail ballots to military and overseas voters 45 days prior to the election. I can report that SBE and the local boards of election met the 45 day deadline which was this past Saturday (2/18).

Finally, redistricting had and will continue to have a big impact on the local boards of elections. Congressional redistricting impacted nine counties, including the big five. Local redistricting (commission and school board districts) impacted almost every county. Redistricting required extensive training on drawing district and precinct boundaries and managing street files and was completed as of mid-January. Next up will be legislative redistricting, which will touch every county and will also be a significant task for the staff at all of the local boards.

## **Issues Raised in the Department of Legislative Services' Analysis**

- 1. SBE should develop alternative methods for measuring the ease of use of accessibility of the campaign finance disclosure process for the 2013 MFR submission rather than using a measure that is no longer available. (Page 6).***

In past years, SBE relied on multi-state analysis of online disclosure conducted by the *Campaign Disclosure Project*, a joint project of the Center for Government Studies, UCLA Law School and the California Voter Foundation. The data collected and analyzed provided a good comparison of state disclosure practices and a good measurement to test Maryland's success in providing meaningful and user friendly information to the public. Unfortunately, the project has been discontinued and to date, SBE has not been able to find another entity conducting a similar multi-state analysis. SBE will work to develop another measurement to assess whether the access to and disclosure of information to the public is being done in a manner that is meaningful and user-friendly.

- 2. SBE should comment on the implementation of the new online campaign finance system and if any additional difficulties have been experienced by either the public or campaign finance entities. (Page 6).***

For the 2012 Annual Campaign Finance Report, political committees had the option of switching to the new campaign finance reporting and information system (MD CRIS). Over 700 committees filed using MD CRIS. Some users did experience difficulties with the filing due to the changes in the filing process. Two of the most common problems were how to activate an officer and who had the administrative rights to file a report (in the new system, only the chairman and treasurer can file reports – candidates do not have administrative rights to do so). There were other minor issues during the filing period which were resolved quickly and did not impede any filings. Overall, the response was positive to the new system, but there is clearly a need for more user trainings. SBE is currently in the process of establishing a training schedule.

A final conversion of data will take place on January 30 for all ELECTTrack filings into MD CRIS. Starting with the Presidential Pre-Primary report, MD CRIS will be the only method a political committee may use to file and the old system will be permanently decommissioned.

- 3. SBE should discuss the implementation of the new MVA interface and how it is expected to improve the voter registration process. (Page 14)***

As widely reported last year, approximately one in five transactions by voters who indicated that they wanted to register or update an existing registration at the MVA was not successfully completed, resulting in the voter not being registered to vote or having outdated registration information. SBE anticipates that the MVA interface will fully resolve this problem by requiring the voter registration transaction to be completed as part of the MVA transaction. In other words, when the individual walks away from the MVA counter, he or she will have completed all the necessary steps to become a registered voter or update an existing voter registration.

In addition to ensuring that the voter registration transaction is completed at the MVA, the interface will also streamline the process of accepting the data. Instead of processing paper forms, LBEs will receive electronic data from the MVA. The process will require each record to be individually reviewed, but will save data entry time and increase accuracy.

**4. *SBE should comment on the status of an electronic interface with other state agencies. (Page 15)***

Delegate Cardin has introduced HB 173, which would authorize an applicant registering to vote at a voter registration agency (such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Department of Human Resources) to consent to the use of an electronic copy of the applicant's signature for voter registration purposes. The bill also requires the voter registration agency to transmit the signature to SBE within five days of the application being submitted. The bill has received a favorable report from the Ways and Means Committee. The bill is necessary to implement the electronic interface with voter registration agencies.

The process contemplated by the bill would be similar to the process being used by MVA. Accordingly, implementation for SBE will be relatively easy to accommodate. The more significant effort will be for the voter registration agency implementing the interface and changing business processes to accommodate the new procedures.

**5. *SBE should comment on when or if funds from the fair campaign finance fund will still be needed in light of the grant. (Page 16)***

While grants funds are applied to absentee ballot delivery system, fair campaign finance funds are still necessary to support some of the development effort during FY 12 and website hosting through FY 13.