

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 241 (Senator Augustine)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

Election Law - Individuals Released From State Correctional Facilities -
Automatic Restoration of Voter Registration

This bill requires the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) to electronically transmit to the State Board of Elections (SBE), on a weekly basis, information on individuals released from incarceration at a State correctional facility in the immediately preceding week, in order for SBE to then restore the voter registration of such individuals who were previously registered to vote in the State before being incarcerated and whose new residential addresses are in the State. Notification must also be sent to an individual notifying them of their voter registration, their eligibility to vote, and how to decline registration or update their address. **The bill takes effect January 1, 2027.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances.

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase, collectively, by \$400,000 in FY 2027 only. Revenues are not affected. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Restoration of Voter Registration

The bill requires DPSCS to, on a weekly basis, electronically transmit to SBE a list that includes the name and new residential address of each individual who was released from

incarceration at a State correctional facility in the immediately preceding week. On receipt of the list, SBE must (1) identify each individual on the list who was registered to vote in the State before being incarcerated and whose new residential address is located in the State and (2) automatically restore the voter registration of such individuals at their new residential address and give them active voter status. Irrespective of the Public Information Act, the bill prohibits public disclosure of the fact that a particular voter was registered through DPSCS pursuant to the bill.

Notice of Registration

The bill also requires the election director of a local board of elections to enclose a notice with each voter notification card sent to individuals whose voter registration has been restored (a voter notification card is sent to a voter as evidence of voter registration) that includes a statement that (1) the individual has been registered to vote at the residential address the individual provided to a State agency; (2) the individual is eligible to vote in the State in all federal, State, and local elections; and (3) if the individual wishes to decline voter registration, or if the individual needs to update the individual's residential address, the individual should contact SBE or the appropriate local board.

Current Law:

Voter Qualifications

Under State law, with certain exceptions, an individual may register to vote if the individual is a citizen of the United States, is at least age 16, and is a resident of the State as of the day the individual seeks to register. A person who has been convicted of a felony and is currently serving a court-ordered sentence of imprisonment for the conviction is not qualified to be a registered voter.

Reports on Individuals Convicted of a Felony and Sentenced to Imprisonment

Each month, the clerk of the circuit court for each county and the administrative clerk for each District Court must report to the State Administrator of Elections the names and addresses of all individuals convicted, in the respective court, of a felony and sentenced to imprisonment with commitment papers. The information must be reported in a format and at times prescribed by SBE. In addition, the State Administrator must make arrangements with the clerk of the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland to receive reports of names and addresses, if available, of individuals convicted of a felony in that court and sentenced to imprisonment with commitment papers.

Voting Information/Material Provided to Released Individuals

DPSCS must (1) provide each individual who is released from a correctional facility with a voter registration application and documentation with the individual's discharge papers that informs the individual that the individual's voting rights have been restored; (2) display a sign in each parole and probation office, in a conspicuous location where notices to the public are customarily posted, indicating that any individual who is no longer incarcerated has the right to vote; and (3) post a notice, in a conspicuous location on the department's website, indicating that any individual who is no longer incarcerated has the right to vote.

Voter Registration

An individual may apply to become a registered voter through a number of means including (1) visiting an election board office; (2) by mail; (3) when applying for services at a voter registration agency (specified public and nongovernmental agencies designated by SBE, including agencies providing public assistance and services for individuals with disabilities, public higher education institutions, military recruiting offices, and one-stop career centers in the Maryland Department of Labor); (4) during an applicable transaction at automatic voter registration agencies, which are the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, local departments of social services, and the Mobility Certification Office in the Maryland Transit Administration; (5) through SBE's online voter registration system; or (6) at an early voting center or an election day polling place in their county of residence.

Voter Notification

The election director in the county where a voter registration applicant resides must send a voter acknowledgment notice, in a format prescribed by SBE, to each applicant informing them whether he or she is qualified to become registered and, if not qualified, the reasons why.

A voter notification card sent to a qualified applicant may serve as a voter acknowledgment notice. The voter notification card must contain the name and address of the voter, the date of issue, and the district or ward and precinct of the voter. SBE regulations also require that the registered voter's party affiliation, if any, and name and address of the appropriate polling place be included on the card. The card is evidence that the individual to whom it is issued is a registered voter on the date appearing on the card. The election director must issue a replacement card on request of the voter and a new card when a relevant change is made in the voter's registration record if the voter continues to reside in the county.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local government expenditures increase, collectively, by \$400,000 in fiscal 2027 only which accounts for the bill's January 1, 2027 effective date,

for one-time development costs billed to the local boards of elections by SBE, in accordance with the State's current cost-sharing structure with the local boards, for modifications in the statewide voter registration system. SBE advises that these modifications are needed to (1) implement new functionality enabling the reactivation of cancelled registrations based on external source data and (2) make changes to the voter notification card (generated through the voter registration system) to include the information required under the bill.

The existing voter registration system is scheduled to be replaced prior to the 2030 elections and SBE expects that the bill's requirements can be integrated into the new system at no additional cost.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 1110 of 2025.

Designated Cross File: HB 115 (Delegate Wilkins) - Government, Labor, and Elections.

Information Source(s): Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Maryland State Board of Elections; Department of Legislative Services

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