



REPORT FROM STATE CIRCLE
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Be sure to visit the new Maryland General Assembly website: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>

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EDUCATION

All hearings are at 1:00 p.m. unless otherwise indicated.

Accountability

HB1288 Accountability in Education Act of 2013 (Stocksdale plus 5) Requires a county board of education to pay public higher education institutions 50% of the tuition and fees for a required noncredit remediation course if a student has been certified by a public high school principal to be qualified for public higher education. The tuition and fees for the student would be reduced by 50%. Hrg. 3/13 W&M

Attendance

SB1033 Public Education –Alternative Schooling (Rosapepe) Allows a superintendent to file a complaint alleging delinquency if a suspended or expelled student has received alternative schooling and does not correct his behavior. SRU

Curriculum

HB1417/SB929 Public Schools - Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Automated External Defibrillator Instruction - Graduation Requirement (Lee plus 8/Pugh and Muse) Requires public school students to complete instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator to graduate from high school, beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2013-2014 school year. County school boards would be required to provide instruction beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Hrgs. HRU; 3/14 EHEA

Nonpublic School Students

HB1441 Public Schools - Extracurricular Activities - Students Not Enrolled in Public School (Fairness for All Children Act) (Hough plus 10) Authorizes a public school to allow students who are not enrolled in public school but otherwise allowed to attend to participate in extracurricular activities. HRU

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

HB103/SB245 School Buildings - Solar Technology - Design Development Documents HB103 passed House, referred to Senate B&T. SB245 passed Senate, referred to House HGO

HB146 Education - Public Charter Schools - Capital Improvement Requests Unfavorable report by APP

SB143 Public Schools - Emergency Management Plans – Evaluation Favorable with amendments by EHEA

SB995 Teaching Techniques - Students with Special Needs and Limited English Proficiency (Montgomery) EHEA; cross-filed with **HB661**

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HB517 State Board of Education – Social Impact Bonds – Request for Proposals Unfavorable report by W&M, withdrawn. Cross-filed bill **SB424** (Ferguson) Hrg. 3/5 B&T, EHEA

HB1033 Education - Taxpayers' Savings Act LWVMD submitted written testimony opposing this bill

HB1376 State Board of Education - Mathematics - Graduation Requirement Hrg. 3/15 W&M

HB1474 Education - State Funding - Operating and Capital Funds (Luedtke plus 3) HRU; cross-filed with **SB958**
Lois Hybl

CHILDREN'S ISSUES

HB1480 Family Law – Unattended Child Under the Age of Three (Glenn plus 5) has been filed as an emergency bill prohibiting a person who has responsibility for a child under the age of 3 leaving the child in the care of someone under the age of 15, if the child is in an apartment, automobile or other enclosed space. This bill adds additional protection for very young children who might be left with baby sitters too young to provide appropriate care. The need is based on an actual situation where an infant died in the care of a sibling who was 11 when the sibling smothered the infant to keep him from crying. At present, the law allows a child of 13 to provide care. HRU

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

SB543/HB1013 Foster Care Recipients – Waiver of Tuition and Other Charges provide for free tuition and room and board in the public university system for former foster children, and could benefit about 40 or 50 young people per year. Hrgs. 3/6 EHEA; 3/13 APP

SB414/HB1012 Higher Education Tuition – Waiver – Foster Care Recipients is similar to SB543 but does not include room and board. Hrg. 3/12 APP

SB861/HB478 Crimes–Committing a Crime of Violence in the Presence of a Minor - Penalties The fiscal note includes analysis of the second major provision, which places restrictions on a wife's refusal to testify against her husband if the crime of child abuse has been committed. Hrg. 3/20 JPR

HB245 Family Law–Substance-Exposed Newborns In a hearing before the Judiciary Committee, proponents clarified that the bill did not presume that a child born with fetal alcohol syndrome was in need of the assistance of the court; rather that this symptom required that the local Department of Social Services ensure that the child would receive proper care and attention.

HB876 Child Abuse–Failure to Report–Civil Penalties, Fund and Task Force Proponents at the hearing pointed out that very few cases would probably be brought under this law, and that the money resulting from civil penalties could be used to provide additional training. Opponents, most of whom came from the professional organizations that are required to report child abuse and neglect said that the bill imposed an unfair burden, and pointed out that the fund would have little money because few fines would be imposed.

HB897/SB570 Professional Licensing and Certification–Governing Bodies–Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training and Discipline was heard without opposition. Delegate Hough testified to complaints from mandated reporters that they lack the skill to identify and report abuse and neglect. Hrg. 3/13 JPR/EHEA

HB1186 Task Force on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect was unopposed, and supported by a child advocacy organization with the argument that more information about best practices is needed to protect and treat children who are abused or neglected. Further emphasis on neglect is necessary, since 70% of the cases reported to the state are neglect complaints.

HB1188/SB215 Criminal Law-Human Trafficking-Victims Under Age 21 was unopposed in a hearing in the Judiciary Committee. Testimony stressed that young people's personality and ability to make decisions is not fully formed by 18, and that many have been sexually abused in their own homes before they are trafficked. The cross-filed bill was given a favorable report, with amendments, by JPR and has gone to the Senate. *Debbie Ehrenstein*

JUVENILE JUSTICE

SB648 Juvenile Law – Jurisdiction and Detention (Gladden) establishes the Juvenile Court's jurisdiction over youth offenders and seeks to keep young people from being detained with adults. Advocates for children testified in favor of separating juveniles from adult offenders, and noted that young people detained in adult jails did not receive appropriate services. Opposition centered on removing flexibility in handling juveniles who had committed very serious crimes.

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

SB818 Community Civil Service Program was heard with no opposition. The system to keep juveniles close to home has been tried in several states with significant savings of money, lower re-arrest rates and better outcomes for young

people. Sen. Frosh said that the state will select the counties allowed to provide their own programs for juveniles. The small savings projected in the fiscal note are the result of uncertainty about the selection process.

SB788/HB966 Task Force to Study Citations for Children and Law Enforcement Diversion Practices proposes a task force to develop a system of citing juveniles for less serious crimes instead of detaining them. Hrg. 3/7 JUD

SB536/HB604 Department of Juvenile Services-Graduated Reponses-Report In the Judicial Proceedings Committee hearing, proposed sanctions, in cases where juveniles have violated probation, and other rules surrounding their contact with DJS, were supported by all the witnesses, who approved of keeping the juveniles away from secure detention facilities. Hrg. 3/7 JUD

SB732/HB711 Juvenile Law-Prohibitions Against Continued Detention, which seeks to keep young people under 14 out of detention unless the crime is subject to life imprisonment, would save money by keeping kids at home or in their communities. An unfavorable report of this bill was urged by the Montgomery County States Attorney because of the possibility that some offenses committed by youngsters could be as serious as those by older teens. Hrg. 3/7 JUD

SB791/HB916 Juvenile Law-Disposition and Placement Guidance was supported for reducing reliance on commitment of children to detention if they have not committed serious crimes. Witnesses suggested that services for these children could be obtained more cheaply and easily if the children were in their own homes or communities. The States Attorney Association did not support prohibition of juveniles being detained in cases of theft or prostitution.

Hrg. 3/7 JUD

SB454/HB848 Juveniles-Confinement in Juvenile Facilities received similar testimony, pro and con, to **SB648** in hearing before Judicial Proceedings. Hrg. 3/7 JUD *Debbie Ehrenstein*

ENVIRONMENT: HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

SB766/HB828 Business Occupations - Oil and Gas Land Professionals - Registration (Edwards/Beitzel) prohibits a person from operating as an oil or gas land professional in the State unless the person registers with, and obtains a registration certificate from, the Department of Labor. Testimony was favorable. Hrg. 3/8, 1 p.m. ENV

SB514/HB337 Natural Gas - Hydraulic Fracturing - Prohibition (Montgomery et al./S. Robinson et al.) EHEA did not hear testimony on **SB514** at the hearing on 2/26. Hrg. 3/8, 1 p.m. ENV

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3:

SB601/HB1274 Maryland Hydraulic Fracturing Moratorium and Right to Know Act of 2013 (Zirkin et al./Mizeur et al.) LWVMD testified in support of SB601 at the EHEA hearing on Feb. 26. After six hours of testimony on other bills and as the people on the first panel of SB601 supporters took their seats, Chair Joan Carter Conway stated that this is a dead issue because there is a moratorium in effect through the Governor's Executive Order and no permits are pending. Supporters of the moratorium testified that the Executive Order is temporary and legal protections are still an open question and requested that the Committee vote on the bill. Hrg. 3/8, 1 p.m. ENV

SB513/HB341 Hydraulic Fracturing Wastewater - Prohibited Acts (Montgomery et al./S. Robinson et al.) EHEA did not hear testimony on SB513 at the hearing on 2/26. Hrg. 3/8, 1 p.m. ENV *Betsy Singer*

ENVIRONMENT: CLEAN WATER, THE BAY, PESTICIDES & LAND USE

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3:

HB508 Local Stormwater Management Charges-State Property Heard by ENV 2/20; no further hearing scheduled.

HB1086/SB576 Community Cleanup and Greening Act of 2013 Heard by EHEA 2/26. No decision at this writing. Hrg. 3/8 ENV

HB1085/SB641 Statewide Container Recycling Incentive Program Hrgs. 3/8 ENV; 3/5 EHEA

HB775/SB675 Maryland Pesticide Reporting and Information Act Hrg. 3/5 EHEA *Susan Cochran*

ENVIRONMENT: WINDPOWER

HB226/SB275 Maryland Off-Shore Wind Energy Act of 2013 passed the House by a vote of 86 to 48 on 2/22.

The Senate Finance Committee voted out SB275 by a vote of 7 to 4 on 2/26. This article is being written on March 4. On 3/5 the full Senate is scheduled to take up the bill for second reading (with proposed amendments).

As mentioned in the last issue, this year's LWVMD testimony strongly supporting HB226 and SB275 has been posted on the state League website at www.lwvmd.org/n/lac/aa/testimony. *Linda Silversmith*

HEALTH

Annapolis last week saw a large group of Amish from Southern Maryland in Lawyer's Square supporting the Lay Midwives bill, **HB1202 Health Occupations - Certified Professional Midwives – Pilot Program** (A. Kelly et al.). The bill would allow lay midwives to practice in Maryland. There are several groups in the state, the Amish among them, which would like to see the bill pass because they are already using the services of these midwives. (It should be noted that these are not nurse-midwives.) The bill would establish criteria for the certification by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) using certification by the North American Registry of Midwives. The criteria would require specific plans for any problem deliveries and to which hospital they would take the patient. The bill also delineates a study to be conducted by DHMH with a report to the Legislature by 2015. The study would track the number of midwives in the state, the number of healthy and adverse deliveries, and recommendations for continuation of the certification of midwives. Hrg. 3/5, 1 p.m. HGO

HB1029/SB783 State Board of Physicians – Naturopathic Doctors (Oaks et al./Pugh plus 8) would add a naturopathic doctor to the Maryland Board of Physicians. It would also allow naturopaths to “prevent, diagnose, and treat human health conditions, injury, and disease.” Needless to say the medical community is opposed to the bill because of the lack of clinical training and experience. It has a strong sponsor in Senator Catherine Pugh in the Senate. The bill was killed last year on the floor of the Senate. Hrgs. 3/5, 1 p.m. HGO; 3/13, 1 p.m. EHEA

HB1117 Motor Vehicle Liability Insurance – Mandatory Coverage – Medical and Hospital Benefits (Donoghue) would add additional required coverage to Maryland automobile insurance policies to provide \$1,000 to pay doctors and hospitals that treat patients injured in auto accidents. It has steep opposition from the insurance industry.

SB760/HB1151 State Board of Nursing – Certified Nurse-Midwives – Standards and Practice Guidelines (Montgomery and Benson/A. Kelly et al.) These eliminate the requirement for a collaborative agreement with a physician, giving nurse-midwives autonomy. Hrgs. 3/13, 1 p.m. EHEA; 3/5, 1 p.m. HGO

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3:

HB225/SB273 Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013 (Speaker et al./President et al., at request of Administration) has had hearings in both houses. However, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that the nurses have indicated a concern with the bill, regarding what they consider a lack of proper training.

HB228/SB274 Maryland Health Progress Act of 2013 (Speaker/President) bringing the Health Insurance Exchange into compliance with the Federal Accountable Care Act, have both had hearings but appear to be in workgroups. These bills are complicated and will have amendments. They are likely to move in the next couple of weeks.

HB373/SB151 Hospitals – Outpatient Services – Off-Site Facility – Rate Regulation (Haddaway-Riccio/Colburn). **HB373** which separates a particular medical group from the hospital rating system to maintain viability of the group, has passed the House 137-0 and moved to the Senate.

HB1343/SB380 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene – Workgroup on Cancer Clusters and Environmental Causes of Cancer (Glenn et al./Muse et al.) has passed the Senate with an amendment that adds a legislative appointment from each house. The Senate's bill has passed to the House and will be heard in Health and Government Operations. The cross-filed bill has not moved at all.

SB693 Health - Certified Nurse - Midwives and Freestanding Birthing Centers – Certification of Need and Practice Privileges (Montgomery plus 4) appears to be in trouble in the Senate because the three hearings have been canceled. It would have eliminated the current requirement for a collaborative agreement with a physician.

Neilson Andrews

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

No new court-related legislation introduced.

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

HB83/SB239 Judgeships - Court of Special Appeals, Circuit Courts and District Court Based on analyses of increased caseloads, this bill increases the number of resident judges of the circuit courts by one judge in five underserved counties, also adding four District Court judges and increasing the number of judges in the Court of Special Appeals from 13 to 15. The bill was passed by the House (127 - 16) and was referred to JPR and B&T in the Senate.

HB129/SB262 Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland Heard 2/6 JUD; 2/19 JPR
HB515/SB327/ Elections for Judges of the Orphans' Courts - Nonpartisan Elections Heard 2/21 W&M; 2/14 JPR
 The LWVMD has a position supporting the election of Orphans' Courts judges via non-partisan elections.
HB883/SB398 Courts and Judicial Proceedings - Jurisdiction over Eminent Domain Cases - Circuit Court
 Unfavorable report ENV & JPR, withdrawn *Marlene Cohn*

OPEN GOVERNMENT

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

HB139 Training for Public Open Meetings Act Passed in the House 134-0 on third reading, 3/1
HB140 State Government-Open Meetings Act-Penalty Unfavorable report in HGO, withdrawn
HB331/SB826 Open Meetings Act-Violations and Penalties Passed second reading but held by special order until 3/5 by Delegate Bobo. This bill has been amended from its original form to provide that a finding by the Open Meetings Compliance Board that a violation of the Open Meetings Act has occurred is not an admission of a violation of the Act and may not be used in court. The legislation was further amended so that civil penalties will still apply to willful violations of the Act, but with lower penalties and the requirement that the court consider the public body's financial resources and ability to pay.
HB484 Maryland Open Meetings Act- Enforcement Authority Unfavorable report in HGO, withdrawn
HB485 Open Meetings Act-Application of Penalties Unfavorable report in HGO
SB230 Open Meetings Act-Public Body-Definition Passed Senate 46-0 on 2/19; first reading in House HGO 2/20

Barbara Schnackenberg

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

HB1499/SB1039 Campaign Finance Reform Act of 2013 (Speaker/President plus 2, by request of the legislatively-created Commission to Study Campaign Finance Law) was finally filed. Because the bill was submitted so late, it must first go to the Rules Committees in both Houses. If the Rules Committees agree that it should be heard it will be assigned to a standing committee. Since it is an Administration bill getting through Rules will not be a problem. This 46-page omnibus bill has many features that the League has supported in other bills, such as enhanced disclosure requirements, tightening regulations regarding compositions of "slates" and transfer of money among and between slates, and closing the limited liability corporation loophole (see *RSC-2 HB259 Campaign Finance-Affiliated Business Entities-Attribution of Contributions*). It has some features that the League is not so thrilled about, including raising the limits that individuals may contribute to a single campaign entity from \$4,000 to \$6,000, increasing the aggregate amount an individual can donate in an election cycle from \$10,000 to \$24,000, and providing for an automatic increase in these amounts based on the consumer price index. Hrgs. TBA *Nancy Soreng*

GUN CONTROL

NOTE: Senate bills are heard in the Judicial Proceedings Committee, House bills are heard in the Judiciary Committee, beginning at 1 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

SB281/HB294 Firearm Safety Act of 2013 The Senate passed the amended bill on 2/28. One amendment, for example, reduced licensing fees in response to criticism that the high fees would prevent many people from being able to afford a firearm. By requiring fingerprints from handgun owners and prohibiting people who have been involuntarily committed for mental health reasons from owning firearms, the bill will be among the strongest in the U.S. Research shows that states with strong gun laws have significantly fewer per capita gun deaths. It also shows that most firearms used in these states were purchased elsewhere. "Maryland residents overwhelmingly support Gov. Martin O'Malley's plan to force gun buyers to submit to fingerprinting, safety training, and more background checks, according to a new Washington Post poll." The bills have been extensively covered by both the *Washington Post* and the *Baltimore Sun*.

HB589 Firearms Freedom Act Unfavorable report JUD, withdrawn

Hearings on 3/1

HB107 (cross-filed SB539) Firearms - Detachable Magazines - Maximum Capacity for Ammunition
HB294 (cross-filed SB281) Firearm Safety Act of 2013
HB477 Firearms - Conviction for Crime of Violence - Probation Before Judgment
HB545 Task Force to Study the Impact of Assault Weapons

HB643 Public Safety - Regulated Firearms - Exemption from Training Course
 HB809 Firearms - Criminal Justice Information System Central Repository - Reporting, Qualifications for Possession, and Relief from Disqualification
 HB810 Mental Health Professionals - Duty to Report Risk of Serious Harm - Firearm Safety
 HB874 Task Force to Study Access of Individuals with Mental Illness to Regulated Firearms – Extension HGO
 HB1133 Public Safety - Restrictions on Possession of Firearms - Convicted Felons and People with Mental Disorders HGO

Hearings on 3/5:

HB131(cross-filed SB531) Criminal Law - Access to Firearms – Penalties
 HB383 Gun Shops - Security Requirements for Regulated Firearms
 HB397 Criminal Law - Carrying Weapons on School Property - Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act
 HB426 Public Safety - Firearm Ammunition - Purchaser Information
 HB436 (cross-filed SB533) Handguns - School Employees - Handgun Permits and Carrying Weapons on School Property
 HB655 (cross-filed SB532) Criminal Law - Child's Access to Firearms - Penalty
 HB776 (cross-filed SB544) Public Safety - Ammunition - Sales Records
 HB861 Public Safety - Access to Firearms - Storage Requirements
 HB1077 Public Safety - Regulated Firearms - Reporting Lost or Stolen
 HB1092 Public Safety - Firearms - Reporting Loss or Theft

Hearings on 3/6:

SB531 (cross-filed HB131) Criminal Law - Access to Firearms - Penalties
 SB532 (cross-filed HB655) Criminal Law - Child's Access to Firearms – Penalty
 SB382 Mental Health - Emergency Evaluations - Surrender of Firearms
 SB533 (cross-filed HB436) Handguns - School Employees - Handgun Permits and Carrying Weapons on School Property
 SB539 (cross-filed HB 107) Firearms - Detachable Magazines - Maximum Capacity for Ammunition
 SB540 Public Safety - Regulated Firearms - Reporting Lost or Stolen
 SB544 (cross-filed HB776) Public Safety - Ammunition - Sales Records
 SB445 Public Safety - Handgun Permits - Requirements and Limitations
 SB577 Public Safety - Firearms - Liability Insurance Requirement
 SB688 (cross-filed HB90) State Government - Access to Public Records - Firearm Permit Records

Hearing on 3/19:

HB90 (cross-filed SB688) State Government - Access to Public Records - Handgun Permit Records HGO

Doreen Rosenthal

DEATH PENALTY

Update on bills reported in RSC 1-3

SB276 Death Penalty Repeal and Appropriation from Savings to Aid Survivors of Homicide Victims passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee with amendments by a 6 to 5 vote. One of the amendments that was adopted was to change the name of the bill to **Death Penalty Repeal - Substitution of Life Without the Possibility of Parole**. The bill has had a second reading on the Senate floor where the Committee amendments were adopted but all other amendments were rejected. A final vote has not yet been taken. The cross-filed bill **HB295** has not had a hearing in the House.

Nancy Soreng

TRANSPORTATION

HB1142 Mass Transit – Failure to Vacate Seat Designated for Elderly or Handicapped – Penalty (Stukes) increases the penalty to \$1000 for failure to comply when requested by a transit vehicle operator or police officer. Hrg. 3/12, 1 p.m. ENV

HB1346 Vehicle Laws – Maximum Speed Limits on Highways (Malone et al.) increasing the maximum speed limit of 65 to 75mph on specified highways. Hrg. 3/12, 1 p.m. ENV

HB1382 Motor Vehicle Accidents – Victim Impact Statement (Alex's Law) (McDermott et al.) allows the prosecuting attorney greater latitude when dealing with certain victims of motor vehicle accidents. Hrg. 3/13, 1p.m. JUD

SB850/HB627 Vehicle Laws – Accident Resulting in Injury – Mandatory Drug and Alcohol Testing (Forehand and Raskin/Valentino-Smith et al.) expands the type of injury suffered by the victim of car accident. If the injured person has a non-life threatening injury, but needs removal to a medical facility, the detained person is required to submit to a drug and alcohol test. Hrg. 3/21, 1 p.m. JPR

Update on bills reported in RSC I-3:

HB171 MVA-Organ Donation-Presumed Consent, unfavorable report

HB725 Vehicle Laws-Title and Registration-Transfer to Surviving Spouse, favorable with amendments

HB911 Drivers' Licenses, Identification Cards, and Moped Operators' Permits-Issuance, Renewal, and Expiration Hrg. 3/13, 1 p.m. JUD

Barbara Ditzler

BUDGET AND TAXATION

HB1302 Commission on Tax Policy, Reform and Fairness (Dumais et al.) would establish a Commission to review the State's current tax structure, review those of other states, and make recommendations regarding reformation, modification and modernization of the Maryland tax structure by December 2014. Hrg. 3/8 W&M

SB827/HB660 Streamlined Tax Administration Act of 2013 (Garagiola/Davis) would transfer duties regarding the regulation and taxation of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and other tobacco products, motor carriers and motor fuel from the Comptroller to the Secretary of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. Hrg. 3/14 FIN

LWVMD plans to testify in favor of the combined income tax reporting provision of **HB1246/SB469 Business Relief and Tax Fairness Tax of 2013** (Luedtke et al./Pinsky et al.). Hrgs. 3/8 W&M; 3/5 B&T

Maryland League members were asked by LWVMD to contact their delegations and voice their support for increased funding for transportation projects, particularly mass transit. Although we did not support certain provisions in **SB830 Transportation Financing Act** we recognized the initiative of Senate President Miller in proposing ways to do so.

Barbara Hankins

ELECTIONS AND REDISTRICTING

There was disappointing action last week on redistricting legislation. The Senate EHEA Committee gave an unfavorable report on **SB240 Task Force to Study Redistricting in Maryland** (Kelley plus 9). The only member of the Committee to vote in favor of the bill was Sen. Simonaire. As a result, Del. Braveboy has withdrawn her companion bill in the House, **HB1269**. These were the two bills being lobbied heavily by the League. Several other redistricting bills still await a hearing including, **HB 233 Elections - Study Commission on the Redistricting Process in Maryland** (McComas); **HB236 Election Law - Districting Plan Questions - Inclusion of Map** (McComas) that would require any future ballot question relating to redistricting to include a map; **HB832 Congressional Districting Process** (Norman), and **HB1199 Citizens' Congressional Redistricting Commission** (Parrott). Hrg. 3/11 HRU

SB361 Congressional Districting Process (Pinsky) was heard on 2/14 by EHEA, but the Committee has not acted on the bill. This interesting legislation would create a non-partisan commission for Congressional redistricting, but only if another state of roughly the same size as Maryland whose legislature is controlled by the opposite party than Maryland's legislature agrees to do the same. The almost unanimous shut-down of redistricting legislation by EHEA, the committee on the Senate side that would receive all redistricting bills, does not bode well for any of the legislation relating to redistricting still open in this session.

On a more cheery note, the Administration supported legislation concerning various election reforms. **SB279 Election Law – Improving Access to Voting**, was voted favorably out of EHEA last week with a few amendments. This bill, which authorizes same day registration (SDR), increases the number of days and sites for early voting and allows online delivery of absentee ballots, would make significant positive changes for voters in Maryland. Amendments include delaying the implementation of SDR until 2016, requiring additional identifiers for obtaining an absentee ballot online, and making sure the process for obtaining an absentee ballot online as well as the proposed online ballot marking tool for absentee ballots are accessible for the disabled. The companion bill in the House, **HB224**, was also heard on February 21, and we can expect additional amendments on that side.

Another bill heard in the House Ways and Means Committee on 2/21, **HB493 Referendum Integrity Act** (Luedtke) is getting quite a bit of attention by the press. This bill would increase the number of petition signatures to place a bill on the ballot for referendum from 3% to 5% of registered voters, requires referendum ballot issue committees to follow the same campaign finance regulations of other political committees, and makes changes to the requirements for the signers of a petition, including the addition of a date of birth and address as it appears on election board records. There has been no Committee action since the hearing.

Also relating to petitions, **HB49 Election Law – Petitions – Confidentiality** (B. Robinson), which would have required that the names of persons signing a petition be kept confidential, received an unfavorable report from the Ways and Means Committee and was withdrawn by the sponsor.

HB427 Election Law – Absentee Ballots – Timeliness (Impallaria plus 11) states that an absentee ballot from an overseas or uniformed services voter is considered timely if it is mailed before Election Day or received by a local election board anytime before the election results are certified. This bill received a favorable with amendments vote out of Ways and Means.

HB220 Voters Rights Protection Act of 2013 (Rosenberg plus 9) received a favorable report from Ways & Means. The bill authorizes the Attorney General to institute an action in circuit court for injunctive relief to prohibit a person from violating specific provisions of election law. The bill also adds fraud to the list of prohibited acts relating to influencing or attempting to influence a voter's voting decision.

Lu Pierson