



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of Montgomery County, MD, Inc.

Date 2015

In re: Montgomery County Delegation Public Bill Hearing on February 6, 2015, on [MC 22-15 – An Act Concerning the Montgomery County Board of Education – Special Election to Fill a Vacancy](#)

To: Members of the Montgomery County State Legislative Delegation:

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County supports this proposed measure to allow Montgomery County to hold special elections to fill vacancies in the Board of Education. In addition, as described further below, we are also suggesting an amendment.

Consistent with our support for elections that reflect community sentiment and increase voter participation, we believe that allowing the voters to fill vacancies by election is preferable to reliance on appointment by incumbent office holders.

Here are our comments on three aspects of the bill as proposed:

- We note that the measure provides that the special election may be held concurrently with a general election. We support this provision as it will encourage voter participation and will also help to reduce the cost of conducting the special election.
- We do not have a position with respect to the provision that would authorize the County Executive to determine the date of a special election, but clearly this authority must be vested in some official.
- We support the provision that would allow a special election to be conducted by mail ballot as this would help to encourage voter participation and could also reduce the cost of conducting the election.

Here (below) we detail the type of amendment that we encourage the delegation to consider as an improvement to the bill:

- The basis for our proposal is that LWVMC supports the use of instant run-off voting to fill vacancies when special elections are held. Where more than two candidates are running for a single seat, voters should be allowed to rank the candidates in order of their preference.
- In this system, if no candidate were to receive a majority of first-choice votes, the candidate with the lowest number of first-choice votes would be eliminated and the second-choice votes on those ballots would be added to the remaining candidates. This process would continue until a candidate received a majority of votes.



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- This process would ensure that the person elected has substantial support from a majority of voters.
- Otherwise, when multiple candidates seek election to the vacant seat, it would be necessary to conduct a primary as well as a general election -- or to settle for electing the person who receives the greatest number of votes even though that may be much less than a majority of the votes cast.

A candidate elected by that method may not reflect the views of the majority of voters and could, in fact, be a representative of a narrow interest group.

In sum, we support the provisions of this bill and believe that it could be further improved by an amendment authorizing instant runoff voting.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Yours truly,

Linna Barnes, President