



**Testimony to the Montgomery County Delegation for the
November 30, 2015 House Local Bills Hearing**

Re: MC 14-16 - An Act Concerning Montgomery County Early Voting Centers

To: Members of the Montgomery County House Delegation in the General Assembly

From: Linna Barnes, President LWVMC

POSITION: Support with Amendment

The League of Women Voters supports this measure to expand the number of early voting centers in Montgomery County -- consistent with the position taken by the County's Board of Elections in its submission to the State Board of Elections concerning 2016 early voting centers. We also note the support of the County Executive and the County Council.

An expansion in the number of centers is consistent with the League's position to assure maximum access to facilitate voting by the largest number of voters.

In addition, we encourage the delegation to consider supporting an amendment that could improve the voting experience for all Maryland voters: We suggest that the increase in the number of centers be framed in a manner consistent with the existing clauses in section 1(b) of election law 10-301.1 -- instead of as a provision solely applicable for Montgomery County. Note our suggested new text that is **bolded** and underlined below:

(5) A county with more than 450,000 **but fewer than 600,000** registered voters shall have eight early voting centers.

(6) **A county with more than 600,000 registered voters shall have ten early voting centers.**

(7) In addition to the early voting centers required in this subsection, each county may establish one additional early voting center ...

The League of Women Voters suggests the above changes for several reasons:

First, this is the next logical step for expansion beyond the current registration thresholds of 150,000 (three centers), 300,000 (five centers) and 450,000 (eight centers).



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

Second, at the October meeting approving the early voting centers submitted by Montgomery County, the State Board of Elections commented that it would support an expansion in the number of early voting centers only if it applied to all counties.

Third, from our state legislative lobbying experience, the General Assembly is more receptive to provisions that apply to the state as a whole rather than to an individual jurisdiction.

Fourth, although the provision in (6) above would apply only to Montgomery County in 2016, all counties eventually reaching this level of registered voters would also be afforded the opportunity to have the ten centers, as well as the one additional one already permitted in existing section 1 (b)(6), for a total of eleven.

We also suggest that the Montgomery legislative delegation consider proposing the following addition to COMAR 33.17.02.02.B, a regulation that specifies the percentage of registered voters required within the combined geographical boundaries of the proposed centers:

Except in emergency situations, any changes to early voting center locations need to match or increase the highest percentage of registered voters within the geographic designation previously covered by the centers in the jurisdiction.

Once again, this change would apply to all counties, regardless of the number of early voting centers and would advance the goal of both the early voting center legislation and the League to increase availability to voting.

In summary, we support the intent of this bill and believe that it could be further improved by applying the increase in an amendment with statewide application, consistent with the current provisions.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.