



House Bill 218

Election Law – Days of Early Voting

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 18, 2015

From: Andrea Mansfield

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 218. This bill would change early voting days of operation to begin the Thursday before Election Day and end the Sunday before Election Day.

Under current law, early voting begins the second Thursday prior to Election Day and ends the Thursday before, which gives the local boards of election and the State Board of Elections (SBE) ample time to update pollbooks and deliver them to Election Day polling locations. HB 218 would end the early voting period on Sunday, two days prior to election day, making it extremely difficult for small jurisdictions to update pollbooks, and making it practically impossible in larger jurisdictions.

A recent analysis performed by the University of Baltimore's Schaefer Center for Public Policy, titled *Voting and the Administration of Elections in Maryland*, confirms this position. Page 25 of the reports states the following:

"If early voting were to be extended to the last Sunday before the election, the logistics of delivering updated poll books to polling places in time for setup Monday night become very difficult for smaller jurisdictions and nearly impossible for the larger ones. There would be no safety margin for errors or for uncontrollable externalities such as weather, resulting in a significant risk that multiple precincts would not be ready to open on time."

The analysis continues to raise possible options for extending early voting, but all would result in significant increased costs for State and county governments.

MACo believes more time is needed to examine the cost implications and logistical issues before making changes to the specified days for early voting. Therefore, MACo would urge the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 218.