

**Chapter 513 of the 2007 Regular Session
(Senate Bill 1)**

QUESTION 1

Constitutional Amendment

Elective Franchise - Early Voting and Polling Places

Summary

(Prepared by the Department of Legislative Services of the Maryland General Assembly in accordance with Section 7-105 of the Election Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland)

Amends Section 1 and Section 3 of Article I - Elective Franchise - of the Maryland Constitution to authorize the enactment of legislation to: (1) allow any qualified voter who chooses to do so to vote by absentee ballot; and (2) allow qualified voters to vote at polling places in or outside the voters' election districts or wards or, during the two weeks immediately preceding an election, on no more than 10 other days prior to election day.

Absentee Voting

The Maryland Constitution currently authorizes the enactment of legislation to provide for absentee voting only by "qualified voters ... who are absent at the time of any election ... and for voting by other qualified voters who are unable to vote personally ..." (Art. I, § 3). This constitutional amendment would expressly authorize the enactment of legislation to allow a qualified voter who chooses - for whatever reason - to vote by absentee ballot.

Early Voting and Voting Outside the Election District or Ward in Which the Voter Resides

The Maryland Constitution also currently designates the Tuesday after the first Monday in November as the calendar date for general elections (*See, e.g.*, Art. II, § 2; Art. XV, § 7; Art. XVII, § 2; et al) and specifies that a qualified voter is entitled to vote "... in the ward or election district in which ... [the voter] resides" (Art. I, § 1).

This constitutional amendment would expressly authorize the enactment of new legislation to allow qualified voters: (1) to vote early on no more than 10 other days during the two weeks immediately preceding an election; and (2) to vote at polling places in or outside voters' election districts or wards.