

continue to receive the life insurance benefits at State expense.

The life insurance benefits offered by the fifteen subdivisions vary from one subdivision to another, ranging from \$1,500 in Garrett County to \$30,000 base amount in Montgomery County. In several counties, the benefit amounts are based upon salary; and, of course, in nine counties, no life insurance benefits are offered.

The bill raises an unfortunate conflict in equities. On the one hand, it does, on the surface, seem unfair to cause an employee who transfers to the State system to lose a benefit such as life insurance as the price of transferring. On the other hand, however, it would be most unfair to have the State providing or funding different benefits for State employees doing essentially the same job. Among the assessment office employees, those in nine subdivisions would receive no additional benefits, and all would be treated unfairly as against the employees in Montgomery County.

The inequity here extends beyond just the group of assessment office employees. State employees working in each of the fifteen subdivisions to which this bill would apply, whose classification is the same or comparable to the assessment office employees, would be treated differently vis a vis the assessment office employees.

On balance, the unfairness of treating State employees differently seems to me to outweigh whatever apparent unfairness there may be as to the individual assessment office employee electing to transfer to the State system. Under the existing procedures, as I understand them, those employees electing to remain with the local system do retain their participation in the local life insurance program. Thus, the failure of House Bill 152 to take effect would not cause those employees to lose their life insurance benefit.

The fiscal impact of the bill appears uncertain. The Department of Fiscal Services estimated a cost to the State of \$41,000 just for the employees in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, involving approximately 160 employees. No estimate was given as to the total cost. Whatever it would be, the ultimate cost for making the benefit uniform and extending it throughout State service, would undoubtedly be enormous.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 152.

Sincerely,
/s/ Marvin Mandel
Governor
