

ensure that we are protecting voters' rights while recognizing our obligation to also protect against voter fraud. To accomplish this goal, our elections system requires a delicate balance between access to the ballot and integrity in the process.

House Bill 1368 imprudently broadens the powers of the State Administrator of Elections while limiting the power of State and local election board members and election administrators. Under current law, the State Board only requires a simple majority vote of its bipartisan Board members to approve or deny proposed election procedures and regulations. House Bill 1368 changes that by requiring a supermajority vote of the Board members. The supermajority requirement puts unreasonable restrictions on the State Board's decision making process and will result in a hamstrung or deadlocked Board on major policy issues. No other State board or commission requires a supermajority vote to conduct ordinary business and operations. Furthermore, no justification has been provided stating why requiring a supermajority vote will improve our State's elections system. As I have stated before, the current statute governing the State Board and the State Administrator has adequate safeguards to protect the rights of the minority party and to insulate the election process from undue political influences.

Increasing the State Administrator's control and authority over the administration of elections greatly limits our local board's ability to effectively conduct elections. Specifically, the bill alters current law by: (1) requiring the State Administrator to be the only person to determine if an early voting site has adequate infrastructure to accommodate computer devices; (2) requiring the State Administrator to be the sole person that can change early voting locations if determined unfeasible; (3) authorizing the State Administrator to initiate legal action to enjoin actions of a local board or its elections director; (4) authorizing the State Administrator to file suit to enjoin a local board or its elections director for violating any provision in statute, regulation, guidance, or procedures; (5) authorizing the State Administrator to step in the shoes of a registered voter and file suit on their behalf; (6) granting the State Administrator the power to suspend and replace certain individuals for violation of campaign activities; and (7) requiring the State Administrator to approve any alterations of precinct boundaries and polling places.

The primary role of the State Administrator is as a professional manager who serves as the executive director of the State's election machinery and reports to the bi-partisan State Board. The General Assembly has carefully crafted Maryland's election statute over the last forty years. As a result of this deliberate legislative process, there has been an emphasis on local control over the day-to-day management of elections with only limited State oversight. This bill egregiously changes the careful balance and makes the State Administrator the micro-manager of decisions that rightfully belong with local jurisdictions.

One of the core concepts in the current law is that the bipartisan State Board makes major policy decisions. Another fundamental underpinning of current law is that those closest to the decision making process, i.e. the county boards, are best suited to make local policy decisions. This bill catastrophically disrupts this careful balance of policy development and shifts the power to, in effect, a dictator of one — the State Administrator. Sound policy concerning disciplinary actions, polling locations and precinct boundaries are best crafted by a nonpartisan Board, not by a single person.