

# HOUSE BILL 582

D1

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

5lr2683  
CF SB 367

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By: **Delegates Sydnor, Bromwell, Brooks, Hill, Jones, Platt, Smith, and Stein**

Introduced and read first time: February 12, 2015

Assigned to: Judiciary

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Circuit Court Judges – Selection, Qualifications, and Term of Office**

3 FOR the purpose of proposing an amendment to the Maryland Constitution relating to the  
4 selection and tenure of circuit court judges; repealing provisions relating to election  
5 of circuit court judges; requiring the Governor, by and with the advice and consent  
6 of the Senate, to appoint a qualified person to fill a vacancy in the office of a judge of  
7 the circuit court; requiring certain hearings, deliberation, and debate on the  
8 confirmation of certain appointees to be public; providing that a judge of the circuit  
9 court shall cease to hold office if not confirmed by a certain time; altering the term  
10 of office of circuit court judges; requiring the Governor to reappoint a circuit court  
11 judge, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, upon the expiration of the  
12 judge’s term; requiring a certain judicial nominating commission or body to reflect a  
13 certain demographic diversity; providing for a transitional period during which the  
14 terms of certain amendments are effective; repealing certain obsolete provisions;  
15 making stylistic changes; generally relating to the selection, election, appointment,  
16 qualification, tenure, and term of office for judges of the circuit courts; and  
17 submitting this amendment to the qualified voters of the State for their adoption or  
18 rejection.

19 BY proposing an amendment to the Maryland Constitution

20 Article IV – Judiciary Department

21 Section 2 and 3

22 BY proposing a repeal of the Maryland Constitution

23 Article IV – Judiciary Department

24 Section 5; 18B and the part “Part IIA – Interim Provisions”; and 21A

25 BY proposing an addition to the Maryland Constitution

26 Article IV – Judiciary Department

27 Section 5 and 5B

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 BY proposing an addition to the Maryland Constitution  
2 Article XVIII – Provisions of Limited Duration  
3 Section 6

4 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
5 (Three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses concurring), That it be  
6 proposed that the Maryland Constitution read as follows:

7 **Article IV – Judiciary Department**

8 2.

9 The Judges of all of the said Courts shall be citizens of the State of Maryland, and  
10 qualified voters under this Constitution, and shall have resided therein not less than [five]  
11 5 years, and not less than [six] 6 months next preceding their [election, or] appointment[,  
12 as the case may be,] in the city, county, district, judicial circuit, intermediate appellate  
13 judicial circuit or appellate judicial circuit for which they may be[, respectively, elected or]  
14 appointed. They shall be not less than [thirty] 30 years of age at the time of their [election  
15 or] appointment, and shall be selected from those who have been admitted to practice law  
16 in this State, and who are most distinguished for integrity, wisdom and sound legal  
17 knowledge.

18 3.

19 [Except for the Judges of the District Court, the Judges of the several Courts other  
20 than the Court of Appeals or any intermediate courts of appeal shall, subject to the  
21 provisions of Section 5 of this Article of the Constitution, be elected in Baltimore City and  
22 in each county, by the qualified voters of the city and of each county, respectively, all of the  
23 said Judges to be elected at the general election to be held on the Tuesday after the first  
24 Monday in November, as now provided for in the Constitution. Each of the said Judges  
25 shall hold his office for the term of fifteen years from the time of his election, and until his  
26 successor is elected and qualified, or until he shall have attained the age of seventy years,  
27 whichever may first happen, and be reeligible thereto until he shall have attained the age  
28 of seventy years, and not after.] In case of the inability of any [of said Judges] **CIRCUIT**  
29 **COURT JUDGE** to discharge [his] **THE JUDGE’S** duties with efficiency, by reason of  
30 continued sickness, or of physical or mental infirmity, it shall be in the power of the General  
31 Assembly, two-thirds of the members of each House concurring, with the approval of the  
32 Governor to retire said Judge from office.

33 [5.

34 Upon every occurrence or recurrence of a vacancy through death, resignation,  
35 removal, disqualification by reason of age or otherwise, or expiration of the term of fifteen  
36 years of any judge of a circuit court, or creation of the office of any such judge, or in any  
37 other way, the Governor shall appoint a person duly qualified to fill said office, who shall  
38 hold the same until the election and qualification of his successor. His successor shall be

1 elected at the first biennial general election for Representatives in Congress after the  
2 expiration of the term of fifteen years (if the vacancy occurred in that way) or the first such  
3 general election after one year after the occurrence of the vacancy in any other way than  
4 through expiration of such term. Except in case of reappointment of a judge upon expiration  
5 of his term of fifteen years, no person shall be appointed who will become disqualified by  
6 reason of age and thereby unable to continue to hold office until the prescribed time when  
7 his successor would have been elected.]

8 **5.**

9 (A) UPON OCCURRENCE OF A VACANCY IN THE OFFICE OF A JUDGE OF A  
10 CIRCUIT COURT, THE GOVERNOR, BY AND WITH THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THE  
11 SENATE, SHALL APPOINT AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS QUALIFIED TO FILL THE OFFICE.

12 (B) ALL HEARINGS, DELIBERATIONS, AND DEBATE ON THE CONFIRMATION  
13 OF AN APPOINTEE OF THE GOVERNOR UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE PUBLIC, AND  
14 THE SENATE OR ANY COMMITTEE OR SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE MAY NOT  
15 CONDUCT HEARINGS, DELIBERATIONS, OR DEBATE ON A CONFIRMATION IN SECRET  
16 OR EXECUTIVE SESSION.

17 (C) CONFIRMATION BY THE SENATE SHALL BE MADE UPON A MAJORITY  
18 VOTE OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE SENATE.

19 (D) A CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR MAY TAKE  
20 OFFICE UPON QUALIFICATION AND BEFORE CONFIRMATION BY THE SENATE, BUT  
21 SHALL CEASE TO HOLD OFFICE AT THE CLOSE OF THE REGULAR ANNUAL SESSION  
22 OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEXT FOLLOWING THE JUDGE'S APPOINTMENT OR  
23 DURING WHICH THE JUDGE IS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF THE SENATE DOES  
24 NOT CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT BEFORE THEN.

25 (E) EACH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR AND  
26 CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE SHALL HOLD THE OFFICE FOR A TERM OF 10 YEARS OR  
27 UNTIL THE JUDGE ATTAINS THE AGE OF 70 YEARS, WHICHEVER OCCURS FIRST.

28 (F) IF THE 10-YEAR TERM OF A JUDGE EXPIRES BEFORE THAT JUDGE HAS  
29 ATTAINED THE AGE OF 70 YEARS, THAT JUDGE SHALL BE REAPPOINTED BY THE  
30 GOVERNOR, BY AND WITH THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THE SENATE, FOR  
31 ANOTHER 10-YEAR TERM OR UNTIL THE JUDGE ATTAINS THE AGE OF 70 YEARS,  
32 WHICHEVER OCCURS FIRST.

33 **5B.**

34 IF THE GOVERNOR APPOINTS A JUDICIAL NOMINATING COMMISSION OR  
35 SIMILAR BODY TO PROPOSE NOMINEES FOR APPOINTMENT TO A COURT, THE

1 COMMISSION OR BODY SHALL REFLECT THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY OF THE  
2 STATE OR THE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT FOR WHICH THE COMMISSION OR BODY IS  
3 CHARGED WITH PROPOSING NOMINEES.

4 [Part IIA – Interim Provisions]

5 [18B.

6 (a) For the purpose of implementing the amendments to this article, dealing with  
7 the selection and tenure of appellate court judges, the following provisions shall govern.

8 (b) Each judge of an appellate court who is in office for an elected term on the  
9 effective date of these amendments, unless he dies, resigns, retires, or is otherwise lawfully  
10 removed, shall continue in office until the general election next after the end of his elected  
11 term, or until his seventieth birthday, whichever first occurs. His continuance in office is  
12 then subject to the provisions of section 5A(c) and (d) of this article, applicable to judges of  
13 that court, but in no event shall any judge continue in office after his seventieth birthday.

14 (c) Each judge of a court specified in subsection (b) who is in office on the effective  
15 date of these amendments, but who has not been elected to that office by the voters, shall,  
16 within fifteen days after the effective date of these amendments, be reappointed to that  
17 office. His continuance in office is then subject to the provisions of section 5A(c) and (d) of  
18 this article, applicable to judges of that court, but in no event shall any judge continue in  
19 office after his seventieth birthday.]

20 [21A.

21 If the amendments to sections 3 and 21 of Article IV proposed by House Bill 972,  
22 Senate Bill 390 (1976) and the amendments to those sections proposed by House Bill 1048  
23 (1976) are ratified by the voters at the election in November 1976, the amendments to those  
24 sections proposed in House Bill 972, Senate Bill 390 (1976) shall take effect.]

25 **Article XVIII – Provisions of Limited Duration**

26 **6.**

27 **(A) FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPLEMENTING THE AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLE**  
28 **IV OF THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION PROPOSED BY SENATE BILL 367 OF 2015**  
29 **CONCERNING JUDGES OF THE CIRCUIT COURTS, THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONS**  
30 **SHALL GOVERN. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE XIV, SECTION 1A OF THE**  
31 **MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, THIS SECTION SHALL EXPIRE WHEN ALL OF THE**  
32 **JUDGES OF THE CIRCUIT COURTS HAVE COMPLETED ALL OF THE TERMS FOR WHICH**  
33 **THE JUDGES ARE REAPPOINTED UNDER SUBSECTIONS (B) AND (C) OF THIS SECTION**  
34 **OR HAVE VACATED THEIR OFFICES FOR ANY REASON.**

1           **(B) EACH JUDGE OF A CIRCUIT COURT WHO IS IN OFFICE FOR AN ELECTED**  
2 **TERM ON THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THESE AMENDMENTS, UNLESS THE JUDGE DIES,**  
3 **RESIGNS, RETIRES, OR IS OTHERWISE LAWFULLY REMOVED, SHALL CONTINUE IN**  
4 **OFFICE UNTIL THE END OF THE ELECTED TERM OR UNTIL THE JUDGE ATTAINS THE**  
5 **AGE OF 70 YEARS, WHICHEVER OCCURS FIRST. CONTINUANCE OF THE JUDGE IN**  
6 **OFFICE IS THEN SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE IV, SECTION 5 OF THE**  
7 **MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, BUT IN NO EVENT SHALL ANY JUDGE CONTINUE IN**  
8 **OFFICE AFTER ATTAINING THE AGE OF 70 YEARS.**

9           **(C) EACH JUDGE OF A CIRCUIT COURT WHO IS IN OFFICE ON THE EFFECTIVE**  
10 **DATE OF THESE AMENDMENTS, BUT WHO HAS NOT BEEN ELECTED TO THAT OFFICE**  
11 **BY THE VOTERS, SHALL, WITHIN 15 DAYS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THESE**  
12 **AMENDMENTS, BE REAPPOINTED TO THAT OFFICE. CONTINUANCE OF THE JUDGE IN**  
13 **OFFICE IS THEN SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE IV, SECTION 5 OF THE**  
14 **MARYLAND CONSTITUTION, BUT IN NO EVENT SHALL ANY JUDGE CONTINUE IN**  
15 **OFFICE AFTER ATTAINING THE AGE OF 70 YEARS.**

16           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly  
17 determines that the amendment to the Maryland Constitution proposed by this Act affects  
18 multiple jurisdictions and that the provisions of Article XIV, § 1 of the Maryland  
19 Constitution concerning local approval of constitutional amendments do not apply.

20           SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the foregoing section  
21 proposed as an amendment to the Maryland Constitution shall be submitted to the  
22 qualified voters of the State at the next general election to be held in November 2016 for  
23 their adoption or rejection pursuant to Article XIV of the Maryland Constitution. At that  
24 general election, the vote on this proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be by  
25 ballot, and upon each ballot there shall be printed the words "For the Constitutional  
26 Amendment" and "Against the Constitutional Amendment," as now provided by law.  
27 Immediately after the election, all returns shall be made to the Governor of the vote for and  
28 against the proposed amendment, as directed by Article XIV of the Maryland Constitution,  
29 and further proceedings had in accordance with Article XIV.