

This appears to be an unnecessary and unsound change in the existing law. As originally introduced, the Bill purported to conform the provisions of the law as to voting machine use by disabled voters with existing provisions of law as to assistance of disabled voters in the use of paper ballots. Section 81 of Article 33 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1951 Edition) provides for assistance of a physically disabled voter in marking a paper ballot, either by an immediate member of his family or by the two clerks at the polling place. The existing Section 100 of Article 33, with respect to voting machines, made no provision for the alternative to the physically disabled voter of assistance from a member of his immediate family, if desired. Initially the Bill corrected this omission and made the assistance provisions uniform as to both paper ballots and voting machines. By amendment to the Bill, the allowable outside assistance was extended to *any* person designated by the disabled voter. At the same time, the existing provisions of Section 81 were likewise amended to permit *any* person selected by the disabled voter to assist in marking a paper ballot.

The original intent of the Bill was entirely unobjectionable and had the desirable feature of providing for substantial secrecy of the ballot to a disabled voter in the use of voting machines. The amendment thereafter placed in the Bill removes all restraint from the limitation as to the person who may be selected and gives no reasonable assurance that the wishes of the physically disabled voter will necessarily be observed. It affords an unnecessary temptation to an over-zealous election worker to disregard the instructions of a physically disabled person, particularly a blind one. It likewise would encourage solicitation of an affidavit in borderline cases of disability in an effort to assure the casting of a vote in the desired manner. The various possibilities inherent in such an opening of the doors, even though the number of votes involved may be relatively few, is entirely inconsistent with the spirit and principle of our election laws which, as presently constituted, adequately protect the public interest and the franchise of public-spirited citizens under such disability as to require assistance in voting.

Sincerely,

(s) THEODORE R. MCKELDIN,

Governor.

TRMcK/tk

Senate Bill No. 148—Prince George's General Hospital

AN ACT to authorize the Board of County Commissioners of Prince George's County to issue bonds in the amount of not more than Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$2,500,000.00) for the purpose of constructing and equipping an addition or additions to the Prince George's General Hospital to include health and welfare facilities, said addition or additions to be built on the present hospital grounds in Cheverly, Prince George's County, Maryland.