

## **2018 Early Voting Centers**

### **Baltimore City (7 centers)**

Public Safety Training Center  
3500 W. Northern Parkway (Enter on Manhattan Ave)  
Baltimore, MD 21215

Southeast Anchor Library  
3601 Eastern Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21224

Mount Pleasant Church & Ministries  
6000 Radecke Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21206

The League for People with Disabilities  
1111 E. Coldspring Lane  
Baltimore, MD 21239

Westside Skill Center  
4501 Edmondson Avenue (Enter on Athol Ave)  
Baltimore, MD 21229

University of Maryland at Baltimore  
Community Engagement Center  
1 North Poppleton Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dr. Carter G. Woodson Modular Building School #160  
2501 Seabury Road  
Baltimore, MD 21225

### **Montgomery County (11 centers)**

Germantown Community Recreation Center  
18905 Kingsview Road  
Germantown, MD 20874

Marilyn J. Praisner Community Recreation Center  
14906 Old Columbia Pike  
Burtonsville, MD 20866

Executive Office Building Auditorium  
101 Monroe Street  
Rockville, MD 20850

Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans Plaza  
One Veterans Place  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Activity Center at Bohrer Park Social Hall  
506 S. Frederick Avenue  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Damascus Community Recreation Center Social Hall  
25520 Oak Drive  
Damascus, MD 20872

Jane E. Lawton Community Recreation Center Social Hall  
4301 Willow Lane  
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Mid-County Community Recreation Center Social Hall  
2004 Queensguard Road  
Silver Spring, MD 20906

St. Catherine Laboure Catholic Church  
11801 Claridge Road  
Wheaton, MD 20902

Potomac Community Recreation Center  
11315 Falls Road  
Potomac, MD 20854

Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department  
17921 Brooke Road  
Sandy Spring, MD 20860

**2020 Primary and General Elections  
Determination of Early Voting Centers**

	<b>Number of Registered Voters<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Number of Early Voting Centers<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Number of Optional Early Voting Centers<sup>3</sup></b>
ALLEGANY	43,261	1	1
ANNE ARUNDEL	394,538	7	1
BALTIMORE CITY	389,326	7	1
BALTIMORE COUNTY	562,738	11	1
CALVERT	66,579	1	1
CAROLINE	20,642	1	1
CARROLL	123,421	1	1
CECIL	66,477	1	1
CHARLES	114,841	1	1
DORCHESTER	21,649	1	1
FREDERICK	177,964	3	1
GARRETT	19,895	1	1
HARFORD	183,077	3	1
HOWARD	220,141	4	1
KENT	13,259	1	1
MONTGOMERY	663,237	11	1
PRINCE GEORGE'S	589,150	11	1
QUEEN ANNE'S	36,523	1	1
SAINT MARY'S	71,326	1	1
SOMERSET	13,363	1	1
TALBOT	27,336	1	1
WASHINGTON	96,605	1	1
WICOMICO	62,527	1	1
WORCESTER	39,235	1	1
STATEWIDE	<b>4,017,110</b>	<b>73</b>	

<sup>1</sup>As of August 27, 2019. See Regulation 33.17.02.01A of Code of Maryland Regulations.

<sup>2</sup>Election Law Article, § 10-301.1(b), *Annotated Code of Maryland* specifies the number of early voting centers for each county. A county with less than 125,000 registered voters shall have 1 early voting center. A county with more than 125,000 registered voters but less than 200,000 registered voters shall have 3 early voting centers. A county with more than 200,000 registered voters but less than 300,000 registered voters shall have 4 early voting centers. A county with more than 300,000 registered voters but less than 450,000 registered voters shall have 7 early voting centers. A county with more than 450,000 registered voters shall have 11 early voting centers.

<sup>3</sup>In addition to the early voting centers required by Election Law Article, §10-301.1(b), each county may establish 1 additional early voting center if the State Board, in collaboration with the local board, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional early voting center. (Refer to Chapter 539, 2019 Laws of Maryland)

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 19-0167R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Pinkett, Henry, Cohen, Schleifer, Sneed, Costello, Dorsey,  
Burnett, Clarke, Reisinger, Bullock, President Scott

Introduced and read first time: September 23, 2019

Assigned to: Judiciary Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Baltimore City Board of Elections, Department of  
General Services, Baltimore City Public School System, City Solicitor

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Creating Another Early Voting Polling Place in West Baltimore**

3 FOR the purpose of endorsing the creation of another early voting polling place in West  
4 Baltimore.

5 **Recitals**

6 Early voting in America is key to ensuring that people have the opportunity to vote. Unlike  
7 in many countries, Election Day is not a holiday in the U.S. On Election Day in 2018, polls in  
8 Baltimore City were open from 7 AM to 8 PM. City residents who work multiple jobs and lack  
9 easy access to child care or transportation can have difficulty going to the polls during those  
10 hours on a single day.

11 To prevent the silencing of those individuals, Baltimore City has 8 days in which residents  
12 can visit early polling places and cast their votes. Early voting is the only way some citizens can  
13 make it to the polls. Early voting is a tradition for some residents in the City; for example, many  
14 churches will provide transportation for their parishioners to go to an early voting polling place.  
15 While residents can also vote with absentee ballots, this is less simple than visiting an early  
16 voting polling place. Residents who wish to vote with absentee ballots must request an absentee  
17 ballot in advance and mail the ballot back. In addition, people who vote by absentee ballot do  
18 not have access to assistance from another person in filling out the ballot, even if assistance is  
19 needed.

20 Early voting is important to preserving the rights of Baltimore City residents. There is  
21 currently only 1 early voting polling place in West Baltimore, and 7 in the City total. The  
22 representatives of District 40 support the creation of another early voting polling place in West  
23 Baltimore. It is important that another early voting polling place is available for citizens to visit  
24 in West Baltimore so that all Baltimore City residents can exercise their right to vote.

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
26 Baltimore City Council endorses the creation of another early voting polling place in West  
27 Baltimore.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.  
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

**Council Bill 19-0167R**

1       **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
2 Director of the Baltimore City Board of Elections, the State Administrator of the Maryland State  
3 Board of Elections, the Delegation from Maryland District 40, and the Mayor's Legislative  
4 Liaison to the City Council.



# Baltimore City Council

COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
Brandon M. Scott

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File #:	19-0167R	Version: 0	Name:	Creating Another Early Voting Polling Place in West Baltimore
Type:	City Council Resolution		Status:	In Committee
File created:	9/23/2019		In control:	<u>Judiciary Committee</u>
On agenda:			Final action:	
			Enactment #:	
Title:	Creating Another Early Voting Polling Place in West Baltimore For the purpose of endorsing the creation of another early voting polling place in West Baltimore.			
Sponsors:	<u>Leon F. Pinkett, III, Bill Henry, Zeke Cohen, Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer, Shannon Sneed, Eric T. Costello, Ryan Dorsey, Kristerfer Burnett, Mary Pat Clarke, Edward Reisinger, John T. Bullock, President Brandon M. Scott</u>			
Indexes:	Polling, Vote			
Attachments:	1. <u>19-0167R~1st Reader</u>			

[History \(7\)](#) | 
 [Text](#)

\* Warning: This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.  
 The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.  
 Introductory\*

City of Baltimore  
 Council Bill R  
 (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Pinkett

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning  
 title  
 Creating Another Early Voting Polling Place in West Baltimore  
 For the purpose of endorsing the creation of another early voting polling place in West Baltimore.  
 body

Recitals

Early voting in America is key to ensuring that people have the opportunity to vote. Unlike in many countries, Election Day is not a holiday in the U.S. On Election Day in 2018, polls in Baltimore City were open from 7 AM to 8 PM. City residents who work multiple jobs and lack easy access to child care or transportation can have difficulty going to the polls during those hours on a single day.

To prevent the silencing of those individuals, Baltimore City has 8 days in which residents can visit early polling places and cast their votes. Early voting is the only way some citizens can make it to the polls. Early voting is a tradition for some residents in the City; for example, many churches will provide transportation for their parishioners to go to an early voting polling place. While residents can also vote with absentee ballots, this is less simple than visiting an early voting polling place. Residents who wish to vote with absentee ballots must request an absentee ballot in advance and mail the ballot back. In addition, people who vote by absentee ballot do not have access to assistance from another person in filling out the ballot, even if assistance i...

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# Baltimore City Council

COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Brandon M. Scott

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**File #:** 19-0167R **Version:** 0 **Name:** Creating Another Early Voting Polling Place in West Baltimore  
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## Introductory\*

### City of Baltimore Council Bill \_\_\_\_\_ R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Pinkett

#### A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning  
title

#### **Creating Another Early Voting Polling Place in West Baltimore**

For the purpose of endorsing the creation of another early voting polling place in West Baltimore.  
body

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Early voting in America is key to ensuring that people have the opportunity to vote. Unlike in many countries, Election Day is not a holiday in the U.S. On Election Day in 2018, polls in Baltimore City were open from 7 AM to 8 PM. City residents who work multiple jobs and lack easy access to child care or transportation can have difficulty going to the polls during those hours on a single day.

To prevent the silencing of those individuals, Baltimore City has 8 days in which residents can visit early polling places and cast their votes. Early voting is the only way some citizens can make it to the polls. Early voting is a tradition for some residents in the City; for example, many churches will provide transportation for their parishioners to go to an early voting polling place. While residents can also vote with absentee ballots, this is less simple than visiting an early voting polling place. Residents who wish to vote with absentee ballots must request an absentee ballot in advance and mail the ballot back. In addition, people who vote by absentee ballot do not have access to assistance from another person in filling out the ballot, even if assistance is needed.

Early voting is important to preserving the rights of Baltimore City residents. There is currently only 1 early voting polling place in West Baltimore, and 7 in the City total. The representatives of District 40 support the creation of another early voting polling place in West Baltimore. It is important that another early voting polling place is available for citizens to visit in West Baltimore so that all Baltimore City residents can exercise their right to vote.

**Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore,** That the Baltimore City Council endorses the creation of another early voting polling place in West Baltimore.

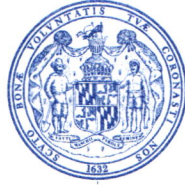
**And be it further resolved,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Director of the Baltimore City Board of Elections, the State Administrator of the Maryland State Board of Elections, the Delegation from Maryland District 40, the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council, and the Mayor.

Armstead B. Crawley Jones, Sr.  
Election Director

Abigail Goldman  
Election Deputy Director

Bruce M. Luchansky  
President (R)

Joyce J. Smith  
Vice President (D)



BALTIMORE CITY  
BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Frankie L. Powell  
Secretary (R)

Tamara M. Purnell  
Member (R)

Arlene B. Fisher  
Member (D)

September 25, 2019

Senator Hayes,

This follows our discussion about your request for a new early voting center to serve voters in the 40<sup>th</sup> legislative district. By email dated September 19, 2019, you suggested five possible sites: Frederick Douglass High School, Coppin State University, Mondawmin Mall, Parks and People Foundation, and Kappa Youth and Community Center. The Baltimore City Board of Elections considered your request at its monthly meeting that day. After discussing it at some length, the Board members reached a consensus decision to maintain the seven early voting centers currently in use. As you noted, one of the sites that currently serves voters in the 40<sup>th</sup> legislative district is the Community Engagement Center at the University of Maryland, Baltimore.

Please know that the Board members reached their decision based on several factors. The Board members discussed the geography of early voting sites. Because voters can go to any site during early voting, early voting centers are located so that there is adequate coverage of the entire city as opposed to proximity to each legislative district. Currently, voters can get from any early voting center to the next within a roughly 5-mile radius. If the Board did not use the Community Engagement Center as an early voting center, for example, it would create a gap in coverage of the city center. As it stands now, this early voting site does not have the lowest turnout in the city.

The Board members also discussed the practical challenges of approving a new Early Voting Site at this time. Under COMAR 33.17.02.02, the Board must submit a form for each proposed early voting center to the State Board of Elections no later than September 30, 2019. Meeting this deadline requires more than the submission of a form, however; it requires staff to assemble additional information about each suggested site to demonstrate that it satisfies all technical and accessibility requirements, so that the Board can then address the site's adequacy and approve it for submission to the State Board. The Board was concerned about the feasibility of completing this process by the deadline, which is now less than a week away.

While the Board has decided not to approve a new early voting center at this time, we continue to be on the lookout for sites that meet all requirements and are well positioned to serve voters across the city, including those in the 40<sup>th</sup> legislative district. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Armstead B. Crawley Jones, Sr." in a cursive script.

Armstead B. Crawley Jones, Sr., CERA  
Election Director  
Baltimore City Board of Elections

cc: Board Members  
Linda Lamone, State Administrator  
Alan J. Dunklow, Board Attorney



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 20  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

October 7, 2019

Linda H. Lamone  
State Administrator of Elections  
Maryland State Board of Elections  
151 West St., Suite 200  
Annapolis, MD 21401-0486

Dear Administrator Lamone,

As elected representatives of Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and White Oak, the District 20 Delegation has a strong interest in the expansion of voting access in District 20 and Montgomery County at large. We write today to urge the reversal of the Montgomery County Board of Elections' recent decision to deny the designation of the White Oak Recreation Center as an early voting site.

Early voting has proven to be highly effective in increasing voter turnout across our state. With the expansion of early voting in Maryland, voter turnout before election day has nearly tripled, and Montgomery County voters have voted early at greater numbers with each passing election. The increase in early voting turnout justifies a need for increased access to early voting in Montgomery County and in District 20. We request that the Board designate the twelfth early voting site in Montgomery County as White Oak Recreation Center.

White Oak is a central part of our district and is diverse, multi-cultural, and home to a large immigrant community. Residents in the White Oak area are more reliant on public transit and less likely to use an automobile. The White Oak Recreation Center is located between the Silver Spring Civic Building, Mid County Community Recreation Center, and Marilyn J. Praisner Community Recreation Center early vote sites. The White Oak Recreation Center's position in northern District 20 makes it well-situated to provide increased voter access to residents of White Oak and eastern Montgomery County.

In the 2018 Midterm Election, Montgomery County voters turned out in record numbers and at a level rate than any other county in Maryland. As we approach the 2020 Presidential Election, we urge the Board of Elections to take any step necessary towards expanding access to the ballot in our state. We urge you to reverse the Montgomery County Board of Elections' decision and designate White Oak Recreation Center as Montgomery County's twelfth early voting site.



We are happy to discuss these matters in further detail at your convenience.


Sincerely,



Senator William Smith



Delegate David Moon



Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins



Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

## Article - Election Law

### §10-301.1.

(a) Except as provided under Title 9, Subtitle 3 of this article, during any regularly scheduled primary or general election a voter may vote:

(1) in the voter's assigned precinct on election day; or

(2) at an early voting center in the voter's county of residence on any early voting day in accordance with this section.

(b) (1) Each county shall have at least one early voting center established in the county as prescribed in this subsection.

(2) A county with fewer than 125,000 registered voters shall have one early voting center established in the county.

(3) A county with more than 125,000 registered voters but fewer than 200,000 registered voters shall have three early voting centers established in the county.

(4) A county with more than 200,000 registered voters but fewer than 300,000 registered voters shall have four early voting centers established in the county.

(5) A county with more than 300,000 registered voters but fewer than 450,000 registered voters shall have seven early voting centers established in the county.

(6) A county with more than 450,000 registered voters shall have eleven early voting centers.

(7) In addition to the early voting centers required in this subsection, each county may establish one additional early voting center if the State Board, in collaboration with the local board, and the governing body of the county agree to establish an additional early voting center.

(c) No later than 6 months before a primary election, the State Board, in collaboration with the local board in each county, shall designate each early voting center in that county.

(d) Each early voting center shall be open for voting as follows:

(1) beginning the second Thursday before a primary or general election through the Thursday before the election; and

(2) during the following hours:

(i) in a presidential general election, during the hours between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. each early voting day; and

(ii) in all other elections, during the hours between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. each early voting day.

(e) Each early voting center shall satisfy the requirements of § 10–101 of this title.

(f) Beginning 30 days prior to each early voting period the State Board and each local board shall undertake steps to inform the public about early voting and the location of early voting centers in each county, including:

- (1) a series of public service media announcements;
- (2) mailings to all registered voters in each county; and
- (3) other measures as appropriate.

(g) Except as expressly provided in this section, any provision of this article that applies to voting on election day also applies to early voting.

(h) The State Board shall adopt regulations and guidelines in accordance with the requirements of this section for the conduct of early voting.



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

September 16, 2019

Montgomery County Board of Elections  
18753 N. Frederick Ave, Suite 210  
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Dear Chair Shalleck:

Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy. Easy access to voting, including convenient locations and hours, is essential to ensuring the greatest participation and fairest elections possible. Many pundits are expecting record election turnout next year, which is why we are writing to urge the County Board of Elections add a 12th early-voting site for the 2020 general election in White Oak.

Many of the polling places with the longest wait times for voters last November were along the [U.S. 29 and New Hampshire Avenue corridors](#). *The Washington Post* reported that some voters waited well over an hour, some up to two hours, to vote at the Marilyn J. Praisner Community Recreation Center in Burtonsville. Some people left before voting, including seniors and disabled individuals who could not stand in line that long, as well as parents and caregivers who had to leave to pick up their kids or run errands.

Nationally, the average wait time to vote in 2016 was 8 minutes, according to an MIT [study](#). The Presidential Commission on Election Administration has committed to a national goal to limit the wait times for voting to no more than 30 minutes. Waiting an hour, or even more, to vote is simply unacceptable.

That's why we believe that the White Oak Recreation Center — which is more convenient to East County voters than the Burtonsville or Silver Spring early-voting sites — should be designated as the county's 12th early-voting site for the upcoming General election. Having early voting at White Oak will relieve pressure, and reduce the long lines, at nearby polling places on Election Day.

Having closer and more convenient early-voting centers — as well as early-voting centers that are sited on major transit corridors like U.S. 29 — is especially important in areas with low car ownership and high transit dependency like East County, where around 35 percent of adults do not own a car despite limited transit availability in that area.

Voting is our precious and hard-won right and responsibility as Americans. Let's make it as easy as possible.

Sincerely,

Nancy Navarro, Council President  
Sidney Katz, Council Vice-President  
Tom Hucker, Councilmember District 5  
Gabe Albornoz, At-Large Councilmember  
Evan Glass, At-Large Councilmember  
Will Jawando, At-Large Councilmember  
Hans Riemer, At-Large Councilmember



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

September 16, 2019

Montgomery County Board of Elections  
18753 N. Frederick Ave, Suite 210  
Gaithersburg, MD 20879

Dear Chair Shalleck:

Turnout is expected to be high for the 2020 general election, therefore, I support adding a 12<sup>th</sup> early voting site for the general election. This additional convenient voting opportunity will hopefully increase turnout and help reduce lines on election day which was a problem in 2018.

I have concerns about the cost and additional benefit of implementing another early voting site for the primary election in this fiscal year. As you know, Maryland's primary is on the back end of the primary calendar. If the presidential nominations are already determined by the time of our primary, turnout might be very low for the whole primary as there are no other competitive races in our county.

Thank you for your role in making our democracy work.

Sincerely,



## Testimony before the Maryland State Board of Elections in support of a 12<sup>th</sup> Early Voting site for Montgomery County MD

Submitted by Diana E. Conway, 10-8-19

Good afternoon,

Thank you for holding this emergency meeting.

My name is Diana Conway. I am here to enthusiastically support a 12<sup>th</sup> early voting site, located in the White Oak area of Montgomery County.

My family and I have lived in Montgomery County for 28 years. For the last 20 of those years we've been in Potomac. Last cycle Potomac got a new early voting site. The Potomac area is characterized by poor transit and low population density, as well as a level of affluence that translates into people having cars, and having disposable time and resources to vote at their convenience. So while the Potomac site saw significant use, those folks would have voted anyway.

In comparison, the White Oak area under discussion today is a low-income, high-density corridor. It is heavily minority and immigrant. With extremely low car-ownership these voters rely heavily on transit. These characteristics translate into well-recognized, significant burdens on ballot access. Accordingly, if anything the White Oak community should be getting enhanced opportunities to vote, rather than facing additional hurdles to voting.

The argument is simple:

- The universal franchise is an iconic representation of the values we claim to enshrine.
- Voters in the White Oak corridor experienced staggering delays in the 2018 cycle
- Experts across the political spectrum universally predict a surge in turnout, beyond even the 2018 uptick.
- The solution—an additional site—is both available and affordable.
- And finally, failure to open a 12<sup>th</sup> site amounts to deciding that 2020 will be worse, and that that's ok.

It's not OK. The only fact-based argument I've heard against the additional site is cost: \$117,000. Given the number of voters at stake, this seems a poor valuation of the universal franchise.

It is disappointing that we have to be here, asking to have the body charged with arranging our county elections be told to perform its core function. Also disappointing is that some voices in this testy conversation are verging on comically transparent in their motivations. I am heartened to say those voices are a distinct minority.

I urge this body to send a clear message supporting meaningful ballot access for all. Please direct the Montgomery County Board of Elections to open a 12<sup>th</sup> early voting site in the White Oak corridor.

Allow me to close with a quote from Susan B. Anthony: "Here, in this very first paragraph of the Declaration, is the assertion of the natural right of all to the ballot; for how can 'the consent of the governed' be given if the right to vote be denied?"

Thank you for considering my views.

Diana Conway, 10600 River Road, Potomac MD 20854 [dconway@erols.com](mailto:dconway@erols.com).



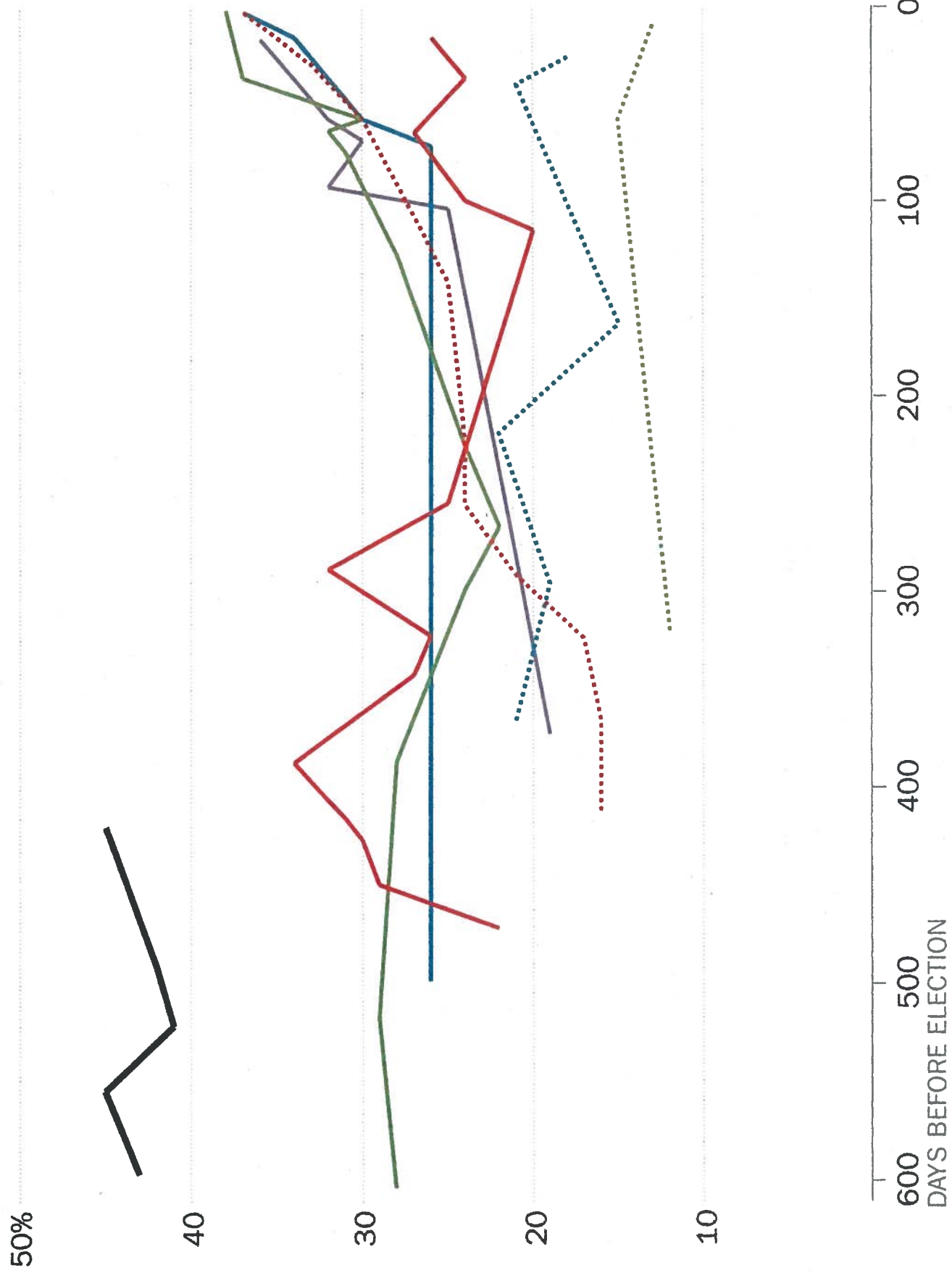
# Early Voting Growth

Early Voting Location	2014 General	2018 General	Percent Change
Silver Spring	5,740	16,864	193%
Potomac	-	14,186	-
Bohrer Park	4,455	13,230	197%
Lawton	3,356	12,265	265%
Germentown	4,549	11,899	162%
Praisner	4,987	10,286	106%
Executive Office Building	4,406	9,190	109%
Mid-County	2,485	7,934	219%
Wheaton (2014) / St. Catherine's (2018)	3,994	7,808	95%
Sandy Spring	-	6,154	-
Damascus	1,468	4,793	226%
<b>TOTAL EARLY VOTERS</b>	<b>35,440</b>	<b>114,609</b>	<b>+223%</b>
<b>ALL VOTES CAST</b>	<b>284,645</b>	<b>412,571</b>	<b>+45%</b>

# Extremely enthusiastic about voting

CNN-SSRS and CNN-ORC polling

- 2004
- 2008
- 2012
- 2016
- 2020
- ..... 2010
- ..... 2014
- ..... 2018



9/12/19

# Extremely or very enthusiastic about voting: Overall

CNN-SSRS and CNN-ORC polling

- 2004
- 2008
- 2012
- 2016
- 2020
- ..... 2010
- ..... 2014
- ..... 2018

100%

75

50

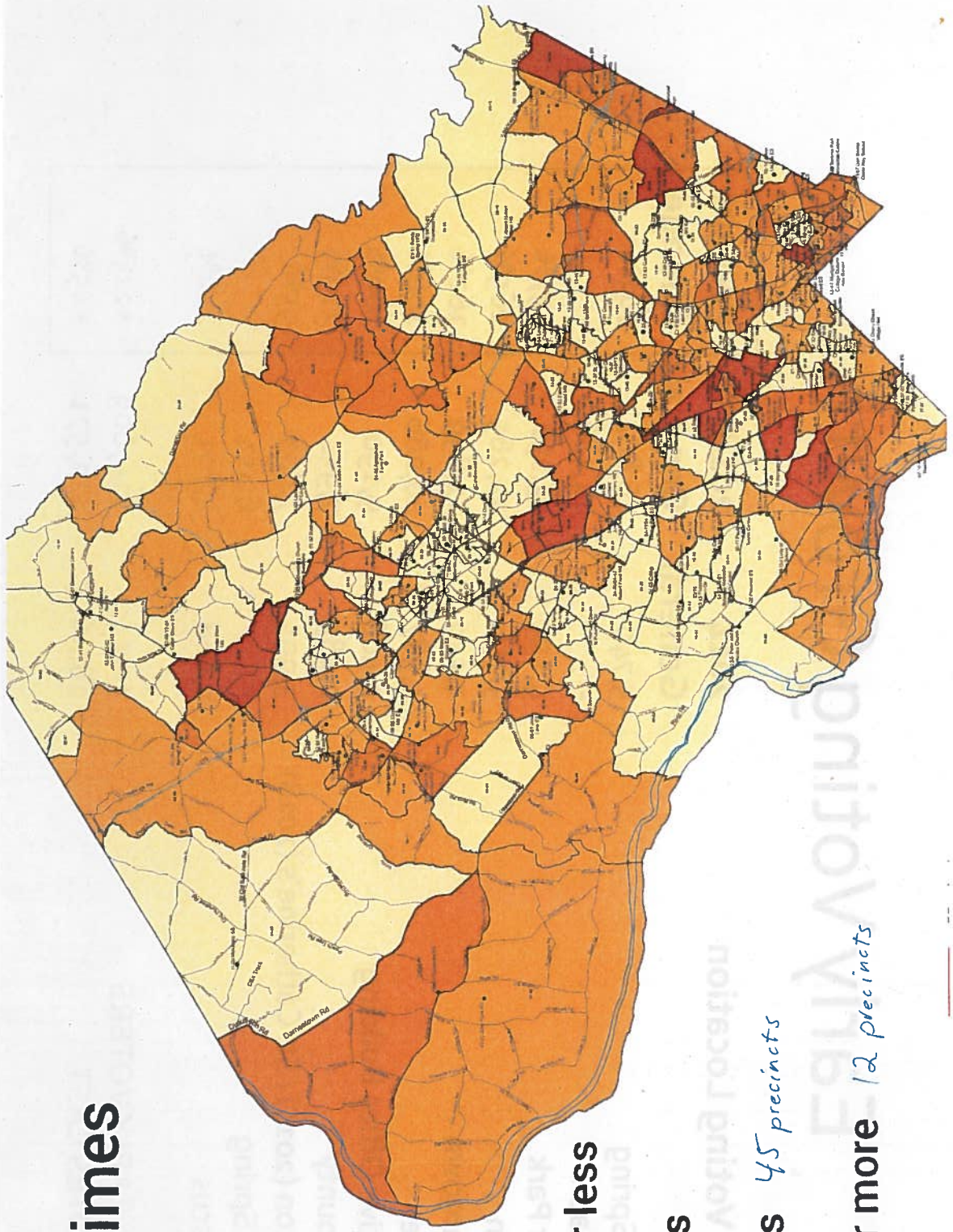
25

600  
500  
400  
300  
200  
100  
0  
DAYS BEFORE ELECTION



2018 General

# Peak Wait Times By Precinct

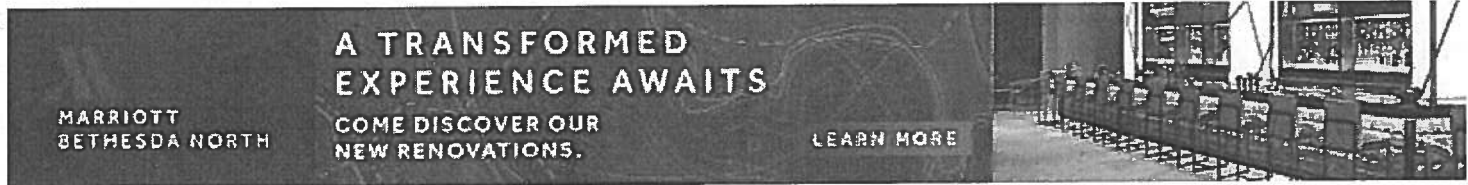


15 minutes or less

20-30 minutes

35-55 minutes 45 precincts

60 minutes or more 12 precincts



# Council Members Pressure Board of Elections To Reverse Early Voting Decision

Board previously voted against a new polling site in White Oak

BY KATE MASTERS | Published: 2019-09-27 17:51

Community activists and elected officials are urging the Montgomery County Board of Elections to overturn a recent decision against adding a 12th early voting site.

County Executive Marc Elrich joined Council Members Tom Hucker and Will Jawando at a press conference on Friday with a clear demand: The Montgomery County Board of Elections should convene an emergency meeting on Monday to reverse its decision not to add an additional early voting site at the White Oak Community Recreation Center.

If the board won't reverse its decision on Monday — the day when local early voting site recommendations are due to the state Board of Elections — council members plan to take their petition further.

“If we have to, we'll organize a bigger campaign to appeal to the state board,” Hucker said. “There's nothing more fundamental than allowing someone to vote, and this is a clear case of disenfranchisement.”

Elected officials cannot dictate the actions of the board, an independent body with members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate.

But the ultimatum comes less than two weeks after the five-member county board voted 3-2 not to approve a 12th early voting site at its September meeting. The vote was split down party lines, with the Republican-appointed majority voting against the objections of two Democratic members.

Proponents of the site, including all nine members of the Democratic County Council, argued that an additional facility was vital given the increased demand for early voting and lengthy lines on Election Day in 2018. The site was especially important for White Oak residents, who have to travel to Burtonsville or Silver Spring for early voting, supporters said.

But most of the board, including President Jim Shalleck, said the site would be a needless expenditure when Montgomery County has 11 early voting sites open for eight days before the



Council Member Tom Hucker pressured the Montgomery County Board of Elections on Friday to reverse a decision not to add a 12th early voting site in White Oak.

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PHOTO BY KATE MASTERS

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election.

Montgomery County is required to provide 11 early voting centers, but a recent change in state law allows the local Board of Elections to approve an optional 12th site.

In a phone interview on Friday, Shalleck emphasized that the majority of the board voted not to approve an additional early voting site anywhere in Montgomery County. Proponents of the facility previously suggested that the demographics of White Oak — a majority black community in District 5 — influenced the board's decision not to establish a site there.

"That is absolutely not true," Shalleck said. "That, to me, is a purely political attack. My personal view is that we made the right decision. We felt that with 11 early voting sites over eight days, there is sufficient early voting for everyone in the county."

The stalemate between council members and the local board would put the state in an unprecedented position if the local decision were appealed, said Nikki Charlson, the deputy administrator for the Maryland Board of Elections.

In 2015, the state considered multiple appeals after the Montgomery County Board of Elections, led by Shalleck, voted to shift two popular early voting sites — including the Marilyn Praisner Community Center in Burtonsville — to different areas in the county.

The state board could not reach a decision on whether to honor the changes, and the county board ultimately decided not to move the sites after weeks of pressure from voters and Democratic leaders.

But in the 2015 case, the state board was weighing in on two early voting centers mandated under Maryland law, not an optional site, Charlson said. Local elections boards are expected to determine the location of early voting centers with collaboration from the county's governing body.

"We've never been in this position before," she said. "And the assessment of a new facility is not something we're prepared to do. You can't have the state board saying 'Pick this site' when we

can't even assess whether the site is suitable or not."

As the establishment of a new site devolves into a larger political battle, community groups are weighing in. The NAACP of Montgomery County recently released a statement in support of the White Oak facility to help remove systemic barriers to voting.

"The Board of Election's failure to add a site in White Oak is also a failure to ameliorate long lines, insufficient polling places and other structural impediments to voting," the statement read. "To knowingly permit the continued existence of such impediments is simply an attempt to suppress the vote in this African American and African immigrant growth area."

The Women's Democratic Club of Montgomery County issued a statement in support of the new site at Friday's press conference, as did Common Cause Maryland, an advocacy group that promotes voting rights and transparent elections.

Elrich also publicly endorsed the site on Friday after authoring a letter that Shalleck previously used to justify the majority's opposition to the proposed facility.

Elrich wrote that he supported a 12th site for early voting in the general election, but had concerns about the costs of establishing an extra early voting site for the primary.

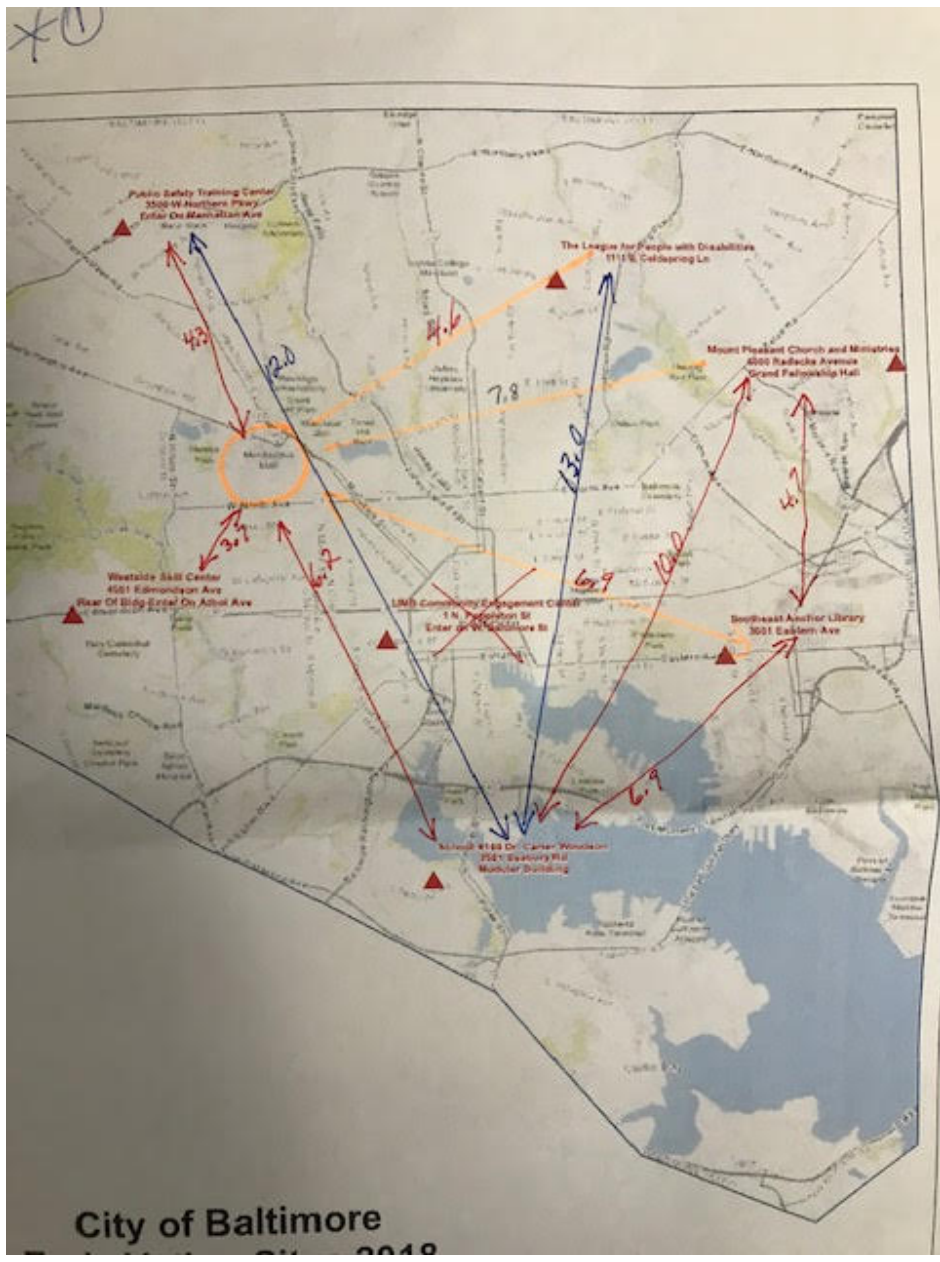
He clarified on Friday that he supports the 12th site for both the primary and general elections.

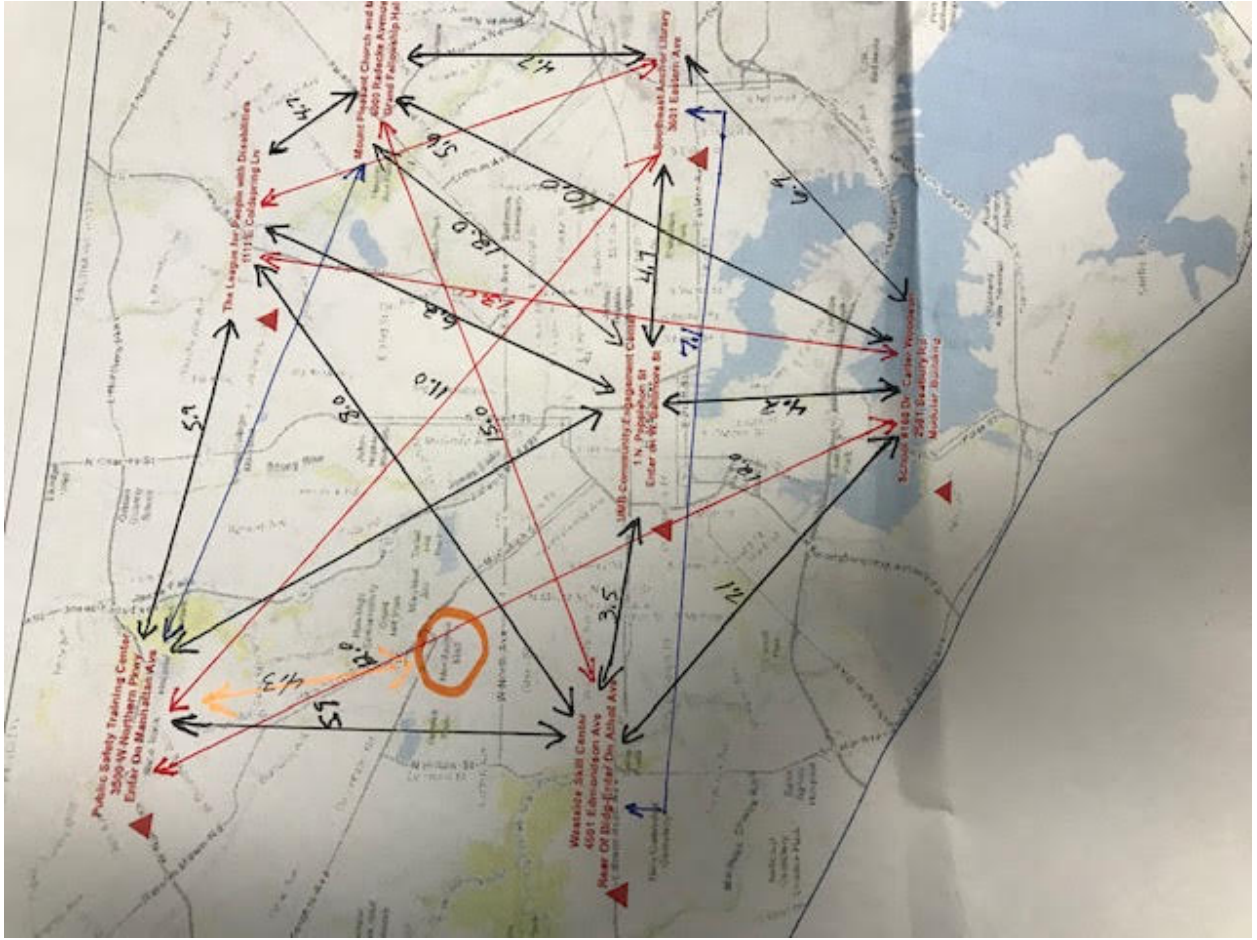
Shalleck largely characterized the decision as a funding issue. Opening a new early voting site would cost Montgomery County \$117,000, he said in a previous interview. The state recently directed local election boards to spend an additional \$349,000 on closed-data networks for same-day voter registration, which also increased costs for the county.

"But that shouldn't be their decision," Elrich said after the press conference. "It's up to me and the council to decide whether to fund a new site. The board shouldn't be making that decision because they're not the ones spending the money."

**BACK TO BETHESDA BEAT >>**







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October 8, 2019

Maryland State Board of Elections  
151 West St. Suite 200  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Cogan & Members of the Board,

I understand that the Maryland State Board of Elections will be meeting to receive testimony regarding the actions of the Montgomery County Board of Elections on a proposal to add a twelfth early-voting site at the White Oak Community Recreation Center in Silver Spring.

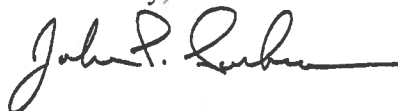
On behalf of my constituents in Maryland's Third Congressional District who would benefit significantly from the early voting opportunity at White Oak, I urge you to consider the strong arguments being presented in support of adding the center and use your authority to secure that result.

It has been my privilege at the federal level to assemble HR1, the For the People Act, a comprehensive package of democracy reforms that was introduced on the first day of the current session of Congress and was passed by the full House of Representatives on March 8<sup>th</sup> of this year. HR1 contains numerous reforms that would make it easier for Americans to register and vote in federal elections – the product of key proposals put forward by voting rights advocates, including my colleague Representative John Lewis of Georgia. Early voting requirements contained in HR1 are a critical part of the legislation's overall effort to protect and preserve the voting franchise in every state in the country. States like Maryland can and should be leaders in demonstrating the value of early voting. That important opportunity is afforded by adding early voting at the White Oak Community Recreation Center.

The case for adding the White Oak center is extremely compelling, particularly the fact that having an early voting site on a major transit corridor such as U.S. 29 is critical for residents who are dependent on bus transportation (some 35% of the residents of the East County area do not have cars). As Montgomery County residents continue to expand their appetite for early voting – participation has grown from 8.4 percent of the total votes cast in the general election to 27.8 percent last year -- every part of the county should have equal access to that opportunity.

Again, I urge you to give full consideration to the arguments in favor of adding a twelfth early voting center at White Oak. A decision to do so would affirm Maryland's commitment to the foundation of our democracy – the right to vote.

Sincerely,



John Sarbanes  
Member of Congress