

# Legislative Wrap 2015



## Campaign Finance

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Anticipated takeaways: big win to restore the public funding tax checkoff, possible big win on the Constitutional Amendment resolution; important cleanup with inaugural committees, tightened reporting. Huge next steps for next year – reform and expand public funding, coordination, loans, shareholder, major donor.

- Restore funding to and modernize the Fair Campaign Finance Fund, the small-donor matching program for gubernatorial candidates (SB593/HB485, Gov. Hogan; SB518, Pinsky/HB573, Luedtke). **WIN/mix (tent); HB 485 should pass. still need to overhaul and expand program**
- Give shareholders a say in political spending by their corporations (SB153, Raskin/HB885, Platt). **Mix (tent); SJ2 might pass in amended form calling for con amendment on Citizens United. Not shareholder.**
- Tighten up loopholes in our campaign finance laws, including requiring reporting of major-donor contributions (SB667, Young/HB185, Carr) strengthen coordination rules (HB1088, Ebersole), and tighten repayment requirements for loans (SB823, Bates). **LOSS/mix; did not get these but got coordination in HB 485, got inaugural campaign committee reporting, got tightened contractor and lobbyist donation reporting (IEs!)**

## Transparency and Accountability

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Anticipated takeaways: HUGE win on Public Information reform, several bills including priority reform. Next steps – no action taken on open meetings, step forward on procurement, continue open data from last year.

- Update the Maryland Public Information Act to ensure that fees and exemptions are not used to deny public access to data, and create an oversight body with authority to mediate disputes around agency or local MPIA decisions (SB695, Raskin/HB755, Cullison). **BIG WIN (tent); also SB94, small open data/fee bill, and SB444/HB83, small PIA bill**
- Require agencies to publicly post the contact information for their Public Information Act officer (SB852/HB674). **WIN (tent.)**
- Strengthen open meetings laws to require agendas in advance of public meetings (HB583, Krebs) and subcommittees to hold open meetings (HB264, Krebs). **LOSS**
- **First steps – procurement; SB662 (recognize Miele too) study bill; HB941 Gov bill for higher ed; more expected from Gov**

## Redistricting Reform

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Anticipated takeaways: Gov announced study commission, will be huge priority.

- Set standards for Congressional districts to ensure that they are compact and respect community lines (SB448, Kelley/HB850, Gutierrez). **LOSS**; *recognize sponsors*
- Begin a process to determine the best method for drawing district lines so that a new system can be in place before redistricting begins again in 2022.(Gov Hogan, exec. order) **WIN/tent**; *after session*

## Election Protection

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Anticipated takeaways: huge steps forward for voter rights; former felon restoration, voter protection act; protected petition process, killed voter id. Next steps – transition to paper trail machines, special elections, automatic registration.

- Fully fund the transition to secure paper-trail voting machines. **Mix; funded but a mess.** *Small bills – sb 711 (tent) return stamp for absentee ballots, SB 5 observe early voting vote canvass*
- Reform our process for filling vacant legislative seats so that citizens have a voice (SB166, Feldman/HB604, Moon; HB806, Miele). **LOSS**
- Protect petition gatherers (SB193, Bates/HB284, Flanagan) and voters (SB192, Pinsky/HB73, Rosenberg). **WIN (tent hb73)**; *also fought off voter id bills; did not get hb43 protect petition signers*
- Clarify the laws that permit formerly incarcerated persons to regain their voting rights (SB340, Conway/HB980, McCray). **WIN**
- **First steps – HB 1049, automatic registration**

## Public Ethics

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Anticipated takeaways: saw renewed interest in the House, bills did not pass.

- Strengthen our revolving door provisions by ensuring top administrative officials and legislators must wait two years before taking a lobbying position (HB234, Tarlau). **LOSS**
- Ensure legislators who become lobbyists are spending funds from their campaign accounts (HB518, Carr). **LOSS**

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Common Cause Maryland is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest and accountable government that works in the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard. Founded in 1974, Common Cause Maryland is one of the state's most effective watchdog groups and has been a strong force for reform at the state and local levels.

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