

2020 SESSION PRIORITIES

Common Cause Maryland is ready for a busy 2020 legislative session. While we expect there will be many bills introduced this year that would improve how democracy functions in Maryland, the bills listed below reflect our priorities for the 90-day session.

Access to Voting

In 2019, we fully implemented Election Day Registration - ensuring anyone qualified to vote can do so when they show up to the polls. But there is still more work to do. This session, we'll be working to make voting more accessible and convenient – ensuring Marylanders can vote regardless of where they are located.

Expand the Vote – Maryland is one of 14 states that allows people with felony convictions to vote once they have been released from incarceration. However, there are still many eligible incarcerated voters who are pretrial or have been convicted of a misdemeanor, who are eligible to vote but don't have access to the ballot. We will work with the Expand the Vote coalition to ensure they have access to materials that would allow them to vote while in a correctional facility.

Encourage Student Voting – College and universities can empower students to vote and participate in our democracy. This session, we will be supporting efforts to encourage institutions of higher education throughout the state to not only encourage students to engage in the democratic process, but to provide straightforward options to do so – including voting on campus.

Encourage Voting at Home – We'll be working to eliminate confusion about the absentee ballot process by requiring ballots be accompanied with a prepaid postage as well as instructions for return and supporting a seamless change that would require absentee ballots be referred to as vote-by-mail ballots. These reforms will help with long-term goal of establishing a statewide vote-by-mail program.

Ranked Choice Voting – The movement for RCV continues to gain steam. We will be working with the RCV for Maryland coalition to ensure we have the technology needed to securely implement RCV for use in the future.

Campaign Finance

With support for public funding programs continuing to grow throughout the state, we will be ramping up our efforts – mobilizing Marylanders throughout the state to help put pressure on the legislature to begin reforming its own campaigns.

Publicly-funded campaigns at the state-level – We are currently working with sponsors to continue building on the county-level gains in publicly funded campaigns. We will be working with the Fair Elections Maryland coalition to create a program for the General Assembly as well as a separate program that would apply to the governor, comptroller, and attorney general. We will also be supporting local efforts to allow County's the opportunity to expand their program to cover the Board of Education.

Limiting Foreign Influence in Maryland Campaigns – Maryland should be taking steps to limit foreign influence in our campaigns. We'll be supporting efforts to prohibit corporations with more than 5% percent foreign ownership from contributing to campaigns or ballot issue committees, or from making independent expenditures in Maryland.

Suspicious Business Contributors – We will continue to work to publicize legislation banning corporate donations to LLCs. And while we would rather put a complete stop to LLC giving in Maryland, will continue to work to create a

system that make it easy to identify suspicious donations from businesses in our elections, closing loopholes that let wealthy donors abuse campaign limits.

Redistricting Reform

Every 10 years, in the year following the Census, state legislatures rearrange the boundaries of Congressional and legislative districts. We'll be working to establish Congressional Standards and supporting efforts to implement a people-powered Independent Redistricting Commission to ensure the lines drawn in 2021 are fair.

Tame the Gerrymander – We'll be continuing our fights for fair maps and ending gerrymandering, supporting effort to establish an independent commission to draw both congressional and legislative district lines as well as the Fair Maps Act which would require Congressional district lines to meet the same standards as legislative districts – to be compact, contiguous, and respect county and municipal lines. We aim to ensure the maps are drawn in a transparent process, with ample public hearings and opportunity for comment and without regard to party affiliation or incumbent residency.

Transparency and Accountability

Open and transparent government is critical for an accountable democracy. We continue in our role as a watch dog and resource on the issue.

Enhance the Public Information Act – Access to government data is a fundamental pillar of an effective democracy. We'll be working with our Maryland Open Government coalition to expand the Compliance Board's jurisdiction, shorten overall response time, make mediation a requirement, require self-reporting from agencies, and more.

