

# News Release

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## Comptroller Pledges Support for Special Elections Legislation

*Senate Bill 10 would have voters pick replacement  
legislators when vacancies occur prior to midterm  
elections*

**ANNAPOLIS, Md. (January 22, 2020)** - Comptroller Peter Franchot today offered his support for bipartisan legislation that aims to alter how vacant seats in the General Assembly are filled.

In testimony submitted to the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee in advance of Wednesday's hearing on Senate Bill 10, Comptroller Franchot said it is a step in the right direction to give voters more of a say in choosing legislators who represent them in Annapolis.

"Each and every one of these vacancies must be filled by a special election to restore the fundamental principles of democracy and inspire trust and confidence among Maryland voters, at a time when so many of our fellow Marylanders have lost faith in their government," he wrote.

The Comptroller expressed his dismay that recent vacancies have either partially or wholly shut voters out of participating or even witnessing the selection process.

"Central committees often quite literally take votes in back rooms, hidden away from the public, with a selection and vetting process that lacks transparency and accountability," he wrote. "Most recently, an aspiring delegate was chosen with a plurality of three total votes to represent a district that is home to over 117,000 Marylanders."

Senate Bill 10 is sponsored by Senator Clarence Lam, a Democrat representing Howard and Baltimore counties, and Senator Michael Hough, a Republican who represents Frederick and Carroll counties. The proposal would essentially require any lawmaker selected to fill a vacancy in the first half of a term to stand for

election on the presidential primary and general election ballot.

"As each of you know, the delegates and senators who comprise the Maryland General Assembly do not work for their local central committees. Nor do they work for the Democratic or Republican parties," wrote Franchot. "They work for the taxpayers who pay their salaries and expenses, and that's who should - and must - have the sole privilege of choosing legislators who make consequential decisions on their behalf."

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