

## SAY "NO" TO LIMITING OUR FRANCHISE

There are two proposed amendments to the Talbot County Charter that will appear on the November ballot. Both limit the franchise of Talbot County voters. Consistent with the belief that "the best government is that which governs least," The Republican Central Committee of Talbot County (RCCTC) opposes both proposed amendments to the Charter.

**Question A:** Vacancies in the County Council (Resolution #149 to amend Section 805). The proposed amendment would give authority to the Governor of Maryland to make the appointment of a new Council member if the Council fails to fill a vacancy within the time prescribed by the Charter. The current Charter requires the County Council to fill any vacancies within 30 days by appointing a new member from a list of three names submitted by the Central Committee of the party to which the former Council member belonged. The Council failed in its responsibility to fill the most recent vacancy within the terms of the Charter; that is why there is a proposed amendment. Whether one supports allowing the Central Committee of the party to which the former member belonged to make the appointment or whether one supports a special election which could be accomplished through mailed ballots if the Council fails to fill the vacancy in 30 days is not the issue on the ballot; the issue is whether local citizens maintain local control of local political decisions.

**Question B:** County Council Salary Standard Commission ( Section 207 of Charter). Why do local citizens need a County Council-appointed commission to set the salaries of County Council members? Currently, the salaries of County Council members are determined by a charter amendment that appears on the ballot and is decided by popular vote. As the County Council members are the elected officials of the County and serve at the pleasure of the electorate, it seems appropriate that their salaries be determined by the electorate. The proposed amendment authorizes establishing a Salary Standard Commission which would make recommendations to the sitting County Council for salary increases that would affect the next Council; however, since many of the current members could serve on the succeeding council, the proposed amendment has a built-in conflict of interest. The obvious question is why have a County Council-appointed, 7-member committee recommend salary increases for the County Council. The County Charter sets minimum salaries for Council members and its president; compensation above that base amount should reflect the satisfaction of the voters with the job their elected officials are doing. Awarding salary decisions to an appointed Commission diminishes the voters' stake in local government and essentially puts salary decisions in the hands of the Council.

Proposed amendments to the charter or the constitution often encroach on our freedom, but go unexamined. **We urge Talbot County voters to study these amendments and reject them.**

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