

Ballot Proposals: State and City

The Nov. 6 ballot has several hot-button issues on it ranging from collective bargaining, a nationwide hot topic this year, to an international bridge spanning from Michigan to Canada. In all, six proposals to amend the constitution will be featured for voters to decide on.

The most debated measures include:

[PROPOSAL 12-1](#): A REFERENDUM ON PUBLIC ACT 4 OF 2011 - THE EMERGENCY MANAGER LAW

Proposal 12 is an updated version of a former emergency manager law, PA 72 of 1990, which would allow emergency managers to deal with financial emergencies. Previously, elected officials were the only ones able to reject, modify or terminate contracts and collective bargaining agreements. Emergency managers would then be able to deal with financial crises faced by cities and school districts.

Currently, PA 4 is suspended awaiting a vote. A vote “yes” would reinstate PA 4, a vote “no” would keep PA 72.

[PROPOSAL 12-2](#): A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE STATE CONSTITUTION REGARDING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The proposal, if passed, would give public and private employees the constitutional right to organize and bargain collectively through labor unions. The law would protect employees that chose to exercise their right to bargain collectively from employer retaliation, according to proponents of the measure. Those on the other side of the coin say it’s a power grab by unions, and would wind up costing taxpayers more money.

A vote “yes” would allow public and private employees to bargain collectively, a vote “no” would keep worker rights as-is.

[PROPOSAL 12-3](#): A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE STATE CONSTITUTION TO ESTABLISH A STANDARD FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

This proposal would require electric companies to provide at least 25 percent of their annual sales from renewable energy sources like wind and solar power by 2025. Proponents of the measure say the current 10 percent by 2015 isn’t enough, while opponents counter saying that 25 percent is too costly and there isn’t enough evidence it would be cost effective.

A vote “yes” would require 25 percent of energy to come from renewable resources, while a vote “no” would maintain the 10 percent by 2015 standard.

[PROPOSAL 12-6](#): A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE STATE CONSTITUTION REGARDING CONSTRUCTION OF INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND TUNNELS

Proposal 6 would require statewide voter approval before construction of any international bridge or tunnel. Those in favor of the measure say that a proposed bridge to Canada could end up with taxpayers footing the bill, and that the project isn't economically viable or necessary. Meanwhile, opponents say that the amendment is self-serving as it's funded by the owner of the existing Ambassador Bridge, and a second bridge would increase trade and jobs.

A vote "yes" would require the approval of voters for any new international bridge or tunnel; a vote "no" would leave the decision up to state government, as it currently is.

The City of Grand Rapids Proposal 1 - Please refer to City Comptroller Donijo DeJonge's article in our latest newsletter on page 2.

The City of Grand Rapids Proposal 2 is also creating controversy. Proposal 2 seeks to "decriminalize" marijuana, and would make marijuana possession, up to a certain amount, a ticketed offense rather than a misdemeanor carrying jail time. Proponents argue that too many resources, including officers and funds, are spent on dealing with non-violent offenders.

Opponents say that it would make it easier to abuse marijuana, and increase illegal drug trade.

A vote "yes" is a vote to decriminalize the drug; a vote "no" is a vote to keep possession a misdemeanor offense.

Several organizations have put together guides to help voters make informed decisions about the issues presented. The [League of Women Voters of Michigan](#), [Mlive](#), and the [Citizens Research Council](#) have put comprehensive guides for individual ballot issues.

For general Michigan voter information, and to see if [you're registered to vote](#), check out the [Secretary of State website](#). To see where your polling location is, Grand Rapids has put together a [map of precincts and polling places](#).