



Legislation Text

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City Election Commission Policy Agenda Recommendations for the 2022 Fiscal Year
The City Council Legislative Policy Agenda is a document that serves as statement of values for the City of Ann Arbor and provides policy guidance for City leaders and elected officials when engaging with state and federal policy makers. The Council Policy Agenda Committee drafts the agenda from suggestions from Council Members, Boards and Commissions, and staff and is provided to City Council for its adoption.

The Policy Agenda for the current year included three election related items:

- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would allow voters to receive absentee ballots for an entire calendar year with a single application.
- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would remove the current requirement to issue challenged ballots to electors registering in-person with the City Clerk during the fourteen-day period before an election who are not in possession of a Michigan Driver's License or Personal Identification Card with their current address.
- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would allow Absent Voter Count Boards to begin the tabulation of absentee ballots prior to Election Day.

In 2020, the City Clerk filed an affidavit in support of *Promote the Vote v. Benson* regarding the challenged ballot law. This unnecessarily burdensome requirement for new voters registering in the last 14-days mostly affects students at the University of Michigan. The lawsuit was unsuccessful in 2020 and the requirement added an additional procedural step to nearly all ballots issued at the University of Michigan Museum of Art in the last two weeks leading up to the November 3 General Election. The Clerk's Office recommends continued support of the removal of this requirement from Michigan Election law, at least during the period of 14 days to 2 days before each election, during which time all new registrations are entered in the Qualified Voter File.

A temporary change to Michigan Election law allowed for "pre-processing" of absentee ballots on the Monday prior to the November 3, 2020 General Election. This change was a "one-time" allowance in the law. The Clerk's Office recommends continued support for any changes that allow more time to process absentee ballots.

A number of legislative changes are supported by the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks that would improve efficiencies for local clerks, reduce costs, and benefit voters. The City Clerk's Office has included several of these initiatives as well for consideration, including the advocacy for a single application for absentee ballot each calendar year. This change would simplify the process of mailing ballots both for the voter and the Clerk's Office. Finally, the elimination of paper voter files would greatly improve office efficiency and aligns with the City's sustainability goals.

Whereas, The Election Commission desires to provide policy guidance for City leaders and elected officials when engaging with state and federal policy makers on election Issues;

Whereas, Voters adopted a measure amending Section 4 of Article II of the Michigan Constitution, adding several provisions pertaining to voting rights including, allowing for same-day registration and adopting “no reason” absentee balloting; and

Whereas, Michigan Election Law currently places restrictions on Michigan voters exercising their constitutional rights;

RESOLVED, That the Election Commission recommends the following additions to the City Council Policy Agenda to improve voter enfranchisement:

- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would remove the current requirement to issue challenged ballots to electors registering in-person with the City Clerk during the fourteen-day period before an election who are not in possession of a Michigan Driver’s License or Personal Identification Card with their current address.
- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would allow Absent Voter Count Boards to begin the tabulation of absentee ballots prior to Election Day.
- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would allow voters to receive absentee ballots for an entire calendar year with a single application.
- Advocate for and support changes to Michigan Election Law that would allow for the elimination of the mandatory requirements to maintain paper Master Cards, allowing for the maintenance of these Master Cards to be at the Clerk’s discretion.