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Voting Rights Groups: Voter Bill of Rights Includes Needed Reforms
Proposed Constitutional Amendment would modernize Michigan elections—ensuring every voter who takes the responsibility to vote has their voice heard and vote counted on Election Day

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MICHIGAN— Today, voting rights groups and community leaders applauded the re-introduction of the Voter Bill of Rights, a proposal that protects Michigan citizen's fundamental right to vote. The proposed constitutional amendment comes on the heels of the introduction of a myriad of bills aimed at limiting participation of eligible voters and putting up unnecessary obstacles to voting in the 2016 legislative session.

"Government is supposed to be of, for, and by the people, but current rules prevent many Michiganders from fully participating in our democracy," **said Aamina Ahmed, executive director for APIA Vote - Michigan**. "It's time for Michigan to act and protect our most fundamental right to vote. We must remove the barriers that prevent many Michiganders from making their voices heard in our government."

Once a leader in expanding voter participation and access, Michigan has fallen behind other states—receiving an 'F' grade in the 2015 Health of State Democracies Report for failing to pass meaningful voter modernizations. Michigan has is behind 37 other states that have expanded absentee or early vote opportunities and 22 other states that allow a voter's registration to move with them when they change their address.

"This proposal is about protecting our right to have a voice in this great democracy–it's about making our elections more secure and ensuring every eligible vote is counted, regardless of party," said **Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum**. "When people take the time and responsibility to exercise their right to vote, we need to guarantee that their votes are counted and voices are heard."

The proposal will amend the state constitution to provide Michigan citizens with these rights:

- To vote a secret ballot
- For absent military and overseas voters to have a ballot sent to them at least 45 days before an election
- For registered voters to remain registered and eligible to vote wherever they move in the state
- To automatically register to vote whenever conducting business with the Secretary of State
- To register to vote up to 15 days before an election
- To vote an absentee ballot in-person during the 15 days prior to an election
- To vote an absentee ballot without giving a reason

"Local clerks across our state have called for the passage of many of these modernizations to increase participation," **said America Votes Michigan Director Patrick Schuh**. "This proposal creates strong rules to ensure that we the people have all our voices heard on Election Day, and we believe now is the time for our state legislature to take real action to protect our vote."

Over the coming months, grassroots leaders and activists plan to urge legislative approval of the proposal and will be reaching out to constituents across the state, calling for the need to protect our vote. Once approved, Michigan voters would have the opportunity to vote on the proposed amendment.

"For nearly 15 years, all the economic gains in Michigan have gone to the wealthy, while key issues like wages, jobs, and fixing our schools are being ignored because they're not a priority of wealthy special interests who fund campaigns and control the political process," **said Denzel McCampbell, deputy communications director for Engage Michigan.** "We have to put power back in the hands of ordinary Michiganders if we ever want to see real action on issues important to us."

The following organizations support the measures outlined in the Voter Bill of Rights:

- ACLU of Michigan
- America Votes
- APIA Vote - Michigan
- Campaign to TAKE ON HATE
- Engage Michigan
- Fair Elections Legal Network
- League of Women Voters of Michigan
- Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan
- Sierra Club Michigan Chapter

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