

# MICHIGAN NEEDS ITS OWN VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Despite recent progress on voting rights, voters of color, voters with disabilities, and those whose first language is not English, still face unequal barriers to the ballot box in Michigan. As several states move backwards with severe voting restrictions and Congress lacks the will to restore the federal Voting Rights Act after the Supreme Court gutted a key component, Michigan needs to do everything it can to ensure that the voices of all citizens are heard. By enacting the Michigan Voting Rights Act (MIVRA or Senate Bills 401, 402, 403, and 404), Michigan can build on recent successes in reducing barriers to voting, meeting critical local needs while joining the growing list of states moving forward to protect the fundamental right to vote.

## Michigan Voters Still Face Persistent Barriers to the Ballot

There are still discriminatory barriers to equal participation in Michigan's democracy for voters of color, disabled voters, and people whose first language is not English. Prior to the Supreme Court's 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* ruling, certain Michigan local governments were required to get pre-approval of voting changes under the federal Voting Rights Act based on evidence of historical racial discrimination in voting — and unfortunately, similar challenges remain today.

One sign that barriers remain comes from statistics on who votes. For example, in the 2020 election, 68.2% of eligible white Michiganders voted, but turnout was 4 points lower for Black voters (63.8%), 13 points lower for Latino voters (54.7%), and 23 points lower for Asian voters (45.1%).

Language access is another area where progress is needed. For example, despite Michigan's significant population of Arabic speakers, no state or federal law currently requires officials to provide voting information to Arabic speakers who are not comfortable speaking English. And at-large elections (where every candidate runs city- or township-wide so even a small majority of likeminded voters can select all the winning officeholders) are widespread, despite the discriminatory result they create when voting is regularly split along racial lines. In addition, a recent audit of metro Detroit polling places conducted by Detroit Disability Power and the Carter Center found that while 25% of Michigan residents have a disability, 84% of polling places in Metro Detroit were not fully accessible.

## The MIVRA Will Protect Voters of Color and Voters with Disabilities and Strengthen Michigan's Democracy

It's time for Michigan to set a new standard for protecting the right to vote. **The MIVRA will do just that by:**

Providing new legal tools to fight discriminatory voting rules in court.

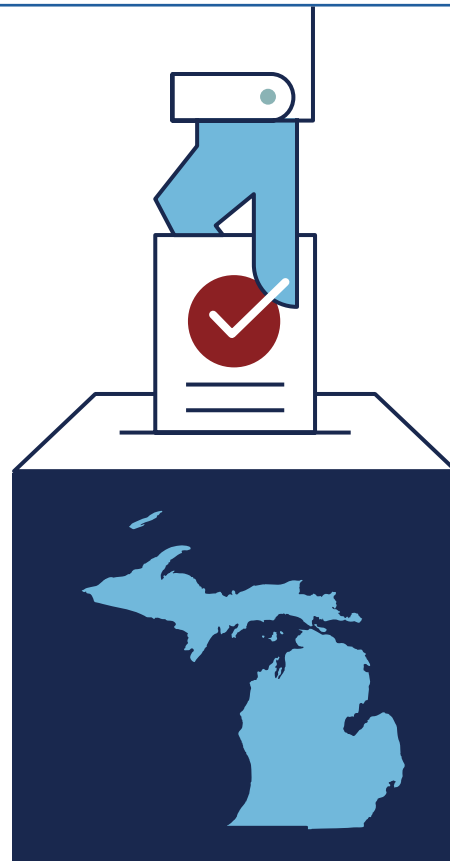
Expanding language assistance for voters with limited English proficiency.

Ensuring advance public notice of key voting changes, enabling voters to take action.

Providing important protections and assistance for voters with disabilities.

Establishing a central hub for election information to increase transparency and promote best practices.

Allowing courts to require places where the court has found voting discrimination to prove that subsequent voting changes will not harm protected voters before they will go into effect.



The MIVRA will strengthen Michigan's democracy and cement Michigan's status as a national leader protecting the fundamental right to vote.

## The MIVRA Will Cement Michigan's Status as A National Leader

If passed, the MIVRA will be one of the most comprehensive state-level voting rights acts in the country, building on successful laws already on the books in Virginia, New York, Connecticut, California, Washington, and Oregon.