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## **Michigan political reformers urge continuous improvement of state's election system**

*State must adapt to evolving electoral challenges*

LANSING – Michigan political reform advocates today commended a new comprehensive study that both praised and warned of potential problems in Michigan's election system. The study said that although Michigan has a history of being a leader in important election administration initiatives, such as 'motor-voter' registration and a statewide voter registration file, there are opportunities to further improve the overall system that will result in increased public confidence in the election process.

The study, by researchers at The Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law, studied the election systems of five large midwestern states. Their findings placed Michigan's system squarely in the middle, labeling it both "stable" and "vulnerable." In contrast, Ohio was dubbed a "poster child for reform" and Illinois was found to be "mismanaged" and rife with "political influence." Wisconsin ranked slightly above Michigan. Minnesota's election system was hailed as "exemplary" and a "model."

"Certainly, we're glad we haven't had the type of problems that have plagued Ohio in the recent past," said Patricia Donath of the League of Women Voters of Michigan. "However, we shouldn't feel satisfied with the status quo. We should commit to continuous improvement and strive to be the best."

"There is a lot of material to consider in this report," said Rich Robinson of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network. "For example, the assessment of the tradeoffs between early in-person voting and expanded absentee voting is particularly timely. The House Ethics and Elections Committee is engaged in bipartisan deliberation on that issue as we speak."

The report's principal recommendations for Michigan were:

- Update the Qualified Voter File, which contains a large number of inactive or invalid entries;
- Enhance the chief election officer's ability to ensure consistency among the local jurisdictions that administer elections; and,
- Improve poll worker recruitment and training.

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Reform advocates also stressed the importance of studying the best practices being implemented in the other four states examined in the study.

“There is plenty to be gained from looking at best practices in neighboring states,” said John Chamberlin, chairman of Common Cause Michigan. “Minnesota has limited Election Day auditing that assures the accuracy of vote tabulators. Ohio has a system of ballot order rotation so candidates don’t win just because they’re the first name listed for an office. Wisconsin and Minnesota have Election Day Registration that boosts voter turnout without any evidence of fraud. Why don’t we do those things?”

The full OSU study, *From Registration to Recounts: The Election Ecosystems of Five Midwestern States*, is available online at **[www.electionlaw.osu.edu](http://www.electionlaw.osu.edu)**.

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