

TRANSPARENT AND FAIR:



Funding Standards are Needed to Run our Elections

The Michigan Legislature must provide funding to local clerks through consistent standards to effectively serve voters.

BACKGROUND

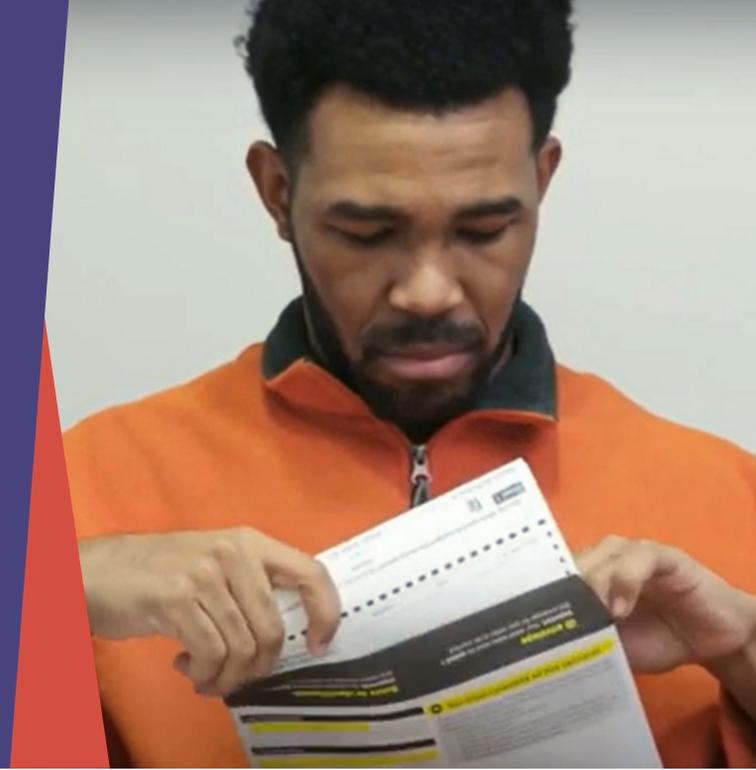
Public funding for elections is scarce, and doesn't meet voters' basic requirements. Private money is filling the gap. The 2020 election came with record absentee voting, historic statewide voter turnout, and unique challenges. What it didn't come with was a proportionate increase in state funding to offset necessary costs. **Instead, many states and communities relied heavily on private funding to cover basic needs, including pay for poll workers and sorting machine costs.** In Michigan, millions of dollars were directed to 474 local clerks' offices to help them operate elections. Many Michigan municipalities received more funding from private sources than from the government. But backfilling shortfalls with private dollars to meet public needs is not an efficient or sustainable way to run elections.

Michigan's election funding has not been updated since Proposal 3 became law, which guaranteed voters the right to no-excuse absentee voting. Yet, state funding has lagged behind clerks' modern responsibilities. Elections should be run by the government, and local officials should not have to rely on private sources simply to comply with requirements of the state constitution or basic public health.

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PROPOSAL

Michigan clerks and voters need a consistent and fair level of funding from the state legislature to fund election administration activities. Such funding should ensure that our elections are effectively run and that there is equitable access to the ballot.



WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING BASIC EQUIPMENT AND NEEDS RECEIVE FUNDING FROM THE STATE:



BALLOT DROP BOXES



HIGH SPEED SCANNERS



TESTING FOR VOTING EQUIPMENT



PREPAID RETURN POSTAGE FOR ABSENTEE BALLOT APPLICATIONS AND BALLOTS

(Supplies associated with increased voting by mail, including: envelopes, automatic letter openers, folders, pre-folded ballots, and mail related fees)



AT LEAST THREE POLL WORKERS PER PRECINCT

(Election overtime or extra compensation to election officials and employees for canvass and audit operations)

Municipal clerks simply cannot adequately prepare for expected levels of absentee voting and early voting moving forward at current funding levels:

"I don't know how we would have done [it] if it wasn't for the [Center for Tech and Civic Life] grant."

Chris Swope, Lansing City Clerk



Increased voter turnout, increased absentee voting, and increased voting options are necessary and require investment. Without the additional funding from private sources during the 2020 election cycle, the City of Lansing, for example, would have had fewer satellite polling locations, fewer drop boxes, less staff, and less technology, which would have led to significant obstacles for voters and the clerk alike.

PREVENTING PRIVATE FUNDING WITHOUT PROVIDING PUBLIC FUNDING IS AN ATTACK ON OUR ELECTIONS

While we recommend that the need for private funding be made obsolete through proper state support, the Michigan legislature must recognize that banning private funding for clerks without responsibly budgeting for election administration is an irresponsible attack on our elections. The proposal in SB 284 to ban private funding would compound problems with our elections, and pass them onto local officials without providing a life raft.

Ultimately, voters and communities will pay the price for elections not funded by the state.