

MICHIGAN AUGUST 2 PRIMARY, INITIATIVES, and OTHER NEWS

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AUGUST 2 PRIMARY

Unofficial results from the August 2 Michigan primary indicate over two million voters cast ballots, a great turnout for a mid-term primary with only one top-of-the-ticket contested race for the Republican gubernatorial candidates. In 2018 with contested primaries for both major parties, 2.2 million voters cast ballots.

Township, city, and county clerks in 1,600 jurisdictions as well as their staff members and thousands of election workers pulled off a relatively smooth election. Some jurisdictions in 65 counties slowed down election result reporting because they chose to put their results on a thumb drive and hand-deliver them to their county clerks rather than transferring the data electronically due to unproven accusations that modems were not secure.

About 1.1 million absentee ballots were returned. More than 3,000 individuals registered to vote on Election Day at their clerk's office, a new feature of Michigan's election law passed by voters in 2018.

GOP Governor's Race - In the Republican primary for Governor, there were five candidates competing for the nomination after five others were knocked out of the competition due to fraudulent petition signatures. **Tudor Dixon** from Norton Shores near Muskegon won with 40 percent of the vote. She had the megadonor DeVos family backing and an endorsement from former president Trump. She is the first woman to win the Michigan Republican Party nomination for governor. According to *Gongwer News Service*, before entering politics in 2021 Dixon was a media personality on ultra-conservative news networks that sprung up in the wake of Fox News Channel losing some of its dominance as the preferred network of Mr. Trump. Prior to that she worked in sales for her father's steel manufacturing company and then other steel companies.

She will run against incumbent Democratic **Governor Gretchen Whitmer** and whoever the minor parties nominate at their conventions this summer.

Congressional Races - Of the 13 Congressional districts in Michigan, four of them are predicted to be very competitive in the fall.

- **3rd Congressional District:** Challenger **John Gibbs** ousted freshman **U.S. Rep. Peter Meijer** for the Republican nomination in the Grand Rapids area seat covering parts of Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties. Meijer voted to impeach President Trump; Gibb worked in the Trump administration and was endorsed by the former president. He'll face **Hillary Scholten**, a former Obama administration official who narrowly lost to Meijer in 2020. Due to redistricting, this seat is more competitive now.
- **7th Congressional District:** Two-term incumbent Democrat **U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin**, former CIA officer who served three tours in Iraq and worked in both the Bush and Obama

administrations, moved to the Lansing area to keep most of her former district after redistricting. She will face veteran and **State Sen. Tom Barrett**, R-Charlotte, to represent a very purple district. Democrats and Republicans will be pouring substantial resources into this race.

- **8th Congressional District:** Five-term **U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee, D-Flint**, will face **Paul Junge**, a former television anchor who unsuccessfully challenged Slotkin in 2020. Junge will rely on the heavy Trump support in some of this region to unseat Kildee in this more competitive district after redistricting.
- **10th Congressional District:** No sitting member of Congress lived in this district, covering parts of Macomb and Oakland counties. **John James of Farmington Hills (outside the district)**, businessman and veteran who lost both his 2018 and 2020 bids to oust Democrats representing Michigan in the U.S. Senate, will be running against recently retired judge and former prosecutor Democrat **Carl Marlinga of Utica**.

Other Races - In the 11th Congressional District in Oakland County, **U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens** trounced **U.S. Rep. Andy Levin** with 60 percent of the Democratic vote in a newly drawn district that included both of these incumbent members of Congress. She will face Republican **Mark Ambrose** in the general election.

In the 12th Congressional District in part of Wayne and Oakland Counties, **U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib** easily handily won her primary contest against three other Democrats with 64 percent of the vote. She will face Republican **Steven Elliott** in the general election in this heavily Democratic district.

In the 13th Congressional District race in part of Wayne County featuring nine candidates in the Democratic primary, **State Rep. Shri Thanedar** bested **State Senator Adam Hollier** and 7 others with just 28 percent of the vote. Thanedar's campaign website says he planned to contribute over \$5 million to his campaign for the primary race. He will face Republican **Martell Bivens** in this heavily Democratic district in the general election.

As a result of the primary wins in the 12th and 13th districts, it is unlikely that Michigan will have an African-American member of Congress from Detroit for the first time in 70 years.

Incumbents Fell - Six incumbent State legislators lost their primaries out of the 44 Republicans and 43 Democrats running for re-election, the *most in at least a dozen years*. *Capturing attention was the impressive win of Kimberly Edwards in the new 12th State House district* covering parts of Macomb and Wayne counties, crossing Eight Mile and extending south into Detroit. She spent *less than \$1,000* and had no major endorsements but was able to beat incumbent **State Rep. Richard Steenland**, a former Roseville city clerk.

In addition to Steenland, **State Sens. Marshall Bullock**, D-Detroit, and **Kim LaSata**, R-Niles, and **Reps. Terence Mekoski**, R-Shelby Township, **Gary Eisen**, R-St. Clair Township, and **Rodney Wakeman**, R-Saginaw Township, lost their primaries. Bullock was drawn into the same district as fellow state **State Sen. Mallory McMorrow**, who won the race by double digits. Eisen faced a similar situation, losing to fellow **State Rep. Andrew Beeler**, R-Port Huron.

Local Ballot Issues - State primary elections are popular for local governments to run ballot issues. There were 760 local ballot proposals statewide on the August 2 ballot: 709 Passed, 50 Failed for a 93.4 percent pass rate. The biggest ballot issue was Public Safety Millage Renewals: 165 Proposals and all of them passed. The next biggest issue on local ballots was **Public Safety Millage Increases**: 120 Proposals with 118 of them passing. The third most frequent topic was **Road Millage Renewals**: 102 Proposals with all but one passing.

Capturing international attention was the vote in Jamestown to turn down a library renewal millage over the refusal of the library to remove books dealing with LGBT issues. The library may close as a result.

Of Note - Six openly LGBTQ candidates, all Democrats, will be on the ballot for the Michigan House, including **Mike McFall, Jason Morgan, Noah Arbit, Jason Hoskins, Emily Dievendorf,** and **State Rep. Laurie Pohutsky**. Currently there are three openly LGBTQ State legislators.

State House candidates backed by former President Donald Trump won a few contests. Two Trump-backed winners were **Angela Rigas** of Caledonia in the 79th District and **Rachelle Smit** of Martin Township in the 43rd District. **Gina Johnsen** in the 78th District and **Neil Friske** in the 107th District were not Trump-endorsed but hold many of the same views and won the nominations there according to *MIRS* newsletter.

Black Detroit representation in the Michigan House and Senate is likely going to decline because new district lines reduced the racial gerrymandering of the past. The primary results will likely be used as evidence in the federal court case alleging Voting Rights Act violations in redistricting in southeast Michigan.

PETITION INITIATIVES UPDATE

The Secretary of State, Bureau of Elections has been working overtime to cope with the August 2 primary and several huge petition signature submissions while getting ready for the November election. The deadline for the Secretary of State to certify all candidates for State office and the 100-word statement of purpose for each statewide ballot proposal to county clerks for printing ballots is 5 p.m. September 9.

Prop 22-1 - The Michigan Legislature has certified **House Joint Resolution R** to the November ballot. It would require annual financial disclosure reports by legislators and state-wide officeholders and limit service as a legislator to 12 years instead of 14 years. The latter could be served in one or both chambers. It will be Proposal 2022-1 on the November ballot. The Term Limits Defense Fund has announced it is opposing Proposal 22-1 and has hired a campaign director.

Expected proposals - The Director of Elections announced on August 4 the challenge deadlines (August 18) for two ballot proposals submitting petitions on July 11: **Promote the Vote 2022** and **Reproductive Freedom for All**. It is expected that an August 31 Board of

State Canvasser's meeting will vote on the Director's recommendations. Then court challenges may occur. AAUW of Michigan Board supported both of these initiative petitions and actively circulated petition sheets for voter signatures.

- **Expected Prop 22-2** - According to the Director of Elections, the proposed constitutional amendment sponsored by **Promote the Vote 2022** to expand convenient and secure voting turned in 137,041 sheets containing 650,415 signatures on July 11. The necessary valid voter signatures required is 425,059. A sampling method is used to determine if there are sufficient signatures. Using the sampling method, 570 random signatures were drawn. 390 or more valid voter signatures from this sample will result in the Bureau recommending to the Board of State Canvassers that the measure should be certified for the November ballot. 356-389 signatures would result in another larger sample being drawn; 355 or fewer valid signatures would result in a recommendation to deny certification.

Reproductive Freedom For All recently announced its leadership team for the campaign to pass the ballot proposal. Amanda Sands, a former advisor for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, is their new campaign manager. She has worked on campaigns ranging from local races to statewide Senate races. Also three other appointments are Shanay Watson-Whittaker, director of strategic partnerships for Michigan Voices and a Detroit organizer, as deputy campaign manager; Darci McConnell, owner of McConnell Communications, as communication director; and Julia Rowe, political strategist and 2018 director of the Michigan Democratic Party's campaign operation, as political and organizing director.

- **Expected Prop 22-3** - According to the Director of Elections, the proposed constitutional amendment sponsored by Reproductive Freedom For All to assure constitutionally protected reproductive rights turned in a record-breaking 147,994 sheets containing 735,439 signatures on July 11. Using the aforementioned sampling method, 514 random signatures were drawn; 315 or more valid signatures from this sample will result in the Bureau recommending to the Board of State Canvassers that the measure should be certified for the ballot. 280-314 signatures would result in another larger sample being drawn; 279 or fewer valid signatures would result in a recommendation to deny certification.

Petition Financing - Given the June 24 U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing states to ban abortion, and lawsuits filed by both the Governor and Planned Parenthood of Michigan challenging the 1931 Michigan criminal abortion law, it was no surprise that the ballot committee **Reproductive Freedom for All** garnered the most funding. The group reported raising \$9.562 million, with \$8.16 million of that in the last three months. It showed another \$1.066 million in in-kind contributions. The committee has also spent most of its funds, \$7.769 million, and reported \$1.794 million cash on hand. The group also stands out for having the most donors. Though it has some big-money contributors, like the ACLU at \$2.81 million, the ACLU Fund of Michigan at \$1.596 million, and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund at \$503,043, the committee reported 16,651 contributions for the quarter.

Citizens to Support MI Women and Children, formed to oppose the issue, reported \$401,319 raised, including \$298,010 for the most recent quarter. It had another \$24,764 in in-

kind contributions, again most of that during the latest quarter. The group had spent \$334,809 and had \$66,509 cash on hand. The primary sources of funds were the Michigan Catholic Conference, at \$200,000, and Right to Life of Michigan at \$163,273. The Knights of Columbus Michigan State Council also gave \$50,000.

Promote the Vote 2022 was second in fundraising reported so far, with \$8.362 million total and \$4.996 million for the quarter. It also reported \$1.515 million in in-kind contributions, most of that, \$1.212 million, last quarter. The group has spent \$8.067 million and reported \$295,850 in cash on hand. The largest portion of the group's contributions came from the Washington, D.C.-based Sixteen Thirty Fund, which gave \$4.891 million. Lynn Schusterman of Tulsa, Oklahoma, donated \$1 million.

Other Petitions – The only legislative initiative among ten to submit petition signatures timely for potential access to the November 2022 ballot was recently found to have insufficient voter signatures. The **Payday Loan Initiative** would have capped interest on payday loans at 36 percent. Of 400,000 submitted signatures, the Bureau's sample estimated that only 274,668 were valid voters, about 72,000 signatures short.

Three voter-initiated statute petition drives affected by the fraudulent signature collectors in June recently turned in petitions seeking access to consideration by the Legislature, and failing that, the 2024 ballot.

- **One Fair Wage**, yet another voter-initiated statute to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2027 and for tipped workers by 2028, submitted 610,000 signatures to the Bureau of Elections on July 26. AAUW of Michigan Board supported this initiative petition.
- **Secure MI Vote** to tighten voter eligibility and access to absentee voting and drop boxes submitted more than 500,000 signatures to the Bureau of Elections on Friday, July 29. It could potentially be rendered moot by the time it is reviewed by the Bureau if Promote the Vote is certified to the ballot and passes. AAUW of Michigan Board opposed this initiative petition.
- **Let MI Kids Learn A and B** backed by the DeVos family that would set up a K-12 scholarship program and tax credits for donations to it turned in over 520,00 signatures on August 10. Like the Michigan Constitution, AAUW Public Policy Priorities opposes diverting public money to support private education. AAUW of Michigan Board opposed this initiative petition.

"ADOPT AND AMEND" NIXED

Recall that in the fall of the 2018 legislative session, the GOP-led Legislature adopted two voter-initiated statute petitions. One raised the minimum wage and the other required employers to provide earned paid sick leave. By passing the laws, the Legislature kept the issues off the ballot where they would have attracted Democratic and independents to vote and while there, perhaps electing more Democrats. After the November election during lame duck session, the Legislature passed laws essentially gutting both initiatives. Lawsuits ensued. The AAUW of Michigan filed an amicus brief in the case opposing the legislative action.

Recently, Court of Claims Judge Douglas Shapiro ruled it is unconstitutional for the Legislature to pass an initiated law then amend it in the same legislative session. Subsequently he ruled his order would not go into effect until February 19, 2023, but otherwise he refused to reconsider or reverse (stay) his ruling. While the State appeals the decision, both parties in the case are agreeing on asking the Court of Appeals for an expedited schedule and a final decision before February 1, 2023.

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT (MSC) GRANTS LGBT CIVIL RIGHTS

On July 28, the MSC decided that “sex” in Michigan’s civil rights statute protected those of all sexual orientations from discrimination in employment, housing, education, public accommodations, and public service. In a 5-2 decision authored by Republican appointee Justice Elizabeth Clement, the high court decided that Rouch World could not deny females Natalie Johnson and Megan Oswalt their request to host their same-sex wedding at its facility. Rouch World gave as its reason for denying the request that it would violate their sincerely held religious belief that marriage is between one man and one woman. AAUW’s Public Policy Priorities opposes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Legislation to expand Michigan’s civil rights statute to include sexual orientation and gender identity has been introduced for several decades but never passed. A voter-initiated statute in 2020 failed to collect sufficient signatures during the height of the pandemic even though it was backed by major corporations in Michigan. However, the U.S. Supreme Court is taking up a challenge to aspects of Colorado’s anti-discrimination law about whether its provisions barring discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity impinges on religious freedom with a ruling expected by the end of June 2023.

KANSAS VOTES FOR CHOICE!

Kansas was the first state to allow state voters to weigh in on reproductive rights (versus gerrymandered legislators in trifecta red states) after the *Dobbs v. Jackson’s Women’s Health Organization* decision. On July 26, Kansans voted 59 percent to 41 percent to reject a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have said there was no right to an abortion in the state. Voters in traditionally Republican and Independent areas and newly registered young voters were key to the win for choice. This year, voters in five to seven states will have abortion questions on their November ballots, and Kansas’ decision may be a harbinger of what is to come. AAUW Public Policy Priorities support the right of individual women to decide on reproductive matters.