



Michigan should clean up its voter rolls (guest commentary)

Published: Friday, December 30, 2011, 6:15 AM Updated: Friday, December 30, 2011, 12:28 PM

By Dan Krueger, Guest Writer

Next year will be a busy election year in Michigan, directed and administered at the local level by clerks who care deeply about ensuring integrity in the process and election workers who take personal pride in making sure democracy works, and every vote counts.

But as strong as our system is, as clerks we always are open to looking at our system of elections and how it may be improved. Secretary of State Ruth Johnson's Secure and Fair Elections (SAFE) Initiative does that.

As a county clerk, I support and champion efforts to make sure our state's voter rolls are as accurate as possible. According to the Pew Center for the States, past years have shown Michigan had a slightly higher number of its eligible electorate registered to vote.

Today, state voter rolls include people who have died, moved out of Michigan and aren't U.S. citizens because of state and federal regulations.

Cleaning up the voter rolls and having an accurate voter count will save local communities money through reduced postage and ballot printing costs. It also will allow clerks to consolidate precincts to save money where possible.

I also support the creation of a no-reason absentee provision allowing voters to vote absentee for any reason. To do so, they just have to follow the same photo ID rules precinct voters follow — show a photo ID or sign a brief affidavit. This would not affect elderly or disabled voters already eligible to vote absentee under present qualifications, and it would open the voting process to many who, because of work or family obligations, have difficulty making it to the polls on Election Day.

Under SAFE, the state also is asking third-party voter registration groups to sign up with the state Bureau of Elections, which will provide free training to help ensure voter registration drive workers fill out forms accurately and turn those forms in on time. Unfortunately, there have been problems where individuals believe they are registered, only to be turned away at the polls on Election Day. That shouldn't happen — ever.

We look forward to working with Secretary Johnson on improving Michigan's elections and urge legislators to seriously consider SAFE proposals that will improve our system of elections.

Dan Krueger is the Ottawa County Clerk and a member of the Michigan Association of County Clerks (MACC) Legislative Committee and the Michigan Council of Election Officials (CEO.)