



Get to Know Your Election Officials

Making sense of Michigan's election system can be a daunting prospect, but it isn't difficult once you have a basic understanding of the people who make it work.

Michigan's election system is a complex, highly decentralized system made up of 83 counties, 280 cities and 1,240 townships. To look up your local clerk's contact information, select Michigan.gov/Vote.

The secretary of state serves as Michigan's chief election officer, with the Bureau of Elections acting on the secretary's behalf. The bureau is responsible for the integrity of the state's elections by ensuring election laws are followed, training and advising 1,603 clerks, compiling election results for federal and state elections and providing instructional materials.

Next are the county election officials. Counties support the election process in a number of ways. Each county has a County Election Commission, with the chief judge of probate of the county or probate court district, the county clerk and county treasurer. The commission provides election supplies, including ballots for federal, state and county elections.

County clerks receive and certify petitions for countywide offices and ballot proposals. The county also accepts campaign finance reports from local candidates and trains precinct inspectors.

The conduct of local elections and operation of polling places is handled at the city or township level. A City or Township Election Commission determines precinct boundaries, assesses voting equipment needs, provides voting supplies and ballots for local elections. The commission is also responsible for appointing precinct inspectors.

Precinct inspectors are the workers who manage the polls on election day. They enter voters' names in the poll book, assist with questions, distribute ballots, make sure proper voting procedures are followed and help maintain the integrity of the elections process.

After you have voted in an election, the results are reviewed by the appropriate Board of Canvassers in each city, township and county. The canvassers certify election results from the jurisdiction they serve in. Similarly, a four-member Board of State Canvassers certifies the results of all statewide offices, district offices that cross county lines and statewide ballot proposals. Once all the canvassers have met, the results are considered final.

Each Board of Canvassers consists of two Republicans and two Democrats.

Voting is an important civic duty, forming the very heart of our democratic system. Gaining a better understanding of how the system works makes you a better-informed voter and citizen. Voting gives you the power to change your community, state and country for the better. Please remember to vote this year!