



May 4, 2023

The Honorable Winnie Brinks
Majority Leader of the Michigan Senate

The Honorable Joe Tate
Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives

The Honorable Jeremy Moss
Chair, Senate Committee on Elections & Ethics

The Honorable Penelope Tsernoglou
Chair, House Committee on Elections

Dear Majority Leader Brinks, Speaker Tate, Senator Moss, and Representative Tsernoglou,

We, the Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force (CSATF) of 2022-2023, are writing to provide the Michigan Legislature with legislative recommendations to improve access to voting and elections among college and university students in Michigan. The CSATF is a diverse body of college and university students from across Michigan, appointed by Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson to advise the Michigan Department of State on policies to promote and improve student voter turnout.

Students in Michigan experience unique barriers to voting, which is compounded by a lack of funding for campuses and clerk's offices to support student voter engagement and Election Day facilitation. Since the passage of same-day voter registration and no-reason absentee voting in 2018, campus communities across Michigan have experienced exorbitantly long lines at clerk offices and satellite locations in every major election. In 2020 and 2022, students reported up to 6-hour wait times in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Allendale, Dearborn, Detroit, and East Lansing. Without intervention, disenfranchisement of student voters will persist through the 2024 elections.

To improve student ballot access, the CSATF have provided the below recommendations for legislative action to empower universities, campus clerks and student voters ahead of and on Election Day. Additional details for each recommendation are included in the enclosed document.

2023 Legislative Recommendation

1. Fund campus voter-education efforts.
2. Require on-campus polling, satellite clerk office, and drop-box locations for colleges and universities with a student population of 15,000 or more.
3. Permit new Michigan residents to register to vote online without a Michigan driver's license or ID.
4. Allow the provision of free transportation to a polling location for voters (MCL 168.931 (f)).
5. Remove link between voter registration addresses from Michigan driver's license or ID addresses.
6. Allow absentee ballots that arrive up to six days after Election Day to be counted.
7. Establish Election Day as a state holiday.
8. Regulate polling place and line-management volunteers, including providing them with standard identification, as is required of election challengers and poll monitors.
9. Expand pre-registration for eligible citizens who are at least 14 years and 8 months old.
10. Permit citizens who are pre-registered voters to vote in primary elections if they will turn 18 before the general election.

As a national leader on voting rights, the Michigan Legislature has an opportunity to empower and stand up for the next generation of voters. This is critical, especially as many states, including Florida, Ohio, Indiana, and Texas are passing anti-student-voter legislation in response to increased youth-voter turnout. While other states work to diminish student voices, Michigan has an opportunity to send a message to current and prospective college students everywhere that their voices will be heard in our great state.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide our recommendations and hope that you take them into serious consideration to help ensure all Michigan citizens can fully access and exercise their right to vote.

Sincerely,

The Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force

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Michigan Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force

2023 Legislative Recommendation

Overview

The Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force recommends the following legislative priorities to the Michigan Legislature to improve student voter engagement and to remove barriers to voting. The recommendations are provided in rank order of priority. Further background and detail on each recommendation is listed below.

2023 Legislative Recommendation

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1. **Fund campus voter education efforts:** Funding would allow for state colleges and universities to provide and/or increase student voter engagement and education, including creating or expanding a student voter engagement department or committee, paying student workers, on-campus clerk resources, and providing transportation.
 - a. Many colleges and universities do not have a staff member, department, or committee devoted to running centralized, coordinated student voter engagement efforts, often due to lack of funding.
 2. **Require on-campus polling, satellite clerk office, and drop-box locations for colleges and universities with a student population of 15,000 or more:** It is recommended that the legislature require colleges and universities meeting set criteria (enrollment size, number of students on-campus or near campus) to have on-campus polling locations, satellite clerk's offices, and drop box locations, and to ensure election administrators have necessary funding for these provisions.

3. **Permit new Michigan residents to register to vote online without a Michigan driver's license or ID:** It is recommended that the legislature and Bureau of Elections establish a secure way for students attending school in Michigan who are from another state, and who do not possess a Michigan driver's license or ID, to securely register to vote online in Michigan, with the understanding this would cancel any existing voter registration out-of-state.
 - a. Currently, students who do not possess a Michigan driver's license or ID cannot register to vote online.
 - b. Approximately 40 percent of Michigan's student population are from another state. Permitting new residents without a Michigan license or ID to register to vote online early will contribute to a decrease in long same-day voter registration lines and wait-times.

4. **Allow the provision of free transportation to a polling location for voters (MCL 168.931 (f)):** Repeal the state law (MCL 168.931 (f)) that forbids hiring or providing transportation for voters. Legalize being able to offer free rides through ride sharing companies (Uber, Lyft), transportation with campus vans, or organization-led rides, etc. Municipalities that have public transportation (bus, trolley etc.) should be encouraged to provide free transportation on Election Day.
 - a. The Constitution currently states: "(f) A person shall not hire a motor vehicle or other conveyance or cause the same to be done, for conveying voters, other than voters physically unable to walk, to an election." (MCL 168.931 (f))
 - b. Transportation has been shown to be an immense barrier to students to visit their polling place or clerk's office.

5. **Remove link between voter registration addresses from Michigan driver's license or ID addresses:** It is recommended that the legislature eliminate the requirement to update a voter's driver's license or ID address when the voter registers to vote or updates their voter registration address.
 - a. Currently, a change in voter registration address automatically updates a voter's Michigan driver's license or ID address. Students describe this as an overly complicated process that causes confusion and disincentives for early registration at on-campus addresses.
 - b. Students avoid changing their driver' license address from their home address to an on-campus address due to misinformation about the impacts of this change and due to increases in car insurance rates.
 - c. By Election Day, students unable to visit their home jurisdiction to vote, or who were unable to submit an absentee ballot, must visit a local clerk's office to update their voter registration address in order to vote. This contributes to long lines at clerk's offices and satellite locations, and many students in this situation choose not to vote at all.

6. **Allow absentee ballots that arrive up to six days after Election Day to be counted:** It is recommended that the legislature extend the processing time for absentee ballots to allow the counting of ballots received by election clerks via mail within six days after Election Day.
 - a. Currently, students voting absentee using their permanent home address, particularly students attending school in the Upper Peninsula, experience mail delays that cause their ballots to arrive after Election Day.
 - b. The six-day period corresponds to the grace period allowed to military and overseas voters with the adoption of Proposal 2022-2.

7. **Establish Election Day as a state holiday:** Establish Election Day as a paid state holiday where workers are entitled to paid time off for voting. Private schools and universities should be *strongly* encouraged to also acknowledge Election Day as a state holiday by canceling classes so that students can vote in person or serve as election workers.
 - a. Currently, the State of Michigan designates Election Day for statewide elections in November as a public holiday but does not guarantee Michigan residents paid time off to vote.
 - b. Frequently, the inability to take time off to get to a polling location is found to be a primary reason why registered voters in the US do not vote on Election Day or serve as poll workers in local elections.
 - c. Election Day is designated as a paid public holiday in West Virginia, Illinois, Delaware, and New York.
 - d. Designating Election Day as a paid state holiday would allow students, faculty, and staff the time to step away from classes and work to participate in voting and elections. This action would provide all Michiganders, but especially students and young people, more opportunity to visit the polls on Election Day, increasing student and overall voter turnout. This opportunity would also allow educators and students the ability to serve as highly needed elections workers in their community.

8. **Regulate polling place and line-management volunteers, including providing them with standard identification, as is required of election challengers and poll monitors:** It is recommended that the legislature provide for an additional regulated classification of individuals that have access to the polling place (outside the voting area) for the purpose of line management and voter assistance so that this volunteer or worker must be credentialed, trained by election administrators.
 - a. Currently, there are no standard qualifications or training for volunteers to assist voters while waiting in-line at a polling place, clerk's office, or satellite location. This frequently results in volunteers providing inaccurate information to voters waiting in line which may impede a voter's ability to cast a ballot.
 - b. Currently, there is not a requirement for volunteers working on behalf of partisan organizations to identify themselves as such when assisting voters waiting in line at a polling place, clerk's office, or satellite location.
 - c. At present, there is not a prohibition against volunteers working on behalf of partisan organizations from providing partisan voting information when assisting voters waiting in a line that extends beyond 100-feet of a polling place or clerk's office.
 - d. Students and first-time voters waiting in line to vote and/or register to vote on Election Day are particularly vulnerable to accepting inaccurate or partisan voting information from volunteers due to long lines at polling places, clerk's offices, and satellite locations.
 - i. **Case Study:** On November 8, 2022, at Michigan State University's on-campus satellite clerk's office, a member of the CSATF observed a group of volunteers working the line and inaccurately telling students waiting in line who were already registered to vote in East Lansing that they could vote with an absentee ballot at the satellite clerk's office. Despite correction that, per Michigan Election Law, students already registered in East Lansing cannot be issued an absentee ballot in East Lansing on Election Day, the volunteers continued sharing the inaccurate information as well as refusing to disclose which organization had sent them.

9. **Allow pre-registration for eligible citizens who are aged 14 years and 8 months:** It is recommended that the legislature allow pre-registration and automatic voter registration during driver's permit transactions at the Secretary of State for eligible citizens aged 14 years and 8 months.
 - a. As many as 15 States and Washington, D.C., permit pre-registration beginning at age 16.

- b. In Michigan, driver's permits are issued at Secretary of State branch offices at age 14 years 8 months. Pre-registration at this age would allow automatic voter registration during a Secretary of State driver's permit transaction.
 - i. Currently, there are no Secretary of State transaction requirements or thresholds for 16-year-olds, making pre-registration at 14 years and 8 months more accessible for future voters.
- c. The Secretary of State's voter registration database already has the ability to mark young voters who are not yet 18 as "pending" until they reach legal voting age, meaning no costly system upgrades are required to accommodate pre-registration.
- d. Once registered, voters are much more likely to turn out to vote. Pre-registration will increase voter turnout for the younger demographic.

10. **Permit citizens who are pre-registered voters to vote in primary elections if they will turn 18 before the general election:** It is recommended that the legislature permit pre-registered 17-year-olds who will be 18 years of age by the general election to vote in primary elections before a general election.

- a. Currently, Michigan residents who are age 17 during the primary election and who turn 18 by the general election do not have any input in the candidate selection process.
- b. 18 states, including Ohio, Indiana, Nebraska, Kentucky, and Mississippi currently allow 17-year-olds to vote in primaries so long as they will be 18 by the general election.