



Ballot Initiative STRATEGY CENTER

Ballot Initiative Overview

2008 Election

Michigan

It is expensive to qualify and run ballot measure campaigns in Michigan, largely because of the high signature threshold, which is why typically only a handful of measures appear on the ballot each year. But Michigan's measures tend to be high in controversy, and this year is no different, with the stem cell issue, a controversial election reform measure and a measure on medicinal marijuana all on the ballot.

The political climate in Michigan these days is tough for most candidates. As a result ballot measures are often used to shape a debate about any number of issues around budget, taxes, spending, or the power of unions. With the automobile industry in crisis and the unions that represent that workforce struggling to make gains for their members, the whole state economy is affected. To spur the economy and pay for vital services, the state legislature has raised taxes in recent years, which has created fodder for a debate about spending and budget priorities. It is certainly a climate that creates openings for some difficult topics to appear on the ballot, which have been attempted through several cycles.

Despite this climate, none of the tax or spending restriction measures circulating earlier in the year ended up qualifying.

For several cycles, Michigan has had one or two ideological or politically divisive ballot questions each cycle, such as permitting assisted suicide in 1998 (approved overwhelmingly by voters), education vouchers in 2000 (defeated significantly), a ban on straight party voting (approved) as well as collective bargaining in 2002, and a ban on same sex marriage in 2004 (approved).

Overall, Michigan voters are typically skeptical of ballot issues, and if there is an argument to be made about confusion or unintended consequences, they tend to vote no.

Two measures were on the statewide ballot (both passed); both were citizen-petitioned initiatives.

1 Statutory Initiative Qualified

Proposal 08-1: Health Care

A legislative initiative to permit the use and cultivation of marijuana for specified medical conditions: The proposed law would: Permit physician approved use of marijuana by registered patients with debilitating medical conditions including cancer, glaucoma, HIV, AIDS, hepatitis C, MS and other conditions as may be approved by the Department of Community Health. Permit registered individuals to grow limited amounts of marijuana for qualifying patients in an enclosed, locked facility. Require Department of Community Health to establish an identification card system for patients qualified to use marijuana and individuals qualified to grow marijuana. Permit registered and unregistered patients and primary caregivers to assert medical reasons for using marijuana as a defense to any prosecution involving marijuana.

Proponents: Michigan Coalition for Compassionate Care, <http://stoparrestingpatients.org/>

Opponents: Citizens Protecting Michigan Kids

PASSED 63% - 37%

1 Constitutional Amendment Qualified

Proposal 08-2: Health Care

A proposal to amend the state constitution to address human embryonic stem cell research in Michigan:

The proposed constitutional amendment would: Expand use of human embryos for any research permitted under federal law subject to the following limits: the embryos are created for fertility treatment purposes; are not suitable for implantation or are in excess of clinical needs; would be discarded unless used for research; were donated by the person seeking fertility treatment. Provide that stem cells cannot be taken from human embryos more than 14 days after cell division begins. Prohibit any person from selling or purchasing human embryos for stem cell research. Prohibit state and local laws that prevent, restrict or discourage stem cell research, future therapies and cures.

Proponents: Stem Cell Research Ballot Question Committee, <http://www.curemichigan.com>

Opponents: Michigan Citizens Against Unrestricted Science and Experimentation, <http://www.micause.com/>

PASSED 53% - 47%

For additional information please check with the Michigan Secretary of State:

<http://www.michigan.gov/sos>