



Election Law Updates and How They May Affect Your Local Government

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Several changes to Michigan election-related laws at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 may affect how municipalities administer and communicate information.

Governor Snyder recently signed Senate Proposed Bill, SB 13 (268 PA 2015), amending the Michigan Election Law to eliminate straight-ticket and split-ticket voting. Under the new provisions, voters may still vote for candidates all in one party, but will no longer have the option to check a box automatically voting for all of a party's candidates. Voters will need to fill in a separate box for each candidate they wish to vote for. These changes may make it more difficult and time-consuming for some voters, resulting in longer lines at the polls. Local clerks should anticipate these potential delays and plan accordingly in the coming elections.

Also, HB 4904 (197 PA 2015), approved by Governor Snyder at the end of November, changed the classification of the state presidential primary from a "special" election to a "regular" election. Under existing law, the only local proposals that could appear on a presidential primary ballot were school-related issues. Now, with the presidential primary being classified as a "regular" election, municipalities may add their issues and candidate races to the ballot. This allows local governments more flexibility in holding elections on local issues, particularly during presidential years. Michigan's 2016 presidential primary occurs on March 8.

If you have any questions regarding these new laws, please contact a Foster Swift municipal attorney.

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