



michigan municipal league

Better Communities.
Better Michigan.

™ 208 N. Capitol Ave.,
1st Floor
Lansing, MI 48933

TEL 517.485.1314
FAX 517.372.7476

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Governor Rick Snyder
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Snyder,

I am writing you today on behalf of the more than 520 city, village and township members of the Michigan Municipal League to express our opposition to the new provision added to Section 57 contained within Senate Bill 571 and urge your veto.

This bill was transformed within minutes from a 12-page piece of legislation that had no impact on local units of government to a 53-page, multi-topic piece of legislation that will have grave legal and practical implications for every public body in Michigan.

Current language in the Michigan Campaign Finance Act already prohibits a public body from using public resources to advocate for or against any ballot measure. Communities across Michigan for the past 20 years have relied upon guidance and rulings from the Bureau of Elections on this exact issue. The alleged concerns from the proponents of this measure will undermine that guidance causing unnecessary confusion and reducing access to critical, objective information on which voters rely.

When given an opportunity to analyze the language adopted to Section 57 in SB 571, a number of critical legal concerns are immediately apparent.

- Existing law identifies certain activities that do not constitute an illegal contribution, including an allowance for "The expression of views by an elected or appointed public official ..." This same acknowledgement is not accounted for in the new language, resulting in free speech concerns.
- The new language bans the use of public resources to communicate by radio and television, questioning any public access audio or video production broadcast. Such programming includes coverage of city council meetings, video communication from a mayor, or even the broadcast of a voter forum or debate.
- New terms are also being introduced in this proposal that are undefined within the act and will lead to needless confusion and litigation.
- The language creates an inconsistency between how information can be shared on state ballot questions as opposed to local ballot questions.

There are many educational communications allowed under existing law that are extremely relevant in the time period near an election to ensure that voters are informed on the decision before them. Residents across the state rely on communication tools like the newsletters sent out by Mount Pleasant and the video forums produced by the mayors of Warren and Grand Rapids to understand the critical issues facing their communities.

The Michigan Municipal League urges you to consider these grave concerns as you review Senate Bill 571 and reject the proposed language within Section 57 as unnecessary, overly broad, and legally suspect.

Respectfully,

Dan Gilmartin
Executive Director & CEO