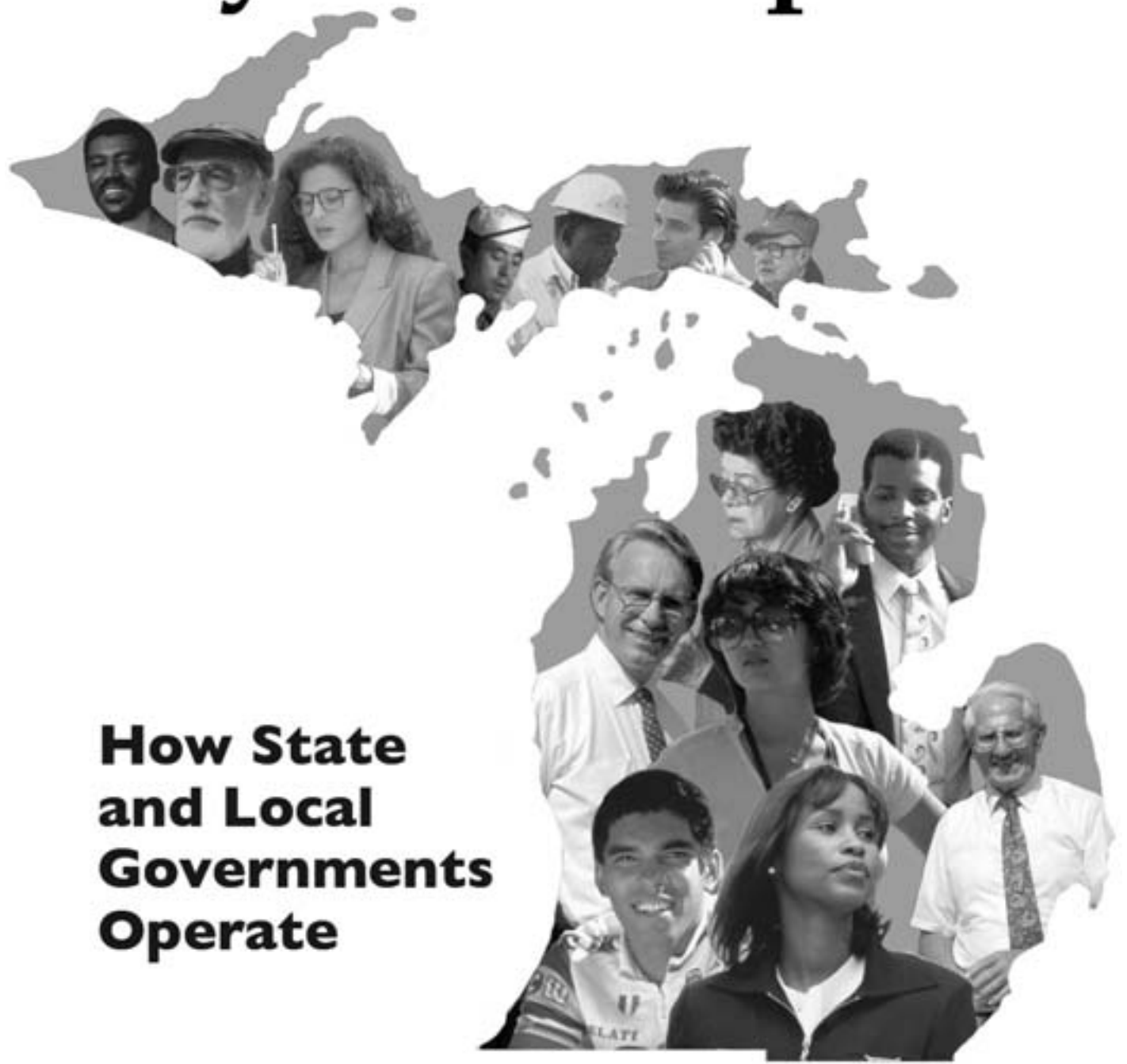


For The People... By The People...

**How State
and Local
Governments
Operate**



There is a basic underlying premise that in order for a government to function at its best, citizen participation is essential.

Often, the public voice is silent because government, at all levels, seems complex and too far removed to be accessible. Perhaps some basic information is missing, such as not knowing who to contact or which segment of government oversees a particular area.

This booklet makes the understanding of both state and local governments much easier. There is a brief description of each branch of our state government (legislative, executive, and judicial) and a brief explanation of how each branch operates. There is also an explanation of how a bill becomes a law and a glossary of common legislative terms.

Another section of this booklet offers advice on how to contact your state legislator and gives you hints on how to make your input stand out from the ordinary. These same rules can be applied when contacting any government official.

The section on local government gives a description of local financing and explains the functions of county, city, township, and village government. It also discusses special districts and authorities and school districts in order to provide a simpler explanation of these operations. A special section has been provided in the back of the booklet so that you may record the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your own U.S., state, and local government officials.

It is hoped that you will find this booklet useful and that it will inspire you to become involved in your local and state government operations. Your elected representatives welcome your input—the concept of democracy and the practice of good government rely on it.

FOR THE PEOPLE ... BY THE PEOPLE ...

How State and Local Governments Operate



Prepared by the Michigan Legislature

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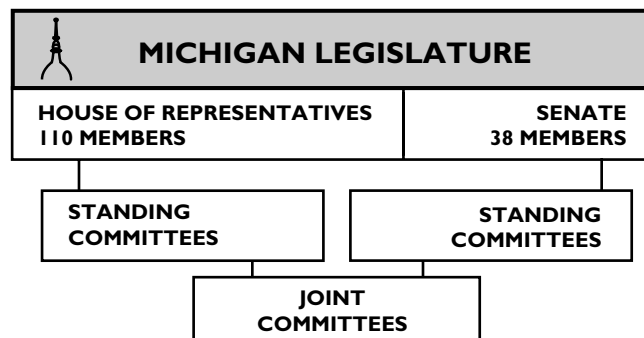
STATE GOVERNMENT

For far too many people, state government is a complex network of agencies and offices with seemingly little interaction and organization. It is, therefore, helpful for all of us to be aware of the interrelationship of the various elements of state government in order to understand the process of government, to learn how to contribute to its operation, and to utilize its functions properly. Seeing the “big picture” can eliminate much of the uncertainty we may feel when confronted with an issue or a problem.

To assist in grasping the overall organization of Michigan state government, we have assembled this description of the principal units of each of the three branches of government. This division of government into executive, judicial, and legislative branches mirrors the federal government’s organization. The concept of three distinct co-equal elements of government, adopted in Article III, Section 2 of the *Constitution of the State of Michigan of 1963*, is designed to provide for the separation of powers which is so vital to our system of self-rule. By dividing the vast power of government into three co-equal and independent responsibilities, each branch of government can serve as a check on the other two, preventing any one branch from undermining the freedoms of the public. In looking at the functions and responsibilities of the units of the three branches, one can appreciate, in a broad sense, how this system of checks and balances is put into effect.

We hope this information will assist you in your dealings with and understanding of state government. Although this section is not intended to present a comprehensive account of all of the functions of state government, it can help you to better understand the offices and agencies through which the people of Michigan govern themselves.

THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH ORGANIZATION CHART



The legislative (law-making) power of the State of Michigan is vested in a bicameral (two-chamber) body comprised of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The Senate is made up of 38 members elected by the qualified electors of each senatorial district. Senators are elected at the same time as the Governor and serve four-year terms. The House of Representatives consists of 110 members elected by

the qualified electors of representative districts. Representatives are elected in even-numbered years to serve two-year terms. Terms for Senators and Representatives begin on the first day of January following the November general election. Legislative districts are drawn on the basis of population figures obtained through the federal ten-year census. This is to insure that each person's vote is weighed as much as anyone else's. At the November 1992 general election, Michigan voters approved a constitutional amendment barring persons from election to the House more than three times and to the Senate more than two times. The term limits apply to terms of office beginning on or after January 1, 1993.

The Legislature enacts the laws of Michigan; levies taxes and appropriates funds from money collected for the support of public institutions and the administration of the affairs of state government; proposes amendments to the State Constitution, which must be approved by a majority vote of the electors; and can exercise a number of options when presented with legislation proposed by initiatory petitions, including adopting it or offering the voters an alternative. The Legislature exercises legislative oversight over the executive branch of government through work on the administrative rules and audit processes, committees, and the budget; advises and consents, through the Senate, on certain gubernatorial appointments; and considers proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States. The majority of the Legislature's work, however, involves lawmaking. The Legislature considers thousands of bills (proposed laws) each two-year session through a process defined by the State Constitution, as well as by statutes and legislative rules.

THE LEGISLATOR'S JOB

Once elected, what are the responsibilities, official functions, and powers of state legislators? In 1966, Senate Resolution 135 authorized, with the Governor's participation, the appointment of a Special Commission on Legislative Compensation. This commission analyzed the responsibilities of a legislator. The following is a summary of many of those responsibilities:

- Prepares and legislates for a program derived from a variety of sources, including the district, the committees on which he or she serves, his or her political party, friends, and interest groups.
- Conceives the need for new legislation through study of the problems of the district and the state. Initiates research through the staff and committees and requests preparation of bills and amendments.
- Develops support for proposals and lends support or opposes programs of other legislators following a thorough personal review.
- Studies the daily calendar, journals, and bill status to keep informed on bills scheduled for hearings and floor action.
- Attends sessions, takes part in debates, and votes on business before the chamber.

- Attends committee meetings and hearings throughout the state to become informed on the details of proposals, the arguments for and against them, and to vote on their submission to the entire Legislature.
- Exercises legislative oversight over the administrative branch of government and the annual state budget through committee hearings, personal contacts, review of reports, and investigation of complaints.
- Replies to correspondence and telephone calls from constituents and supervises the work of a secretary and other staff.



- Keeps constituents informed on the progress of legislation and his or her position on specific bills and, in turn, keeps informed on the opinions of constituents, political parties, and interest groups.
- Acts as liaison between the district and state and federal agencies, providing personal assistance to constituents in handling their problems.
- Assumes an active role in the district by serving on local committees and attending and speaking to civic organizations which are interested in legislation.
- Plays an active role in his or her political party by attending and participating in party caucuses, meetings of a specialized nature, and in general conventions.
- Takes part in ceremonial local and state functions.
- May maintain an office within the district.

OFFICERS OF THE MICHIGAN SENATE



Lieutenant Governor—President of the Senate, presiding officer; votes only when Senators are equally divided in vote. Not elected to the Senate.

President Pro Tempore—Presiding officer in absence of the Lieutenant Governor. Assistant and Associate President Pro Tempore positions have also been created.

Secretary of the Senate—The parliamentarian; keeps records and supervises support staff. Not a member of the Senate.

Majority Leader—Elected by majority caucus. Appoints committees, assigns duties to Senate employees, and establishes guidelines for the financial management of Senate offices. The Assistant Majority Leader helps with these duties.

Minority Leader—Elected by minority caucus and serves as minority party leader. The Assistant Minority Leader works with this officer.

Majority Floor Leader—Directs activities on the floor of the Senate. There is one Assistant Majority Floor Leader.

Minority Floor Leader—Directs activities of minority party on the floor of the Senate. There is also one Assistant Minority Floor Leader.

Caucus Chairs—Direct the party caucus meetings. There are also Assistant Caucus Chairs.

Caucus Whips—Assist party leaders with caucus functions.

OFFICERS OF THE MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Speaker of the House—The presiding officer; appoints committees, selects employees, presides during session, and handles administrative functions. The Speaker is elected by a majority of the members voting.

Speaker Pro Tempore—Performs duties of the Speaker in the Speaker's absence. The Associate Speakers Pro Tempore assist with the responsibilities of the Speaker. These officers are elected by a majority of the members voting.

Clerk of the House—Not a member of the House of Representatives; assists in conducting session, records votes, and serves as parliamentarian. Also handles some administrative functions.

Minority Leader—Elected by the minority caucus. There is also an Assistant Minority Leader.

Majority Floor Leader—Directs activities on the floor of the House. There are also two Assistant Majority Floor Leaders.

Minority Floor Leader—Directs activities of the minority party on the floor of the House. There is also an Assistant Minority Floor Leader.

Caucus Chairs—Direct the party caucus meetings with other house members of the same party.

Caucus Whips—Assist party leaders with caucus functions.

Caucus Secretaries—Assist party leaders during a caucus meeting.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

About the Michigan Legislature

Constitutionally, regular sessions of the Legislature begin at 12:00 noon on the second Wednesday in January of each year. Legislative sessions are held year-round except for recesses that are scheduled during certain holiday and election periods and for a portion of the summer. Recesses allow the necessary time for many legislative hearings, meetings, research, and catching up on district business.

Extra sessions of the Legislature may be called by the Governor. Only subjects specified by the Governor may be considered at an extra session.

Except for a person with certain criminal convictions, anyone 21 years of age or older who is a registered voter in the district to be represented can serve in either house of the Legislature. The State Constitution prohibits persons from election to the Michigan House more than three times and to the Michigan Senate more than two times. Those filling a vacancy for a period greater than one-half of the term for such office are considered to have been elected for the entire term.

The Michigan Legislature develops and considers legislation for the state on any subject not prohibited by the state or federal constitutions. There are various steps that every piece of legislation follows in the course of being considered. These steps constitute the legislative process.

Proposed laws are known as bills. Many bills introduced during a two-year term of a Legislature are introduced in an effort to modify or eliminate statutes that are no longer adequate and to bring the laws of the state into harmony with modern conditions. Some of this legislation is unopposed and consists of necessary pro forma business, similar to work done by directors of a corporation or members of a school board. Relatively few bills are considered to be strictly partisan. Divisions on bills being voted on often center on differences of opinion between factions such as rural versus urban.

During its two-year term, the Legislature may consider from 3,000 to 4,000 bills. Proper consideration of the bills requires organization, time, and hard work. Legislators and legislative committees spend many hours of work on each bill before the bill is submitted for consideration on the floor of either house of the Legislature. The floor debate on a bill, as seen by a visitor, is the final stage of legislative consideration of the bill prior to passage or defeat in each house.

Introduction of Bills

Any bill that would provide for a change in the laws of Michigan, regardless of the subject matter, may be introduced in either the Senate or House of Representatives. Identical bills may be introduced into both chambers.

When a bill is introduced in either the House of Representatives or the Senate, it is sent to one of the committees in its own house which deals with that particular type of issue. At this point, the bill will be given a number and copies will be prepared and made available from the document room and on the Internet, at www.legislature.michigan.gov.

The Committee System

Much of the work of reviewing and amending a bill takes place in the standing committees of the House and of the Senate. These committees generally contain from five to seventeen members, although the House Appropriations Committee is comprised of 29 members. The standing committees may be further divided into subcommittees where bills that address specific problems are assigned for discussion, analysis, and revision before being presented to the full committee for action. In addition, there are a number of statutory standing committees. A quorum (a majority) is necessary to hold a meeting of a committee.

The Senate Majority Leader appoints members of Senate committees and the Speaker appoints members of House committees.

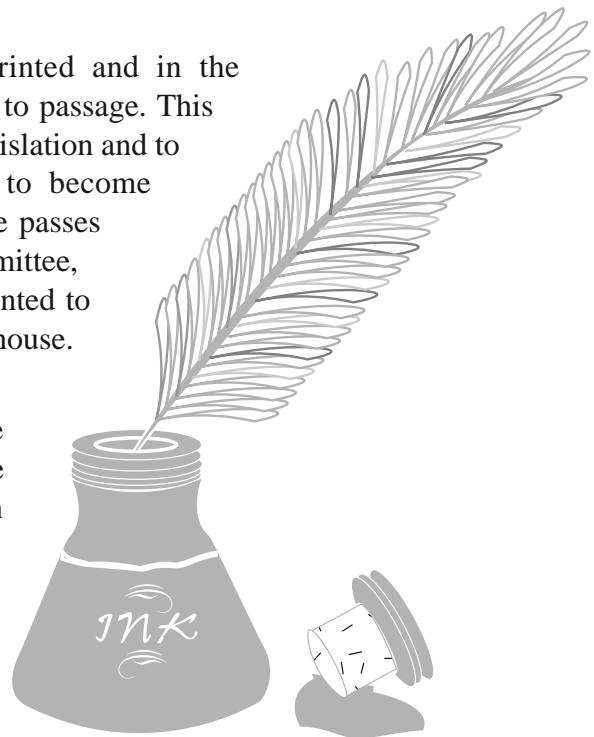
The Open Meetings Act, Act No. 267 of the Public Acts of 1976, requires, with few exceptions, that all committees and subcommittees hold open meetings. Public bodies may hold closed sessions to discuss certain employee matters, to consider the lease or purchase of buildings, and for collective bargaining purposes. This law also allows closed sessions for partisan caucuses of the Legislature.

Voting on Bills and Final Approval

All roll call votes in the House and Senate are required by the Constitution to be public information. A computerized voting system is used to tally the votes. The vote of each Senator or Representative is flashed on electronic roll call boards located on each side of the rostrum. In order to become law, bills, with certain exceptions, must be passed in each house by a majority of Senators or Representatives elected and serving. Some bills require “super majority” votes in both houses to become law.

The State Constitution requires that a bill be printed and in the possession of each house for at least five days prior to passage. This provision serves to prevent hasty or ill-considered legislation and to allow interested persons outside the Legislature to become familiar with proposed legislation. When each house passes differing versions of the same bill, a conference committee, comprised of three members of each house, is appointed to work out a compromise bill to be submitted to each house.

After enactment by the Legislature, a bill is enrolled and is ready for the Governor’s consideration. The Office of the Secretary of the Senate and Office of the Clerk of the House perform the enrollment function for each respective house. If the Governor approves the bill, it becomes a public act in the year in which the Legislature adopted it. If the Governor vetoes the bill, the Legislature may exercise a number of options, including overriding the veto.



GLOSSARY

Amendment—proposed change, addition, or deletion to a bill. Amendments may be offered by individual legislators or by a committee.

Appropriation—the authorization to spend state and federal funds. Probably the most important function of the Legislature, appropriating money is carried out by passing bills to let the government spend money for specific purposes.

Bill—a proposed law introduced in the Legislature for consideration. A bill can be a new law, a change in a law, or a repeal of a law.

Calendar Book—also known as the Blue Book or the E-Blue Book. The book contains all bills on the Senate or House calendar for any particular legislative session day, and includes master bills with sheets of new amendments, proposed amendments, and substitute bills. Most legislative offices maintain a calendar book, often electronically, to follow each daily session of the Legislature.

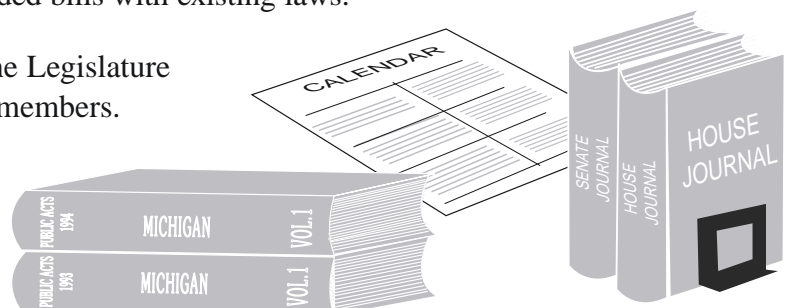
Caucus—a group of legislators with a common interest. Although most commonly used to refer to the Democratic Caucus or the Republican Caucus, the term is also used to describe many groups of legislators, such as the Detroit Caucus, the Women’s Caucus, etc. As a verb, the term “to caucus” means to have a closed meeting of a group of lawmakers belonging to the same party or faction.

Conference Committee—a committee of legislators assigned the responsibility to negotiate the differences between versions of bills passed by the Senate and House. A conference committee is comprised of three members from the Senate and three from the House. The committee attempts to work out a compromise that is then submitted to each house for approval.

Daily Calendar—the listing of bills and other business items to be considered by the Senate or House. The calendars are published for each session day, and items are considered in the order listed unless changes are made during a session. The calendar also contains a list of future committee meetings and public hearings.

Enrollment—the process of preparing a bill in the form as finally adopted by the Legislature for presentation to the Governor. Enrollment involves incorporating amendments into bills, checking for technical errors, and rechecking amended bills with existing laws.

Joint Committee—a committee of the Legislature composed of both Senate and House members.



Journal—a record of actions and events occurring during a legislative session. Separate journals are published each session day by the Senate and the House. They contain attendance and voting records, reports, messages, amendments, and statements in support of or opposition to proposed legislation. However, the journals do not include all of the debate occurring during a session.

Record Roll Call Vote—a vote in which each member’s “yea” or “nay” (“yes” or “no”) vote is recorded. Roll call votes are taken using buttons at the desk of each of the members, with the display boards on the floor indicating a “yes” vote with green and a “no” vote with red.

Regular Session—the one-year period during which a Legislature carries on business. The State Constitution requires that each regular session start on the second Wednesday in January at 12:00 noon.

Resolution—a document expressing the will of the House or the Senate (or both, in the case of concurrent resolutions). Resolutions are used to conduct certain legislative business.

Rules—both the House and the Senate operate under their own set of rules, which specify the procedures of session, including the actions involved in each stage of the lawmaking process. For matters involving both houses (such as conference committees), there are Joint Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives.

Sine Die—a Latin phrase that means “without day” or “without a day” set to reconvene. The State Constitution requires that the Legislature adjourn *sine die* as the final adjournment each year of a regular session. Adjournment must be at 12:00 noon on a day set by concurrent resolution.

Standing Committee—a permanent committee comprised of Senate or House members to handle specific areas of legislation, such as education, environmental affairs, transportation, social services, or health policy. A few of the major functions of a standing committee are to review and modify legislation and to determine which bills should receive consideration by the full Senate or House.



Subcommittee—a part of a larger committee that is given responsibilities by the full committee.

Suspend the Rules—a timesaving device to bypass some of the steps of routine legislative actions.

Table a Motion—to remove something from consideration for the time being.

Voice Vote—a vote taken by members responding “yea” or “nay” in unison, with no recording of individual votes. These are generally used on routine business.



HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW _____



1 A bill is introduced in either house of the Legislature. Senate bills are filed with the Secretary of the Senate and House bills are filed with the Clerk of the House.

2

The bill receives First and Second Reading in the Senate and First Reading in the House. (Procedure at this step consists of reading the title of the bill only.) The bill is ordered to be printed.

3

In the Senate, the bill is referred to the proper committee by the Majority Leader and in the House by the Speaker of the House. All bills involving an appropriation must be referred either directly to the Appropriations Committee of the respective chamber or to an appropriate standing committee and then to the Appropriations Committee.



4

Committee members consider a bill by discussing and debating the bill. The committee may hold public hearings on the bill. Voting records regarding committee action are available to the public for inspection.

The committee may act on a bill in various ways. The committee may:

5

- a) Report the bill with favorable recommendation;
- b) Report the bill with amendments with favorable recommendation;
- c) Report the bill with the recommendation that a substitute be adopted;
- d) Report the bill with adverse recommendation;
- e) Report the bill without recommendation;
- f) Report the bill with amendments but without recommendation;
- g) Report the bill with the recommendation that the bill be referred to another committee;
- h) Take no action on the bill;
- i) Refuse to report the bill out of committee.



In both houses, a majority vote of the members serving on a committee is necessary to report a bill. If a committee fails to report a bill, the bill may be forced out of the committee by a motion to discharge the committee from consideration of the bill. If the motion is approved by a vote of a majority of the members elected and serving in the respective house, the bill is then placed in position on the calendar for floor action. In the House, at least one day prior notice of the motion to discharge must be given to the Clerk of the House.



6

If the bill is reported from committee favorably with or without amendment or in the form of a substitute bill, the committee report is printed in the Journal under the order of business “Reports of Standing Committees.” On being reported favorably from committee, the bill and committee amendments (if any) are placed on General Orders in the Senate. In the House, the bill and amendments are referred to the order of Second Reading. Action may also be taken to place the bill on special order of business on General Orders in the Senate or on Second Reading in the House at a specified date. In the House, the bill may be considered on Third Reading, by a suspension of the rules, without having been considered on Second Reading.

The Senate resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole and the House assumes the order of Second Reading, where the standing committee recommendations on a bill are considered. Amendments to the bill may be offered by any member when the bill is being considered by the Committee of the Whole or on Second Reading. In the Senate, a simple majority of members present and voting may recommend adoption of amendments to the bill and recommend that a bill be advanced to Third Reading. In the House, amendments may be adopted by a majority serving, and a majority voting may advance the bill to Third Reading. In the House, a bill may be placed on Third Reading on a specified date.

7

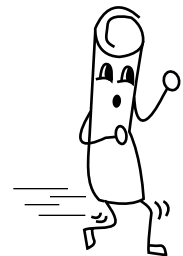
Upon Third Reading in the Senate, an entire bill is read unless unanimous consent is given to consider the bill read. In the House, the bill is read in its entirety on Third Reading unless four-fifths of the members consent to consider the bill read. In practice, few bills are read in full in either chamber. In both houses, amendments on Third Reading must be approved by a majority vote of members serving. In both the Senate and the House, debate may be cut off by a vote of a majority of the members present and voting. At the conclusion of Third Reading, the bill is either passed or defeated by a roll call vote of the majority of the members elected and serving (pursuant to the State Constitution, approval of certain measures requires a two-thirds vote or, in some instances, a three-fourths vote) or one of the following four options is exercised to delay final action on the bill: (a) the bill is returned to committee for further consideration; (b) the bill is postponed indefinitely; (c) the bill is made a special order of business on Third Reading for a specified date; or (d) the bill is tabled.

8

Following either passage or defeat of a bill, a legislator may move for reconsideration of the bill. In the Senate, the motion for reconsideration must be made within the following two session days; in the House, the motion must be made within the next succeeding session day.

9

If the bill passes, it is sent to the other legislative house where the bill follows the procedure outlined in Steps 2-8, resulting in defeat or passage.





If the bill is passed by both houses in identical form, the bill is ordered enrolled by the house in which the bill originated. Upon enrollment, the bill is sent to the Governor.

However, if the bill is passed in a different form by the second house, the bill must be returned to the house of origin:

- a) If amendments or a substitute bill of the second house are accepted in the house of origin, the bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor.
- b) If amendments or a substitute proposal of the second house are rejected in the house of origin, the bill is then sent to a conference committee (special committee composed of legislators from both houses) which attempts to compromise differences between the two versions of the bill adopted by the houses. The conference committee can consider only issues in the bill upon which there is disagreement between the two houses. The conference committee may reach a compromise and submit a report to both houses of the Legislature. Such a report is not subject to amendment. If the conference committee report is approved by both houses, the bill is enrolled and sent to the Governor. If the conference committee does not reach a compromise, or if the Legislature does not accept the conference committee report, a second conference committee may be appointed.

Upon receipt of an enrolled bill, the Governor has 14 days to consider the bill. The Governor may:

10

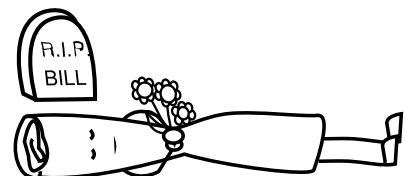
- a) Sign the bill, which then either becomes law at the expiration of 90 days after the Legislature adjourns sine die, or a date beyond the ninetieth day specified in the bill. If the bill has been given immediate effect by a two-thirds vote of the members elected to and serving in each house, the bill will become law at the time of the Governor's signature, or on a day specified in the bill.
- b) Veto the bill and return it to the house of origin with a message stating the Governor's objections.
- c) Choose not to sign or veto the bill. If the bill is neither signed nor vetoed, the bill becomes law 14 days after having reached the Governor's desk if the Legislature is in session or in recess. If the Legislature should adjourn sine die before the end of the 14 days, the unsigned bill does not become law. If the Legislature has adjourned by the time the bill reaches the Governor, he or she has 14 days to consider the bill. If the Governor fails to approve the bill, it does not become law.



If the Governor vetoes a bill while the Legislature is in session or recess, one of the following actions may occur:

11

- a) The Legislature may override the veto by two-thirds vote of members elected and serving in each house, and the bill becomes law.
- b) The bill does not receive the necessary two-thirds vote and thus the attempt to override the veto will fail.



HELPFUL HINTS FOR CONTACTING YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR

An estimated 90 percent of the public will never express even a single opinion to their legislator. It is surprising that more people do not contact public officials since government decides so much of what affects our lives. The government defends our civil rights, regulates commerce, protects consumers from unfair trade practices, and establishes policies to maintain the public's continued good health. The government builds and repairs public roads, provides education for our children, and assures quality services for our senior population. These are only a few examples of how government touches our lives. The list goes on and on.



Sometimes there is a reluctance to contact lawmakers because of the belief that “No one listens or cares.”

Let's put this myth to rest right now. Perhaps this idea developed because our legislators are always busy. It's true, they are frequently on the go, but never so much that they aren't glad to hear from individuals in the district.

Legislators are very interested in what the public has to say. Most see dialogue with the public as one of their primary objectives while in office.

Communications Make Good Government

Communications with the people of their districts is more important than ever to modern-day legislators. The job of State Legislator requires long hours of study on often complicated issues before the Legislature, as well as numerous committee meetings and lengthy sessions. Because they travel between Lansing and the district, most members of the State Legislature often do not have the time to talk one-on-one with all of the people in their district. E-mails and traditional letters are highly effective tools to let public officials know what you think.



A thoughtful, factual, and timely letter or e-mail written to a legislator can solidify or cause a serious review of a previous judgment on an issue. Hearing from their constituents gives legislators a better understanding of issues and of public opinion.

To Find Your Legislator

To find the postal or e-mail address or phone number of your lawmakers, go to the home pages for the Senate and the House.

Senate: www.senate.michigan.gov

House: www.house.michigan.gov

You may also call the Clerk of the House at (517) 373-0135 or the Secretary of the Senate at (517) 373-2400 to identify your legislators. Your public library can also help you identify your Representative or Senator.

Before You Write

If you would like to present your views on an issue to your State Legislator, please consider the following points:

1. Is the issue you're writing about a federal, state, county, or municipal issue? Sometimes it's hard to tell. If your issue is in the newspaper, give the article a quick double-check to see if it mentions which level of government has the matter under consideration.
2. Many people are confused by the fact that they have a Representative and Senator at both the federal and state levels. Usually, a federal lawmaker is referred to as a member of Congress. A newspaper is likely to refer to lawmakers in Washington, D.C. as a U.S. Representative or U.S. Senator.

Likewise, an official in Lansing is usually referred to with "State" before their title, as in State Representative or State Senator.

You have one State Representative and one State Senator in Lansing serving your area. You have one U.S. Representative serving your area

and each state has two U.S. Senators serving in Washington, D.C.

There is only one Congress in the country, by the way, and that is in Washington, D.C. Our state lawmaking body is referred to as the State Legislature.

3. Make certain you have the correct address. The traditional way to address your State Legislator in Lansing is:

The Honorable (Full Name)
State Representative
State Capitol
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Representative (Last Name):

AND/OR

The Honorable (Full Name)
State Senator
State Capitol
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Senator (Last Name):

4. Be sure you include your name and address. Messages without a name and address have little impact, and the legislator has no idea if the note is from someone in his or her district. A phone number is also helpful. If you're expecting a reply, the legislator will need to know how to contact you.

As You Write

After you have determined which official to contact, here are some other considerations to think about as you write:

1. Time the arrival of your letter or e-mail. If the issue you wish to write about is a bill, it

is important to make sure your comments arrive before the bill comes up for a vote. Ideally, you should communicate your concerns while the bill is in committee so that your legislator knows your view early in the legislative process.

2. Stay focused on the subject. Many issues are complex and related to a host of other matters. If there are especially strong feelings about an issue, it's easy to become sidetracked in the emotion of the moment. Your views will be clearer if your letter is kept centered on the issue.
3. Write as much as possible in few words. Though some issues may be detailed and complex, try to keep your letter to no more than one page. It also helps a legislator's office if you write a single letter for a single issue.
4. Identify the issue. There are literally thousands of bills introduced each session and sometimes there are different bills on the same subject. Identify your issue as specifically as you can. List the bill number if you have it. If you write about a proposed bill on transportation, but don't know the bill number, perhaps you might refer to it by the bill's sponsor, "State Representative Smith's" bill or the bill's nickname, "the highway logo signs" bill.
5. Make your note personal. Signing a petition, sending a form letter, or forwarding materials may have some impact, but nothing beats the "personal touch." Writing in your own unique words emphasizes that you cared enough about the issue to take the extra time to convey your individual thoughts. Lobbying groups sometimes urge citizens to send form letters to their legislators. After a legislator

has read one, she/he knows what they all say. Form letters or e-mails don't have the same impact as personal letters. Personal letters sometimes give new views or aspects to a position on a bill that a legislator may not have heard before.

6. Keep your tone positive. Everyone is more open to suggestion when approached in an upbeat and optimistic manner. Lawmakers are no exception. Sometimes, in the heat of passion, we may write angry letters. These types of communications have few useful results, if any, and may even damage a cause.

Keep in mind, your State Representative has to take into account the well-being of approximately 90,000 people in his or her district and each State Senator must take into account 261,000. Each of those people has an individual viewpoint. This means that at times tough choices have to be made. Just because you and your legislator disagree on one subject does not mean that you will not agree on many, many more further down the road. Try to keep the dialogue open between you and your legislator.

7. Present your position and give sound reasons. A note that states "Vote for House Bill 4001; it's a good bill" does make a statement. However, if you back up your position with reasons, it makes an even better point. "Please vote for House Bill 4001. I'm a senior citizen on a fixed income, and the bill will help me in the following ways..." It helps to mention how the issue affects you, your family, your business or profession—or the effect on your community or the state as a whole. This will make a legislator more aware of the bill's potential effect.

For the People . . .

8. Try to be constructive. If you believe a bill presents the wrong approach to an existing problem, let your legislator know what you think would be a better solution.
9. Share your knowledge. There is always a shortage of specialists on issues. If you have particular expertise on an issue, let your legislator know. Your legislator votes on everything from farming and transportation bills to education and veterans bills. A professional or expert on an issue can prove to be extremely helpful.
10. Letters of appreciation are certainly welcome. If you think your legislator is doing a good job, please tell him or her so. Everyone enjoys being told, “well done.” Even if the legislator votes on an issue differently than you would like, a letter explaining that you disagree but are still willing to work together in the future could help you both on other issues.
11. A special note to teachers—Some of the most interesting letters of all come from students. Young people are affected by the laws the Legislature passes and they have a vested interest in our state’s future. Their views are always welcome by a legislator.

Unfortunately, legislators have small staffs. When writing to a legislator as a class project, it is helpful to send composite letters or the letters of selected students so that your efforts may receive better attention.

Before You Make Contact

When writing to lawmakers, it is important to consider a few reasons that determine how they may vote on a bill.

We rightly expect our leaders to make studied, informed decisions before they vote on an issue. It’s crucial that we allow our officials to look at as many sides of an argument as possible before they reach a final decision. For this reason, it is important to let them know when we write to them that we are not asking for an immediate commitment to our point of view. A legislator is not likely to take a firm and unyielding position until he or she has studied the bill, witnesses have been heard during the committee process, and the rest of the public has had a chance to have input.



What We See on Television and in the Newspapers

If it is significant, the media may present a particularly newsworthy section of a bill. However, it’s common for legislation to contain multiple provisions. A bill can be 100 pages long with many more provisions besides the one that interests us. A legislator may be forced to vote on the bill as a whole, weighing the good against the bad.

There are a number of times after introduction that a bill can be changed. A bill often becomes law in a different form than it was introduced. This means it is possible that the content of a bill you supported will be amended in such a way that you strongly oppose it by the time it

reaches the floor for a final vote. After telling you he or she is against House Bill 4001 because it would have bad consequences for small business, your State Representative and Senator may vote for the final version if the unfavorable content has been removed and the rest of the bill remains positive.



Phone Calls to Your State Representative and State Senator

Generally speaking, writing a letter or sending an e-mail to your State Representative or State Senator is more effective than phoning. A written statement on an issue allows time for careful investigation by a legislative office. With so many issues, it is difficult for any member to have all answers ready for all occasions.

Sometimes an issue must be addressed quickly so a phone call is the only practical method of contact. Phone calls to your legislator are certainly welcome.

Catching a legislator personally between sessions and committee meetings is often difficult. However, his or her staff will be glad to relay your concerns. Often, the staff can supply basic answers to your questions.

It should be noted that it is against House policy for State Representatives to accept collect calls.


Dropping By a Legislative Office

People visiting the State Capitol often like to stop by and see where their lawmaker works. It's always best to make an appointment if you have a concern to discuss directly with a State Legislator, but he or she will gladly greet you personally any time a schedule permits. Representatives agree that meeting people from the district is one of the major highlights of the job.

Since time may be limited, legislators appreciate a direct and forward presentation when you drop by to discuss an issue. A clear idea of your issue with well-prepared facts that back up your position will help your discussion.



THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH ORGANIZATION CHART

 EXECUTIVE OFFICE GOVERNOR LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR			
Department of AGRICULTURE	Department of ATTORNEY GENERAL	Department of CIVIL RIGHTS	Department of CIVIL SERVICE
Department of COMMUNITY HEALTH	Department of CORRECTIONS	Department of EDUCATION	Department of ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Department of HISTORY, ARTS, AND LIBRARIES	Department of HUMAN SERVICES	Department of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	Department of LABOR AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
Department of MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET	Department of MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS	Department of NATURAL RESOURCES	Department of STATE
	Department of STATE POLICE	Department of TRANSPORTATION	Department of TREASURY

DUTIES OF THE GOVERNOR AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

The executive power is vested in the Governor, who is responsible for the faithful execution of the laws of the state. Elected by the people to a four-year term, the Governor:

- Supervises the departments of the executive branch and appoints members to state boards and commissions;
- May direct an investigation of any department of state government and may require written information from executive and administrative state officers on any subject relating to the performance of their duties;
- May remove elective and appointive officers of the executive branch for cause, as well as elective county, city, township, and village officers;
- Submits messages to the Legislature and recommends measures considered necessary or desirable;



- May issue executive orders to make changes in the organization of the executive branch of state government;
- Submits an annual state budget to the Legislature, recommending sufficient revenues to meet proposed expenditures;
- May issue executive orders to reduce budget expenditures in response to revenue shortfalls;
- May convene the Legislature in extraordinary extra session;
- May call a special election to fill a vacancy in the Legislature or the U.S. House of Representatives, and may fill a vacancy in the U.S. Senate by appointment;
- May grant reprieves, commutations of sentences, and pardons;
- May seek extradition of fugitives from justice who have left the state and may issue warrants at the request of other governors for fugitives who may be found within this state;
- Signs all commissions and patents for state lands, and appoints notaries public and commissioners in other states to take acknowledgements of deeds for this state;
- Serves as chairperson of the State Administrative Board, which supervises and approves certain state expenditures, and has veto power over its actions; and
- Serves as commander in chief of the state's armed forces.



The Lieutenant Governor is nominated at a party convention and elected with the Governor. The term of office is four years. The Lieutenant Governor serves as President of the Michigan Senate, but may vote only in case of a tie. The Lieutenant Governor may perform duties requested by the Governor, but no power vested in the Governor by the State Constitution may be delegated to the Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor would succeed the Governor in case of death, impeachment, removal from office, or resignation. At the November 1992 general election, Michigan voters approved a constitutional amendment barring people from being elected more than two times as Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Secretary of State. The term limits apply to terms of office beginning on or after January 1, 1993.

STATE DEPARTMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Ottawa Building, 4th Floor
611 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30017
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Information: (800) 292-3939
www.michigan.gov/mda

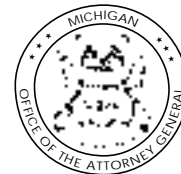


The Department of Agriculture promotes the agricultural interests of the state. The major priorities of the department are food safety, economic growth indicators for agricultural production, environmental stewardship, and providing food for the hungry. The department develops and implements safeguards to protect the public from disease and unsanitary conditions in connection with food production and food handling, product labeling, dairy products, animals, and plants. The department carries out responsibilities relating to food, standard weights and measures, farm produce storage, and dairy products; inspection and enforcement of animal health; control of plant pests and diseases; and inspection of beans and perishable fruits and vegetables.



DEPARTMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

G. Mennen Williams Building, 7th Floor
525 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30212
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Information: (517) 373-1110
www.michigan.gov/ag



The Attorney General is the state's lawyer. In that capacity, the Attorney General and assistants act as exclusive legal counsel for Michigan's departments, agencies, and officials and provide representation in actions brought against legislators, the Governor, and judges. The Attorney General is also responsible for issuing opinions on questions of law submitted in writing by members of the Legislature and others. In addition to being the state's lawyer, the Attorney General is the chief law enforcement officer of the state, charged with supervision of all prosecuting attorneys and empowered to intervene in any criminal proceeding.

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Capitol Tower Building
110 West Michigan Avenue, Suite 800
Lansing, Michigan 48913
Detroit/Service Center
Cadillac Place
3054 West Grand Boulevard, Suite 3-600
Detroit, Michigan 48202
Information: (517) 335-3165
(800) 482-3604
TDD: (877) 878-8464
www.michigan.gov/mdcr



The Department of Civil Rights, in implementing the policies of the Civil Rights Commission, investigates alleged discrimination in employment, public accommodation, public service, education, and housing against any person, as prohibited by the State Constitution, state and federal law, and the Governor's executive directives.

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE

Capitol Commons Center
400 South Pine Street
P.O. Box 30002
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Information: (517) 373-3030
(800) 788-1766

Detroit Office: (313) 456-4400
www.michigan.gov/mdcs



The Department of Civil Service administers the functions of the Civil Service Commission in the maintenance of a statewide merit system. These include classification of positions, administration of competitive examinations for all positions in the classified service, pay setting, development of rules governing personnel transactions and conditions of employment, and administration of the commission's Employment Relations Policy. The department also administers a centralized personnel development program.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

Lewis Cass Building, 6th Floor
320 South Walnut Street
Lansing, Michigan 48913

Information: (517) 373-3740
www.michigan.gov/mdch



The Department of Community Health is responsible for health policy and management of the state's publicly funded health service systems.

This department, the largest in state government, includes the Medical Services Administration (the state's Medicaid agency), the Office of Drug Control Policy, the Office of Services to the Aging, and the Crime Victims Services Commission. The principal components of the department work in the areas of Medicaid and the Michigan medical program, behavioral health services, community public health, and drug law enforcement, education, and prevention.



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Grandview Plaza
P.O. Box 30003
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Information: (517) 335-1426
www.michigan.gov/corrections



The Department of Corrections has jurisdiction over all felons sentenced to prison in the state. It administers and staffs all state prisons and the Special Alternative Incarceration facility. Department-employed field agents supervise probationers for the sentencing courts and supervise parolees or those felons who have left prison and are preparing for a full release from the jurisdiction of the state. Felons who are being supervised in the community prior to parole, including those on electronic monitoring and those in community corrections centers, also fall under the jurisdiction of this state department.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Hannah Building
608 West Allegan Street
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909



Information: (517) 373-3324
www.michigan.gov/mde

The Department of Education is the state administrative agency implementing federal and state legislative mandates in the field of education. Among the department's primary functions are providing educational leadership, developing educational standards, and administering state aid programs to school districts, public school academies, and other public education agencies. The department, which is responsible for the certification of teachers, provides technical assistance to local districts, communities, and individual schools and educators in regard to curriculum, standards, school improvement, and school programs.



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Constitutional Hall, 6th Floor
P.O. Box 30473
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Information: (517) 373-7917
www.michigan.gov/deq



The Department of Environmental Quality works to protect the public health and natural resources for current and future generations by carrying out a wide range of duties to safeguard Michigan's unique environment. The department enforces the state's statutes and policies dealing with the use and condition of our water, soil, air, and minerals. This task includes monitoring environmental quality, close communication with federal and local officials, and processing permits to assure standards are maintained for the safety of our resources and our citizens.

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,
ARTS, AND LIBRARIES**

702 West Kalamazoo Street
Lansing, Michigan 48915

Information: (517) 241-2236
www.michigan.gov/hal



The Department of History, Arts, and Libraries brings together the state's offices, agencies, and resources committed to the preservation of our state's historic, artistic, cultural, and intellectual heritage. The department, which includes the Library of Michigan, the Michigan Historical Center, the Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Mackinac State Historic Parks, and Michigan Film Office, is the state's focal point for preserving Michigan's historic sites, archives, and other cultural treasures.



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Grand Tower
235 South Grand Avenue
P.O. Box 30037
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Information: (517) 373-2035
www.michigan.gov/dhs



The Department of Human Services works to improve the quality of life in Michigan by protecting vulnerable adults, delivering juvenile justice services, and providing support to strengthen families and individuals striving for independence. The department administers numerous financial programs, including those related to child care, development, and support; employment; food, cash, and home energy assistance



for eligible families; and medical and disability assistance, emergency relief. The Department of Human Services operates a wide range of service programs, including those pertaining to adoption, adults with disabilities, foster care, juvenile justice, family preservation, domestic violence, protecting children from abuse, migrant outreach, refugee services, and teen parent and youth services.

**DEPARTMENT OF
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

G.W. Romney Building, 8th Floor
111 South Capitol Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48913

Information: (517) 335-4000
www.michigan.gov/dit



Created by Executive Order in 2001, the Department of Information Technology is committed to strengthening all areas of information technology within the executive branch of state government. Under the leadership of the Chief Information Officer, the Department of Information Technology provides professional management of the information technology resources of the state. In addition, it seeks to improve the effectiveness of information technology resources, to advance the delivery of services to citizens, and to maintain the security and confidentiality of state-managed information.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Ottawa Building, 4th Floor
611 W. Ottawa
P.O. Box 30004
Lansing, Michigan 48909



Information: (517) 373-1820
www.michigan.gov/dleg

The Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) promotes the development of Michigan's economy, including strengthening the state's workforce. This department, which includes a host of key agencies and commissions, including the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, works with the business community to encourage investment in our state and job creation and to increase the number of well-prepared workers. Working with Michigan businesses and those that may relocate or expand here, DLEG works to build up the resources and infrastructure of our state and promote safety and high standards in the workplace.

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Lewis Cass Building
320 South Walnut Street
P.O. Box 30026
Lansing, Michigan 48909



Information: (517) 373-1004
www.michigan.gov/dmb

The Department of Management and Budget is an interdepartmental service and management agency responsible for providing financial management, property management, capital facility development, procurement, retirement and related benefits, employee benefits programs, accounting and payroll functions, demographic functions, geographic information, systems development, and office support services to state agencies. The State Budget Director prepares, presents, and executes the state budget on behalf of the Governor.

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

2500 South Washington Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48913



Information: (517) 483-5500
www.michigan.gov/dmva

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is the state agency that administers the Michigan Army and the Air National Guard. The department supervises two state-operated, long-term veterans care facilities and cooperates fully with the federal government and Air National Guard in managing various facilities throughout the state. Michigan National Guard units are available to the Governor to assist local and state government in coping with natural disasters and civil emergencies.



DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Mason Building, 6th Floor
P.O. Box 30028
Lansing, Michigan 48909



Information: (517) 373-2329
www.michigan.gov/dnr

The Department of Natural Resources, which carries out the policies of the Natural Resources Commission, is charged with conserving and developing the state's natural resources and enhancing the state's network of state lands, forests, and recreational resources, including our state park system. Management responsibilities of the department extend to wildlife and fisheries and overseeing hunting and fishing throughout the state.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Treasury Building
P.O. Box 30045
Lansing, Michigan 48918

Information: (517) 322-1460
www.michigan.gov/sos

The Department of State, the oldest department in Michigan state government, is administered by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has constitutional as well as statutory duties. The Department of State is responsible for licensing drivers, the registration and titling of vehicles, the regulation of automobile dealers and repair facilities, the registration of voters and administration of elections, and the certification of documents and public records.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

714 South Harrison Road
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Information: (517) 332-2521
www.michigan.gov/msp

The Department of State Police is charged with broad responsibilities in the area of public safety. The department provides not only direct police service to citizens in the form of traffic enforcement and criminal investigation, but also a wide range of law enforcement support services to local agencies through crime labs, canine units, and tactical assistance.



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Van Wagoner Transportation Building
425 West Ottawa Street
P.O. Box 30050
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Information: (517) 373-2990
www.michigan.gov/mdot



The Michigan Department of Transportation is responsible for Michigan's multi-modal transportation network. Its mission includes providing quality transportation services for the 9,500-mile state highway system and its I-, US- and M-numbered highways. The department administers programs for all other modes, ranging from air, rail, and bus transit to bicycle paths and Great Lakes port development. The department's duties include developing and implementing comprehensive transportation plans for the entire state, administering state and federal funds allocated to these modes, and administering federal aid programs for local roads and bridges.



DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY

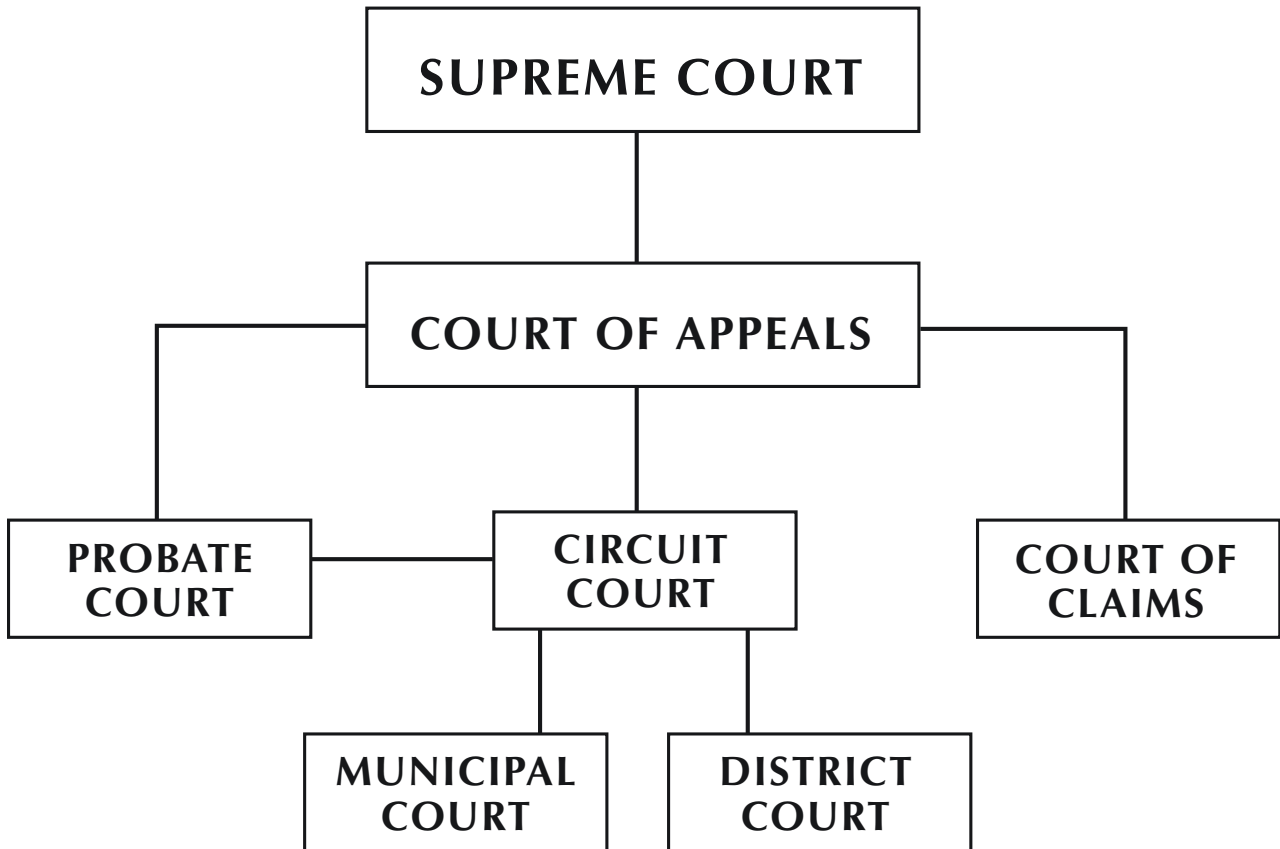
Treasury Building
430 West Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan 48922

Information: (517) 373-3200
www.michigan.gov/treasury



The Michigan Department of Treasury is the chief fiscal agency of the state of Michigan and acts as an economic advisor to the Governor on tax and fiscal policy issues. Under the State Treasurer's direction, the department collects, invests, and disburses state monies. It plays a major role in revenue estimating and oversees any necessary interim borrowings and all long-term bonding. The Treasury Department is organized into an executive office and bureaus to handle its diverse responsibilities to taxpayers, businesses, local governmental units, and financial and public institutions.

THE JUDICIAL BRANCH ORGANIZATION CHART



The State Constitution provides that “The judicial power of the state is vested exclusively in one court of justice which shall be divided into one supreme court, one court of appeals, one trial court of general jurisdiction known as the circuit court, one probate court, and courts of limited jurisdiction that the legislature may

establish by two-thirds vote of the members elected to and serving in each house.”

The following description of Michigan’s judicial system is taken from *One Court of Justice*—a publication of the State Court Administrative Office.

APPELLATE COURTS

Supreme Court

The Michigan Supreme Court is the highest court in the state, hearing cases appealed to it from the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court has the authority to decide which cases it will hear. If an application is granted, the Supreme Court will hear the case; if denied, the decision made by the lower court remains unchanged. The Supreme Court also has original jurisdiction over some matters.

In addition to its judicial duties, the Supreme Court is responsible for the general supervision of all courts in the state. The Supreme Court also establishes rules for practice and procedure in all courts.

The Supreme Court consists of seven justices: the Chief Justice and six Associate Justices.

Court of Appeals

The Court of Appeals was established by the State Constitution as an “intermediate” court between the Supreme Court and the Circuit Court. Judges of the Court of Appeals are chosen in nonpartisan elections from four districts of approximately equal population.

TRIAL COURTS

Circuit Court

Circuit Courts are referred to as the trial courts of general jurisdiction in Michigan because of the very broad powers of this central part of the state’s court system. Circuit Court has jurisdiction over all actions except those given by state law to another court. Generally speaking, the Circuit Court handles all civil cases involving more than \$25,000; all criminal cases where the defendant could be sent to prison; and all family and domestic relations cases, including divorce, paternity actions, juvenile proceedings, and adoptions.

Circuit judges are elected for six-year terms on nonpartisan ballots.

Court of Claims

The Court of Claims has jurisdiction limited to hearing cases where someone is suing the state. As a general rule, a state cannot be sued without its consent. Michigan granted that consent by establishing the Court of Claims. The Court of Claims is part of the 30th Circuit Court (Ingham County).



Probate Court

The Probate Court is a court of limited jurisdiction. This court's main functions are supervising the probating of wills and the administration of estates, trusts, conservatorships, and guardianships and dealing with matters related to people protected by the court because of mental illness or developmental disabilities.

There is a Probate Court in each Michigan county with the exception of ten counties that have consolidated to form five two-county probate court districts. Each district has one judge, and each of the remaining counties has one or more judges, based on volume of business in the court. In fourteen counties, probate judges serve part-time.

Probate judges are elected for six-year terms on nonpartisan ballots.

District Court

The District Court has exclusive jurisdiction of all civil (not criminal) cases up to \$25,000 and handles a variety of other proceedings. For criminal cases, the District Court conducts preliminary examinations in felony cases and handles all misdemeanors where punishment does not exceed one year in jail.

District judges are elected for six-year terms on nonpartisan ballots.

Municipal Court

Municipal Court civil jurisdiction is limited to \$1,500. Four municipalities have chosen to retain a Municipal Court rather than change to District Court.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MICHIGAN

Local government is the foundation of modern democracy. From the founding of New England to today's complex world, local government has been the seed from which democracy has grown and flourished.

In Michigan's early years as a territory, although ostensibly governed under the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance, local government played a key role in the life of an average person. Due to the slow means of communication and transportation at the time, Michigan was, in effect, largely governed by local forms of government until it became the twenty-sixth state on January 26, 1837. Until the 1930s, local governments remained primarily responsible for providing direct services to the people of Michigan. This rich tradition of local government independence continues today, providing Michigan residents with an effective voice in the conduct of their everyday concerns.

Local governments, in general, were established to help provide citizens with a more direct voice in government and to promote more effective management of local concerns. Created by the state, local governments have those powers and immunities specifically provided by state law. In Michigan, the State Constitution has established six forms of local governmental entities: counties, townships, cities, villages, intergovernmental districts and authorities, and school districts.

Local Financing

Financing is the key to the operation of local governments. Gaining an understanding of this significant process is essential to those wishing to become more involved in helping design Michigan's future.

In order to help local units of government provide necessary services, the state has granted them the authority to tax and incur debt. It also has established certain limitations on the extent of this power. Local governments may also receive funds from state and federal programs, gasoline taxes for road improvements, special assessments, and certain penalties and fines.

The primary source of local revenues, however, is the property tax, with the amount levied determined by multiplying the tax base of the property eligible for taxation against the tax rate. In Michigan, the tax base is set at 50 percent of the true cash value of the property, and the rate represents the mills multiplied against that value (one mill equals one dollar of taxation per \$1,000 of taxable value).



Local units of government are restricted in their general taxing authority to a 15-mill tax limit. A county's electorate may choose to implement a "fixed millage" approach which permits an 18-mill tax limit. This limit, however, does not include voter-approved millage proposals for schools, roads, sewers, or other authorized purposes, and those taxes imposed by authorities.

On November 7, 1978, the voters of Michigan approved Ballot Proposal E (the Headlee Amendment), which placed certain additional limits on local taxation and financing. This amendment, in part, requires the state to pay for

state-mandated local activities, requires that local property taxes not increase faster than inflation, and prohibits local taxes from being raised without voter approval.

More recently, with the passage of 1993 PA 145, local property taxes were eliminated as a source of funding for K-12 and intermediate school district school operating funding. With approximately 64 percent of the then \$10.2 billion in total funding for schools eliminated, it became necessary to look for a new way to restructure Michigan's tax system. In 1994, the voters of the state of Michigan approved ballot Proposal A by a margin of 1,681,541 to 750,952 in a special election held on March 15, 1994. This proposal (Senate Joint Resolution S), in part, imposed an additional 2 percent rate on the 4 percent sales and use taxes beginning May 1, 1994, that is dedicated to the State School Aid Fund; and, beginning with taxes levied in 1995, capped the rate of property tax increases to the rate of inflation or 5 percent, whichever is less. When the property is transferred, it is assessed at true cash value.

As to the property tax, 1993 PA 331 created the State Education Tax Act, imposing a six-mill state education tax levy on all property subject to the general property tax. Public Act 312 of 1993 allows local school districts to levy not more than 18 mills for school operating purposes or the number of mills levied in 1993 for school operating purposes, whichever is less. Homestead property, and, pursuant to 1994 PA 136, qualified agricultural property are exempt from the 18-mill levy.

In addition to the 18 mills in local, non-homestead property tax permitted to be levied under 1993 PA 312, a limited number of high-revenue school districts may levy supplemental "hold harmless" mills on homestead property, and, in some circumstances, on nonhomestead property. Since 1997, intermediate school

districts have been authorized to levy, on voter approval, a "regional enhancement" millage of up to three mills. This millage may be levied for a term of up to 20 years. Certain school districts may, with voter approval, levy up to five mills for the creation of a sinking fund, and a school district operating a community college may levy taxes for operation at a rate equal to the mills formerly authorized. With the expiration of such authorization, the district, with voter approval, may renew the millage authorization, levy additional millage, or both. Finally, an intermediate school district, pursuant to 1994 PA 258, may authorize certain millage for operating expenses, funding, vocational-technical education programs, and special education.



Another important source of local financing is the city income tax. Cities, with voter approval, may institute an excise tax of not more than 2 percent on corporations and residents, and not more than 50 percent of that amount on nonresidents working in that city. Cities with more than 750,000 in population have been authorized to impose an excise tax of 2 percent on corporations, 3 percent on residents, and up to 1-1/2 percent on nonresidents. Legislation adopted in 1998 (1998 PA 500) will, however, incrementally reduce the rate assessed residents to 2 percent. The rate assessed nonresidents will be adjusted accordingly (but no more than 50 percent of the rate assessed residents).

Local units of government may also levy, in some cases, taxes on mobile homes, low grade iron ore, hotel-motel accommodations, real estate property transfers, transportation districts, and industrial facility/commercial rehabilitation districts.

School districts, in addition to property taxes, now receive their operating revenues from the State School Aid Fund, which, in part, helps equalize the state's school districts' resources by financing K-12 schools with a per pupil foundation allowance.

The revenues for the school aid fund, in part, are comprised of 60 percent of the state sales tax at the 4 percent rate and 100 percent of the revenue from the 2 percent rate, the 2 percent from the increase in the use tax, the 4 percent excise tax on liquor, 63.4 percent of the cigarette tax, revenues from the real estate transfer tax, and net proceeds from the state lottery. The State School Aid Fund also receives revenues from the Industrial Facilities Tax, Commercial Facilities Tax, and Commercial Forest Tax. Finally, the federal government provides, on average, 4 percent of the aid to public schools, with the rate varying on the special characteristics of individual school districts.

County Government

County governments, in terms of area, are the largest form of local government. Their relative size enables them to serve as an administrative arm of the state in many respects, providing for such services as the maintenance of roads and the recording of various types of official documents. With 695 elected county commissioners throughout Michigan's 83 counties, this form of government truly provides a unique opportunity to become involved in the management of local issues.

Constitutional provisions in Michigan require each of Michigan's 83 organized counties to elect, for four-year terms, a sheriff, a county clerk, a county treasurer, a register of deeds,

and a prosecuting attorney. The Constitution also permits the county board of commissioners either to combine or separate the offices of county clerk and register of deeds. In addition, a county is required to establish a board of commissioners, consisting of members from each district in the county. The districts are apportioned every ten years. Commissioners are elected on a partisan basis in each even-numbered year, and must be registered voters.

Charter counties, established under the provisions of 1966 PA 293, differ, in part, from general law counties due to the selection of a chief administrative officer or elected county executive. The county charter, prepared by a partisan elected charter commission, provides for the election, concurrent with the term of office of state representatives, of from five to 27 county commissioners, depending on the county's population.

A charter county is also required to hold partisan elections for sheriff, prosecuting attorney, county clerk, treasurer, and register of deeds. Another form of county government is the optional form of unified county government created by 1973 PA 139. It permits either the election of a county executive or the appointment of a professional county manager by the county board of commissioners.



Township Government

There are currently 1,242 townships in Michigan. The second largest form of local government in area, townships provide a number of important services to their residents. From supervising elections, assessing property, and collecting taxes to providing fire and police protection, township government makes an important contribution to the lives of Michigan citizens who are outside the jurisdiction of city government. There are more than 6,500 elected township officials in Michigan, making township government one of the most accessible to those concerned citizens wishing to become involved in local government.

Annual township meetings provide residents with a direct voice in township affairs. Usually held on the last Saturday in the last month of each fiscal year, township meetings traditionally provided electors of the township with a significant amount of influence on the conduct of township business. Although the complexity of the problems facing township governments and townships' ability to do away with the annual meeting itself under certain circumstances have somewhat limited a citizen's voice on township matters, regular meetings of the township boards continue to provide the ordinary citizen with an important advisory role on the conduct of township affairs.

Townships are constitutionally required to provide for the election of, for four-year terms, a township supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two or four township trustees who serve four-year terms, all of whom then comprise the township board. Candidates for the township board must be registered voters, at least 18 years old, residents of Michigan, and residents of the township for at least 30 days prior to the primary.

Charter townships are a slowly growing form of township government. Established under the provisions of 1947 PA 359, charter townships

are more formally structured, and are therefore somewhat less limited in the nature of their legislative and administrative powers. Charter townships usually have a stronger authority to tax and have greater protections from annexation by contiguous cities than general law townships. The charter township board can appoint a township superintendent, but if it chooses not to, the township supervisor automatically assumes the duties of this position. Charter townships are required to have four trustees.

City Government

City government is one of the most basic and familiar forms of local government. City government differs from village government in that a city is removed from township governance, and must therefore provide for its own operation as well as for those services normally provided by a township government. There are at least 4,432 elected officials in Michigan's cities and villages. This provides an excellent means of becoming involved in local government. A city's services include those typically provided, including police and fire protection, and such other services as the operation of its parks, its cable television services, and any public utilities.

In the past, there were two main types of city government charters governing Michigan's 274 incorporated cities, fourth class cities (those with populations of less than 10,000) and all



other cities which were classified as special charter cities. According to the Michigan Municipal League, all but one of the special charter cities and, under the provisions of 1976 PA 334, all fourth class cities have become re-incorporated as home rule cities under 1909 PA 279. The charters of seven former fourth class cities, however, continue to govern those particular cities until they revise their former charters.



City charters provide for the qualifications for public office and the election of a mayor, but city governments may be governed through various types of organizations, with the council-manager currently being the most popular form. Under this system, an elected city council appoints a professional manager to administer policies and programs designated by the council. Other common forms of organization include the mayor-council form of government in which the mayor acts as the chief executive officer and a council serves in a legislative capacity, counterbalancing, to various degrees, the power of the mayor. A rarer form of organization is that of the city commission in which each elected member of the city commission serves as the head of a principal municipal department.

Village Government

Michigan has 259 incorporated villages. A village, unlike a city, remains as part of the

township government for a few functions. A village normally provides several types of local services such as police and fire protection, and the maintenance of streets and sidewalks, but must rely on the township for property assessment and general election administration.

A village is required, under the provisions of 1895 PA 3, to elect a president, six trustees, a clerk, a treasurer, and an assessor, with the president and trustees constituting the village council. An elected or appointed village officer must be a registered voter. The term of office for a village president, clerk, treasurer, and assessor is four years, but the terms of office vary greatly for trustees among Michigan's villages.

A charter village, incorporated under the provisions of 1909 PA 278, differs from a general law village in that the charter generally provides a greater number of variations in the operation of the village, and may also provide greater taxing authority for the village. A village charter requires the election of a president, a clerk, and a commission or other legislative body by a partisan, nonpartisan, or preferential ballot, or by other legal means of voting. As of 2000, Michigan had 38 charter villages.

Special Districts and Authorities

Intergovernmental districts and authorities are designed to provide specific services to units of government within their area of jurisdiction. Generally formed by any two or more cities, villages, or townships, these authorities are normally created to operate parks and public utilities, or provide sewage disposal, drainage, water, or transportation. As of 2002, the U.S. Census Bureau identified 365 special districts in Michigan. Each authority has the power to provide for the selection of officers, and the ability to levy taxes with voter approval. In addition, the last few years have seen the

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development of a number of other types of authorities, designed to provide specific services, which do not cross local governmental jurisdictions. Downtown development authorities (DDAs) and business improvement districts (BIDs), which are designed to promote downtown business districts, and tax increment financing authorities (TIFAs), which are designed to promote growth in the community, are examples of this type of authority.



Some of the more well-known metropolitan districts are the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, which is designed to build and operate parks, the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority, which has jurisdiction over the commercially navigable waters within its specific domain, and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), which is designed to provide planning services for bus operations and other modes of transportation in southeastern Michigan.

School Districts

In 2004-05, there were 768 local school districts in Michigan, including 216 public school academies (which are a relatively new form of school district administered by a board of directors), and 57 intermediate school districts. Traditionally, school districts are administered by a school board normally comprised of three to 11 members who are elected on a nonpartisan basis. Although certain standards for the operation of school districts are mandated by the State Board of Education, school board members have a considerable amount of discretion in determining school district policy and management. School board members normally serve from three- to six-year terms and meet

monthly to set operational policy. Participation on local school boards provides an excellent vehicle from which a concerned citizen may make a significant contribution to Michigan's outstanding system of education.

School districts in Michigan have traditionally been classified into four types of districts—first, second, third, or fourth class—based on the number of students in that district. Under the changes associated with the Revised School Code created by 1995 PA 289, all school districts other than first class school districts are reorganized as general powers school districts. Another form of school district is the intermediate school district, which is comprised of a number of smaller school districts joined together to provide services that the smaller districts normally are not able to supply on an individual basis. Intermediate school districts are under the direction of a five- or seven-member intermediate school board. These school board members serve staggered six-year terms with no more than two seats up for election every two years.

Any registered voter who has been a resident of the district for at least one month prior to the election is eligible for appointment or election to a school board.



IMPORTANT PEOPLE TO CONTACT:

U.S. Senator

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Address: _____

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State Representative

Name: _____ District No.: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____ Staff Contact Name: _____

Notes: _____

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS:

Local Representative:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____ Staff Contact Name: _____

Meeting Date and Time: _____

Notes: _____

County Commissioner:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No.: _____ Staff Contact Name: _____

Meeting Date and Time: _____

Notes: _____

Other Names and Numbers:

Name: _____ Title: _____ Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____ Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____ Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Notes: _____

Name: _____ Title: _____ Phone No.: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Notes: _____

*The information in this publication is available,
upon request, in an alternative, accessible format.*
