

## Resources

### Michigan Election and Campaign Law Changes

January 7, 2016

The Michigan Legislature approved and Governor Snyder just signed into law significant reforms to the Michigan Election Law and the Michigan Campaign Finance Act. The following is a short summary of the changes provided for in Senate Bill 13 and Senate Bill 571.

#### Elimination of Straight-Ticket Voting (SB 13)

Senate Bill 13 (Public Act 268 of 2015) amends the Michigan Election Law, removing provisions that allow voters to cast straight ticket or split ticket ballots during general elections. In partisan elections, ballot labels are now prohibited from allowing electors to vote for all of the candidates of one party by a single selection. Voters must now select the candidate of their choice for each individual office. An appropriation was added to this legislation, so it may not be challenged by referendum.

#### Campaign Finance Reform (SB 571)

Senate Bill 571 (Public Act 269 of 2015) amends the Michigan Campaign Finance Act with a number of changes, including the following:

- “Co-mingling” reform: a corporation may direct contributions into its general fund for later transmission into the corporation’s PAC.
- Employees who wish to contribute to a company’s PAC no longer need to “opt-in” to that contribution on an annual basis.
- Corporations with a PAC are not permitted to administer the PAC of their employees’ labor unions through the corporation’s payroll system.
- Public bodies (including school districts, local governments, and their representatives) may not use public funds to distribute information about local ballot proposals 60 days before the proposal appears on the ballot. The prohibition applies to the dissemination of *any* information, which is a change from the prior ban on express advocacy only. This was a very controversial piece of the law change and Governor Snyder, in signing the law, asked for further reform on this issue.
- The February filing deadline for PACs is eliminated.
- PACs must now file an annual report.
- Robo-calls do not need to include a disclaimer (the words “authorized by” or “not authorized by”), but must identify who is funding the call and provide contact information.
- Candidates may use contributions to pay down debts from previous election cycles.

This document is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of all applicable laws or to respond to a particular question about these reforms. For complete political compliance advice or to ask a specific question, please contact W. Alan Wilk at 517-374-9122 or [wawilk@dykema.com](mailto:wawilk@dykema.com), or the Dykema Political Compliance Team.

#### Attorneys

Gary P. Gordon

Jason T. Hanselman

Michigan Election and Campaign Law Changes (Cont.)

Steven C. Liedel

W. Alan Wilk

## **Practice Areas**

Political Compliance, Elections & Campaign Finance

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