

Time to Rewrite Michigan's Constitution

The current Michigan Constitution of 1963, which is the fourth edition of Michigan's Constitution, states that every sixteen years Michigan citizens must be asked on a state wide ballot whether they want the Michigan Constitution rewritten. The framers of the 1963 Michigan Constitution did not intend to make the document permanent. Provisions were also included in the Constitution to amend it one section at a time. In 2010 voters will have the opportunity to decide if they want the Michigan Constitution rewritten. Historically speaking Michigan's Constitution has never been permanent. It has been an evolutionary document in order to meet the needs of the time. Thomas Jefferson felt that each generation should have the opportunity to write their constitution.

In 1963 Michigan was an economic and political leader. Unfortunately, times have changed, and Michigan is in a severe economic decline, and has a repressive Constitution that does not fairly serve the needs of many of its citizens. Michigan cannot afford the type of government mandated by the 1963 Constitution. A new constitution can down size, reorganize, and streamline Michigan government. At the top the legislature can be unicameral. The Michigan Supreme Court can be downsized from seven to five justices.

Citizens will be respected and better served by state government by eliminating special interest control of vital government functions in the state of Michigan. The ***Golden Legal Oversight Amendment*** which mandates an independently elected board to police the legal system, write court rules, and administer the courts instead of the Michigan Supreme Court will enable Michigan to become a political leader. Michigan should change its constitution to enable retention elections of incumbent judges like Illinois does in order to hold incumbent judges accountable when they run for re-election. In retention elections incumbent judges run against themselves with the question, "Should this incumbent judge be retained?" Arizona's Constitution mandates Commissions to gather information in an unbiased manner concerning judicial performance of all its judges for public information. Eliminating the requirement that the majority of all professional regulatory boards be composed of members of the profession the board regulates will make the various professions more responsive to the people they serve. Michigan's current constitution does not permit a graduated income tax. The vast majority of the states have a graduated income tax, and it is time for Michigan to fall in line with the majority.

In 2008 the Michigan Supreme Court threw out a proposed amendment to the Michigan Constitution that would have downsized the Michigan Supreme Court. I doubt if the Court will allow Constitutional amendments that would reduce its power such as the ***Golden Legal Oversight Amendment*** or other changes to the legal system.

Special interest groups such as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the MEA are opposed to a rewrite, because they feel their members will lose special privileges they enjoy under the current Constitution. These organizations give misleading negative information as well as citing Con-Con expenses, while neglecting Michigan cost savings, and the potential benefits for the average citizen. Some naysayers will state that the rewrite process will disrupt Michigan, which many think is already politically broken. Scare tactics implying radical control is another ploy.

Michigan and its citizens will benefit if Michigan rewrites its Constitution. Start the process with a ***YES*** vote for a rewrite this November. www.tagolden.com