



December 18, 2015

The Honorable Rick Snyder
Governor
State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Snyder:

On behalf of more than 6,500 elected township officials, I urge you to veto Senate Bill 571 which was passed late Wednesday evening.

MTA has specific concern with the inclusion of Section 57 that would prohibit a public body's ability to communicate to its residents on local ballot questions 60 days prior to the election. These changes were adopted in the final hours of session without notice, without public review and without discussion with any local government association.

The last minute provision added will prohibit townships from informing voters and providing factual information on local ballot proposals to residents—including local millage proposals, zoning referendums, annexation issues, proposals to reinstate annual meeting, incorporation as a Charter Township, establishment of a planning commission, or establishment of a public library, and referendums on issuing revenue bonds—in the 60 days before the election.

These changes would also prohibit townships from informing electors of the ballot language itself or using public money or resources to respond to false information being disseminated.

Per MCL 168.646a, a local unit must submit ballot wording to the county clerk 82 days prior, thereby leaving a very limited time period of 22 days to provide information to residents.

Additionally, many public bodies provide televised broadcasts of their meetings. Should SB 571 be enacted, the measure will put local governments that televise their meetings on public access channels at risk of violating the law if they so much as answer a question from the public or make mention of any local ballot question.

Section 57 would prohibit public bodies from responding to questions from the news media for news stories about local ballot question on public property. For example, a township official would be unable to respond to an interview from broadcast or news media regarding a fire or ambulance millage proposal in a public building.

Finally the proposed change creates an inconsistent process for communicating with residents on local ballot questions versus statewide ballot questions.

Should you have questions regarding the issues raised, MTA would be happy to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Lawrence Merrill". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

G. Lawrence Merrill
Executive Director