

Election Advocacy Toolkit

Ideas for Using This Information

Michigan's Children is a statewide, independent voice for children and their families. We work with lawmakers, business leaders, and communities to make Michigan a place where all children have the opportunity to thrive. We rely heavily on communities, organizations, businesses and the public in general to further the work that we do through action. This "Election Advocacy Toolkit" includes information and ideas for you to be engaged in the upcoming 2012 elections to help candidates view children as a priority.

We encourage you to reproduce and disseminate information from this Toolkit that you believe will help engage your community to *VOTE for Michigan's children*. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Use the "VOTE" logo in your newsletter to draw attention to articles about children's issues in your community. The logo can be downloaded from Michigan's Children's website: www.michiganschildren.org.
- Make your own stickers with the "VOTE" logo. Standard address labels work and can be purchased from an office supply store. Make stickers to share!
- Copy and distribute the information about election advocacy for 501(c)(3) organizations for your Board of Directors or for a Board you sit on.
- Organize a letter writing campaign using sample letters by using the samples included in the Toolkit. Find ways to encourage public participation, such as providing child care and refreshments at the campaign meeting. Planning activities for children may also be a draw for coverage by your local media.
- Remind members of your community of the importance of voting and key dates, like the last day to register to vote. Included in the Toolkit is a list of important election dates.
- Plan a forum for local candidates. Include youth, who are new to the election process, to help organize and conduct the forum.

Thank you for your commitment to improving the lives of kids in Michigan. We hope that these materials are helpful during the campaign season to ensure that children are a priority for candidates, and that you will continue to reach out to candidates once they have taken office to hold them accountable. Together, let's make sure that the public will *VOTE for Michigan's children* in 2012!

Please visit the campaign website for additional materials, www.michiganschildren.org/VOTE-for-Michigans-Children and please do give credit where credit is due by citing your source (Need to update once on website).

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Issues for Children in Michigan

Making Children a Priority in the 2012 Elections

The children of Michigan will be our future scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents, laborers, artists and elected officials. Ensuring all children have a healthy start in life and are supported from cradle to career is essential for Michigan to continue on a path to economic prosperity. Investing in children, particularly those most challenged by their circumstances, must be a key part of rebuilding and strengthening Michigan's economy.

The single best predictor of economic prosperity is a state's success in educating and preparing its workforce. However, the long-term disparities in educational success and the subsequent economic, social and fiscal consequences of these inequities are profound and unacceptable. These gaps can be traced to the earliest years of a child's life and continue to grow during their educational careers. With the next workforce set to be its most diverse yet, Michigan needs policies and related practices that promote equity across races and ethnicities so that all children can thrive in school, the workplace and life.

The impact on the state's greatest asset, its children, is undeniable and the state must do better to ensure that Michigan children are prepared to lead the state in the future.

- **A Healthy Start:** Too many young children do not get a healthy start in life. While infant mortality has improved, significant disparities continue to exist. Nearly 1,000 Michigan infants die in the first year of life, with Michigan ranking 36th in the U.S., largely because African American children are three times more likely to die before age 1. Yet, Michigan has devoted few resources to infant mortality prevention and supporting new parents, and deep cuts have been made in pregnancy prevention and family support programs. Though small increases in investment for home visitation programs – programs which lead to healthier pregnancies and healthy early childhood development – have been made through both federal and state funds, these programs only reach approximately 20 percent of Michigan families with young children who are eligible for services.
- **Access to Basic Needs:** Recent Kids Count data show a 64 percent increase in childhood poverty between 2000 and 2009 in Michigan, with nearly one of every four children in the state now living in poverty. During the same time period, childhood poverty rose only 18 percent nationwide.¹ High poverty rates are even more prevalent for children of color, who are rapidly making up a larger and larger share of children in the state. While children of color represent just over one-third of all children in the state, they account for over half of the children living in poverty in Michigan in 2010. Ensuring access to poverty-prevention programs such as cash assistance, food assistance, and housing assistance – programs which have been scrutinized and cut by the Legislature – protects children from the detrimental impacts that poverty may have on child development.
- **Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention:** The number of victims of child abuse and neglect has grown by 21 percent in the first decade of this century, with 32,500 of the 121,000 reported cases to have been substantiated in 2010. Young children under the age of four were more likely to be confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect representing two of every five victims. At the same time, state funding for

¹ Promoting Opportunity for the Next Generation, 2011 Kids Count Data Book, Annie E. Casey Foundation (August 2011).

family preservation and child abuse/neglect prevention programs have been cut over the past several years.

- Early Education: An estimated 38,000 four-year-olds at-risk of school failure currently eligible for Michigan's Great Start School Readiness program (GSRP) are not served because current funding levels allow for less than half of all eligible children to enroll. A 2009 survey of Michigan kindergarten teachers found that one-third of children entering their classrooms are not ready to learn, and the lack of opportunity to attend a preschool program is a primary reason that kindergartners are trailing behind their peers. Evaluations of GSRP have shown that students who participated in the program are more likely to be ready for school, less likely to repeat grades, and more likely to graduate high school on time.
- High School Completion: Nearly 35,000 Michigan young people did not receive a high school diploma in the spring of 2011 – more than one-quarter of the students who began high school four-years earlier. Young people of color or those from economically disadvantaged families remain the least likely to graduate “on-time” with their peers, with 43 percent of African American students, 37 percent of Latino students, 38 percent of Native American students, and 37 percent of low-income students failing to graduate in four years. This is often due to lack of access to high quality early learning experiences that transition to high quality K-12 education as well as limited access to strategies outside of the traditional four-year high school experience that many students need to graduate. Fewer programs are available to help students continue their education or find career training, which greatly affects Michigan's economy. National data reveal that high school dropouts make up the only educational group that pays less in taxes at all government levels than its member receive in public assistance.
- Access to a Consistent Source of Medical Care: While Michigan's rate of uninsured children is lower than the national average (6% versus 10%); too many Michigan families have lost their employer-sponsored health care or are under-insured resulting in more children becoming reliant on public insurance programs. More than 1 million children, or 42 percent of all children in the state, were enrolled in Medicaid or MICHild at one point during 2010 and over half of all Michigan births are paid for by Medicaid. Unfortunately, too many children are being denied access to services that keep them healthy and out of hospitals and expensive emergency rooms due to chronically low Medicaid reimbursement rates. Luckily, due to the passage of the federal Affordable Care Act, Medicaid rates will go up in Michigan starting in the 2012-2013 fiscal year. Increasing access to a consistent source of medical care will reduce health costs while improve health and educational outcomes for Michigan children.

Michigan must ensure that the elected officials who will take office in 2013 will prioritize children and families in state and federal budget and policy decision making and must reverse some of the detrimental trends that have resulted in fewer services available for children and families most challenged by their circumstances. Michigan's Children believes that children are the key to our economic future. State and federal leaders must prioritize children as our next workforce and place all solutions on the table—including responsible revenue options—in order to create a sustainable base on which to rebuild Michigan's economy. Our children deserve it, our state deserves it, our future deserves it.



Advocacy Actions

Being a Voice on Behalf of Children

There are several ways to foster a relationship with candidates and hold them accountable for their promises once they are elected. Building a relationship and educating candidates on important children's issues prior to the election are two of the most effective actions you can take on behalf of kids. Following are some suggestions to help you create communication with candidates and ensure that your voice—and concerns—are heard.

BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CANDIDATES

1. Do your homework.

About the Candidates

- Go online to www.michigan.gov/sos and click on “Elections in Michigan” for a candidate listing.
- Check the candidates’ websites to find out who they are and what issues are important to them.
- Contact the candidates’ campaign offices to request their platform and other printed material.
- Find out what they have said to the press.

About the Issues

- Use the *Issue’s for Michigan Children* on page 2 of this Toolkit and the *Issues Primer for Michigan’s 2013 Leaders*, one specifically on early childhood and one on high school completion, available on the *VOTE for Michigan’s children* website (www.michiganschildren.org) to better understand where children currently stand. Make copies and use with candidates in explaining what is at stake for kids in Michigan.
- Use the KIDS COUNT in Michigan data book available at <http://michiganschildren.org/Kids-Count-in-Michigan/>. Make copies of the county page for the candidates.
- Use the *Resource Guide for Voters* on page 14 to find other resources.

2. Meet the candidates.

- Phone the candidate’s campaign office to request a meeting. You can meet individually with a candidate or ask him/her to meet with a group you are a member of.
- Provide information to the candidate about the issues you are concerned about. Think of this as an opportunity to educate the candidate and to lay the foundation for future work together.
- Ask for a “calendar of appearances” for the candidate. There should be a number of places where the candidate is appearing to meet voters. Share this information with other advocates.

3. Keep in mind the limitations on 501(c)(3) organizations.

- We have included some brief information on *Election Advocacy for 501(c)(3) Organizations* in the next section of this Toolkit. Visit the Michigan Participation Project website, which provides nonpartisan voter engagement resources to the nonprofit community, at www.michparticipationproject.org.

EDUCATE YOUR CANDIDATES

1. Prepare questions about the issues.

- Use each question as an opportunity to educate the candidates about issues. Preface questions with a short fact about the issue you are asking about. Here are a few sample questions:



- Studies show that zero to five are critical years for brain development. What steps would you take to ensure that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn?
 - Many Americans think kids are in trouble today, and they tend to blame parents for it. What steps would you take to help educate and support families in their tough job of raising children?
 - Too many Michigan young people fail to graduate from high school within four years. What steps would you take to provide multiple pathways to high school completion?
 - Students' educational success is not only impacted within the four walls of the school but also by what's going on in their neighborhoods. What opportunities outside of the school would you promote to ensure that students are fully supported in their educational careers?
2. Attend candidate forums (or host your own candidate forum) and ask questions.
 3. Write a letter to your candidates.
 - Individualized, personal letters tend to be the most effective with candidates because they realize that these letters take more time and effort on the part of citizens. We have provided sample letters in this Toolkit to help get you started.

EDUCATE FELLOW VOTERS

1. Write a letter to the editor, or opinion and/or editorial pieces to your local newspaper.
 - Use these pieces to encourage voters and candidates to make children a priority in the election. Provide information about the key issues for children in Michigan using *VOTE for Michigan's children* briefs.
 - Be sure to check with the newspaper before sending anything as there are often restrictions, like word limits.
 - Many newspapers conduct surveys or questionnaires of candidates and voters. Ask the editorial boards to include questions about children and youth in their discussions with candidates. Let them know how important children and youth issues are to you, and that this is the news you want them to report on.
 - Remember, if you are acting on behalf of a nonprofit, 501(c)(3), your letter should educate the public about issues for kids and not endorse any specific candidate.
 - See the "Writing a Letter to the Editor" in this Toolkit for key tips to a successful letter to the editor.
2. Offer yourself to be interviewed by local news stations.
 - When at an event, news cameras are often looking for people to interview. Introduce yourself and offer to be interviewed.
 - Remember to keep it short—the best sound bites are brief, ten second statements.
3. Appear on television programs or call into radio stations that have open discussion forums.
 - Make sure you know your issue considerably well to get your point across, but it is a good idea to keep your message simple and factual.
4. Create short, 15 – 20 second "Kid Bits" for the radio.
 - For example: "Did you know that child poverty in _____ County has increased by _____ percent since 2000? Does your candidate know? Help us *VOTE for Michigan's children* in the

2012 elections. Ask candidates about their positions on issues related to the health, development, and education of our children from *Cradle to Career*.”

- Check with your local radio stations about their policies for handling public service announcements.
5. Hold an event and involve your community.
 - Some suggestions for family-friendly events: talent shows, community fairs, and cookouts. Invite parents and families that are concerned with children’s issues.
 - Write a press release and send it to local media outlets.
 - Be sure to delegate someone to give a brief speech about why you have gathered people around children’s issues.
 6. Use the same material to communicate with multiple audiences.
 - When you write a letter to the editor, modify it slightly, and make it into a letter to the candidates. When you create a radio message, use it to create an educational question to ask the candidates. This will help in driving home the main message: *VOTE for Michigan’s children!*

POST-ELECTION FOLLOW-UP WITH LEGISLATORS

1. Once the election is over, follow-up with your original contacts with your newly elected legislators and other elected officials.
 - If you have internet access, visit our website and sign-up for our eBulletins for the latest information and policy updates regarding kids in Michigan. Become a member of one of our action networks: Early Childhood and/or Graduate Michigan. Use our timely *Action Alerts* to contact policymakers and engage other children’s advocates. And, follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/michiganschildren and Twitter at www.twitter.com/MichChildren.
 - Familiarize yourself with the contact information of your newly elected public officials, including their office phone number and address, and follow them on Facebook and Twitter. Be sure to call their offices whenever you have a concern. Let them know you are paying attention by writing letters in support or opposition of their positions or tagging them in your Facebook and Twitter posts. They are your legislators and should listen to your concerns!
 - Continue to write letters to the editor of your local newspaper. Legislators read the newspaper every day.
 - Most importantly, don’t give up! Legislators are there for their constituents and it is up to each of us to hold them accountable!

HOW CAN MICHIGAN’S CHILDREN HELP YOU?

1. Provide **data** on particular issues relating to children and families.
2. Provide a speaker to facilitate **advocacy training**.
3. Provide **technical assistance** on elections and youth leadership.
4. Provide **guidance** for less experienced advocates.

**Source: Partially adopted from the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy 2008 Election Advocacy Tool Kit*

Election Advocacy for 501(c)(3) Organizations

Helpful Guidelines & Resources

Nonprofits or 501(c)(3) organizations have the right to lobby and should do so; however, lobbying activities are limited by IRS regulations. There are two types of political activity: 1) Lobbying for legislation and 2) Getting involved in the election process, or *Policies versus People*, respectively.

Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited from electioneering—supporting or endorsing candidates, but can ALWAYS talk about policies/issues to anyone who will listen, like candidates, other voters, on television or street corners. Put simply, they can talk *Policies*, NOT *People*.

Here are some helpful guidelines to keep in mind for your 501(c)(3):

- Yes, you **CAN** conduct voter registration drives.
- Yes, you **CAN** conduct voter education activities such as candidate forums. Discussion of broad, social, economic, and similar policy issues requiring legislative solution, so long as the discussion does not address the merits of specific legislation, is also okay.
- Yes, you **CAN** sponsor or conduct candidate debates or forums as long as all candidates are treated in a fair and impartial manner. Also, all candidates must be invited.
- Yes, you **CAN** promote participation in the electoral process, as long as it's nonpartisan.
- Yes, you **CAN** produce nonpartisan voter guides to educate the public on the candidates' positions on the issues based on the candidates' responses to a questionnaire. You can also make available the result of nonpartisan analysis, study or research on a legislative issue.
- Yes, you **CAN** engage in direct communication with legislators, executive officials, their staff, and/or the general public about a general issue of concern where there is no reference or view expressed on specific legislation and no call to action on that legislation.
- No, you **CANNOT** support or oppose candidates for public office.
- No, you **CANNOT** refer candidates using "code words," such as "conservative" or "liberal." These can be seen as labels by which voters can identify the organization's favored candidates.

Visit the [Michigan Participation Project website](#) which provides nonpartisan voter engagement resources to the nonprofit community, including detailed guidelines for election advocacy for 501(c)(3) organizations.

**Source: Information adapted from: "E-Advocacy for Nonprofits: The Law of Lobbying and Election Related Activity on the Net" a publication by the Alliance for Justice. For more information, visit their website at: www.ajfj.org.*

Key 2012 Election Dates

Important Dates to Remember

Elections:

- August 7th – Primary Election
- November 6th – General Election

Voter registration deadlines:

- July 9th – Last day to register to vote in the primary election
- October 9th – Last day to register to vote in the general election

Candidate filing deadlines:

- March 26th – Incumbent judicial candidates (other than Supreme Court) file affidavit of candidacy for the August primary
- May 1st – Non-incumbent judicial candidates (other than Supreme Court) file affidavit of candidacy for the August primary
- May 15th – Partisan and nonpartisan candidates (other than judicial candidates) file nominating petitions and Affidavit of Identity for the August primary
- July 5th – Incumbent Supreme Court Justices file Affidavit of Candidacy for the November general election
- July 19th – Candidates without party affiliation file qualifying petitions for the November election

Other deadlines:

- May 30th – Petitions to place a proposal to initiate legislation for placement on the November ballot (258,088 valid signatures required)
- July 9th – Petitions to place a proposed constitutional amendment on the November ballot (322,609 valid signatures required)
- July 19th – Petitions for new political parties to qualify for the November ballot (32,261 valid signatures required)

Top Ten Reasons to VOTE for Michigan's children

If you've ever said, "I don't have kids, why should I vote with them in mind?"

Listed here are the top ten reasons why you should.

10. **Big Bird and Elmo tickled you.** With knowledge comes opportunity. Early education is important, yet only half of all children under five receive early childhood education from someone other than a parent. In recent years, funds for early education programs have had small, incremental increases, but not nearly enough to offset the thousands of Michigan children who are eligible for early childhood education programs but can't access it due to limited funding. *Your vote could ensure that access to early childhood education is adequately expanded.*
9. **You want to live in a vibrant community.** In the absence of quality after-school programs those hours after school without supervision are the peak for juvenile crime and other risky behaviors. During these hours, juvenile crime triples and teens are more likely to be victims of violence, plus teen pregnancy is more likely to occur amongst youth who are not engaged in after-school programs. Lawmakers have recently cut significant funding for pregnancy prevention programs and eliminated critical funding for after-school programs. *Vote to help sustain after-school activities—and lower the incidence of juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, and other risky behaviors.*
8. **You worry about your grandma.** Michigan has responded to youth violence with punitive, rather than preventive measures, and has changed the laws to make it easier to prosecute juveniles as adults. Funding for juvenile justice day treatment programs has been cut. Lack of reintegration resources could increase the likelihood of repeat offenses. *Yours could be a vote for violence prevention.*
7. **Michigan's future depends on diplomas.** Too many young people are dropping out of high school in Michigan and research shows that a high school diploma is the foundation on which adult and family success is built. Young adults who graduate from high school and are ready for postsecondary education or training are provided with a lifetime of employment options and earning potential. Yet, Michigan lawmakers continue to cut support programs that help *all* young people reach their potential. *Vote for your community's future.*
6. **Your worst scars are from climbing trees.** But all "accidents" aren't accidents, and some scars run deep. The number of victims of child abuse and neglect has grown by 16 percent in the first decade of the 21st Century while funding for prevention and support programs has been drastically reduced. *Vote to support people who fight to prevent child abuse and neglect.*
5. **Healthy teens stay in school.** Teen health clinics have been shown to increase school attendance rates, boost test scores, and reduce school violence. Youth served by school-based clinics throughout Michigan have rallied successfully for consistent funding for their program in the K-12 School Aid budget. *Join the rally—vote!*
4. **An apple a day doesn't always work.** More children have been denied access to quality, affordable care as fewer doctors accept Medicaid clients since the state has drastically reduced payments to these doctors. While barriers to access have increased and Medicaid payments will increase due to

the federal Affordable Care Act, the number of people seeking public insurance has soared in Michigan with approximately 1 million kids on Medicaid and MICHild, our state's Children's Health Insurance Program. These public health insurance programs are most critical for Michigan babies with over half of all births in the state paid for by Medicaid, allowing them to have a healthy start in life. *Vote to keep health care an option.*

3. **Your sister is expecting.** All women of childbearing age should have access to health care services including family planning, pre- and post-natal care, through public or private health care providers. Early (and uninterrupted) prenatal care mitigates many risks associated with personal behaviors, heredity, and nutrition. *Your vote can help keep moms—and babies—healthy.*
2. **You love your kid sister (brother).** Nearly half of all child deaths are preventable. Despite the fact that child death rates have been dropping, nearly 1,000 babies died before their first birthday in 2010 and about 400 teenagers died. Also, the number of youth attempting suicide in Michigan is slowly on the rise—in fact they are at greater risk than adolescence across the country. We are in danger of reversing progress as lawmakers continue to make penny wise, pound foolish decisions with taxpayer funds.
1. **Remember when you were a kid?** Life seemed so care-free and easy. *Vote to keep it that way—for all kids.*

This election, VOTE for Michigan's children.

Sample Letter to Candidates

Write a Personalized Letter to Candidates

Individualized, hand-written letters tend to be most effective with candidates because these letters take more time and effort on the part of citizens. However, preprinted letters or postcards are easy and can force a candidate to think about children’s issues. These can be simple and effective when sent in large quantities and people can be encouraged to write a personal note on the card.

Date

Appropriate heading

Candidate Name

Candidate Address

Appropriate salutation

Dear _____:

State your purpose in the first paragraph of the letter.

I am writing to express my concern about a lack of commitment to children in the state of Michigan. I do not understand why the protection of children and families is not a higher priority and hope that if you are elected, you will make children and families the highest priority.

If you want to express your concerns about an issue, this should be done in the second paragraph. Explain why you are concerned and include any statistics or personal knowledge on the issue. This paragraph is optional in a letter to a candidate.

Scientists have proven that by the time children reach school age, between 80 and 90 percent of the intellectual and emotional wiring of their brains has been set for life. Despite the evidence that children’s earliest experiences affect the very architecture of their brains, too many young children face difficulties that may affect their long-term well-being and success. Ensuring young children – particularly those most at-risk for poorer health and developmental outcomes – have access to high quality early learning experiences is critical to preparing Michigan’s future scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents, laborers, artists and elected officials.

In the final paragraph you should repeat the purpose of the letter & ask for the candidate’s platform. Close by thanking the candidate for his or her time.

This is a very important issue to me in this election and I would like a copy of your platform. I am particularly interested in your plans to safeguard the health and well-being of young children, as well as the support of their families. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name and address

Ima Advocate
1234 Proactive Way
Yourtown, USA 12345-6789

Sample Letter to Legislators

Build a Relationship with Your Newly Elected Legislator

After the election, those candidates elected become your legislators. This presents an excellent opportunity to develop a relationship with them and to remind them of the importance of making children and families a priority. This sample letter should be adapted to express your interests and the needs of your community.

Date

Appropriate heading

The Honorable (full name)
State Senator (or Representative)
State Capitol Building
Lansing, MI 48909

Appropriate salutation

Dear Senator/Representative (name):

State your purpose in the first paragraph of the letter.

I am writing to urge you to vote in favor of children’s issues, such as early childhood learning programs.

If you want to express your concerns about an issue, this should be done in the second paragraph. Explain why you are concerned and include any statistics or personal knowledge on the issue. This paragraph is optional in a letter to a candidate.

Scientists have proven that by the time children reach school age, between 80 and 90 percent of the intellectual and emotional wiring of their brains has been set for life. Despite the evidence that children’s earliest experiences affect the very architecture of their brains, too many young children face difficulties that may affect their long-term well-being and success. Ensuring young children – particularly those most at-risk for poorer health and developmental outcomes – have access to high quality early learning experiences is critical to preparing Michigan’s future scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents, laborers, artists and elected officials.

In the final paragraph you should repeat the purpose of the letter & ask for the candidate’s platform. Close by thanking the candidate for his or her time.

The future of America depends on what we do for our children today. Therefore, we need you to support this issue. I am looking forward to hearing from you and your views on this issue. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your name and address

Ima Advocate
1234 Proactive Way
Yourtown, USA 12345-6789

Writing a Letter to the Editor

Key Tips to a Successful Letter to the Editor

1. **You must take a position.** If you are referring to a previously published letter, a news story or column, identify it by its headline and the date it was published.
2. **Cut to the chase.** Choose two or three of your strongest points and develop them.
3. **Be clear and concise.** Write short, punchy sentences, group in no more than two or three paragraphs.
4. **Your letter must stand on its own.** Do not assume all readers will have seen the original article.
5. **Proofread.** Spell check the letter, and have a friend read it to make sure it makes sense and serves a purpose.
6. **Be polite.** Don't launch a personal attack on the columnist/reporter or other writer. Instead, offer a counter opinion backed by facts.
7. **Target one publication at a time.** Don't send copies of your letter to a whole host of publications. Tailor your letter to the publication you really want to publish it.
8. **Follow-up.** If your letter doesn't appear within a week of submittal, send a polite and brief email asking whether it is being considered. Include the date you sent it and attach a copy of the original.
9. **Have more to say?** Consider submitting a guest column if you have more to say than the letter permits.

General guidelines to remember:

- Include your first name, middle initial and last name. Letters without names are not used.
- Include the township, city or village you live in as well as a complete mailing address and day/evening telephone numbers for verification purposes. Only your name and community you live in are published. Newspapers are more likely to use letters from residents within their circulation area.
- Most newspapers limit writers to one published letter per month.
- Letters are subject to editing. Don't save your best point until the end. If your letter is going to be shortened, it will usually be the final paragraphs.
- Follow the limitations and details outlined on the editorial page for the newspaper.

Resource Guide for Voters

Information to Facilitate Participation in the 2012 Election

Voter Information Center:

The Michigan Secretary of State Voter Information Center provides voters with election dates, registration status and how to register if you are not already registered, a view of your sample ballot, links to the candidates and their websites, and more. Check it out at www.michigan.gov/sos.

If you are a parent, grandparent, family member, caregiver, teacher, and/or other child advocate:

The resources below provide information and data about important children's issues. As the campaign season continues, many will post materials to use with candidates for public office to ensure that kids are a priority in the 2012 election.

- *State resources:*
 - Michigan's Children – www.michiganschildren.org
 - League of Women Voters of Michigan – www.lwvmi.org
 - Michigan League for Human Services – www.milhs.org
 - Michigan Nonprofit Association – <http://mnaonline.org>
 - Michigan Sandbox Party – www.michigansandboxparty.org
- *National resources:*
 - First Focus – www.firstfocus.net
 - Voices for America's Children – www.voices.org
 - SparkAction – www.sparkaction.org

If you are a young adult:

The resources below provide information for young people to become engaged not only in the election process, but in their communities as well.

- Campus Compact – www.compact.org
- Rock the Vote – www.rockthevote.org
- Youth Vote – www.youthvote.org
- Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) – www.civicyouth.org