

# VOTING IN 2010: Ten Swing States

## MICHIGAN

Michigan seems to always be on lists of states to watch at election time and that's true in 2010 as well. Notably, Michigan was until recently involved in a lawsuit over purges to its voter registration databases in which the state agreed to settle and reform its past practices. During the 2008 election, Michigan was the epicenter of controversy over possible plans to challenge voters whose homes had been foreclosed. Challenges and caging lists remain a potential problem.

### POLITICAL OUTLOOK

- The race for **governor** was considered close, slightly leaning Republican; however in recent weeks, Republican businessman Rick Snyder has opened a lead in the polls over Democrat Virg Bernero, the mayor of Lansing.
- Republicans appear well-positioned to contend for at least two **House** seats currently held by Democrats.

### OBSTACLES TO VOTING

- Despite cooperative efforts between the state's Department of Human Resources and advocates, data on **voter registration at public assistance agencies** suggest that improved NVRA procedures have not been uniformly implemented throughout the state, or that accountability mechanisms may not have been fully utilized by the state agency after initial implementation of reforms.
- The absence of a law specifically prohibiting **deceptive practices** leaves voters vulnerable to Election Day dirty tricks and misinformation campaigns.
- **Provisional ballots** cast in the wrong precinct – even if cast in the correct polling site or county – will not be counted, potentially disenfranchising a great number of eligible voters.
- The **voter registration deadline** falls a full 30 days prior to the election, effectively barring some interested citizens from being able to register to vote in time to cast ballots.
- Prior to Election Day, any registered voter of the municipality may, by written affidavit, **challenge the registration** of any registered voter. On Election Day, any registered voter of the precinct at the polling place may **challenge** a voter.
- **Language minority voters** must navigate the Secretary of State website in English in order to get to forms and information in Spanish.

### EXEMPLARY VOTING LAWS/ PROCEDURES

- Citizens' **voting rights** are restored as soon as they are released from prison.
- Michigan does not jeopardize the **privacy and security of overseas and military voters** by accepting ballots cast by fax, e-mail, or over the Internet. Ballots are sent out to voters "upon receipt" of request and in accordance with the 45-day rule of the MOVE Act
- The Secretary of State makes a serious effort to **conduct voter registration at citizenship naturalization ceremonies**.

ARIZONA

COLORADO

ILLINOIS

KENTUCKY

LOUISIANA

**MICHIGAN**

MISSOURI

NEVADA

NORTH CAROLINA

OHIO

Demos



# WHAT CAN BE DONE BY CHIEF ELECTIONS OFFICER BEFORE ELECTION DAY

- The Chief Elections Officer is required by law to **implement the NVRA** and should coordinate with state public assistance agencies to ensure that all clients are receiving the registration assistance they must get under that statute.
- Take extra steps to ensure people have the correct voting information ahead of time, to prevent negative impacts from potential **deceptive practices**. Establish a clear system for detecting misinformation campaigns and a plan for how the office will **respond** to them to ensure voters have the true information immediately.
- Make sure voters and poll workers alike know the correct polling place *and* the correct precinct to ensure they will **not cast a “placebo” provisional ballot**.
- Ensure citizens know of ramifications for frivolous, fraudulent or discriminatory vote caging and challenges
- **Provide translated information and materials** on the Secretary of State’s website in all languages for which there is a substantial voting population who predominantly speak another language. Provide links to such information in the translated language on the home page.

---

In advance of the mid-term elections, Common Cause and Dēmos will release a new report that finds election policies in 10 swing states could disenfranchise voters and impact election results. The report, “Voting in 2010: Ten Swing States,” looks at Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, and Ohio, summarizing each state’s practices, and providing a set of recommendations for improvement.

To view the full report, visit **[demos.org/swingstate](http://demos.org/swingstate)**  
or **[commoncause.org/swingstate](http://commoncause.org/swingstate)**.

## **Media and other inquiries:**

Tim Rusch, Dēmos, [trusch@demos.org](mailto:trusch@demos.org), 212.633.1407  
Mary Boyle, Common Cause, [mboyle@commoncause.org](mailto:mboyle@commoncause.org), 202.736.5716