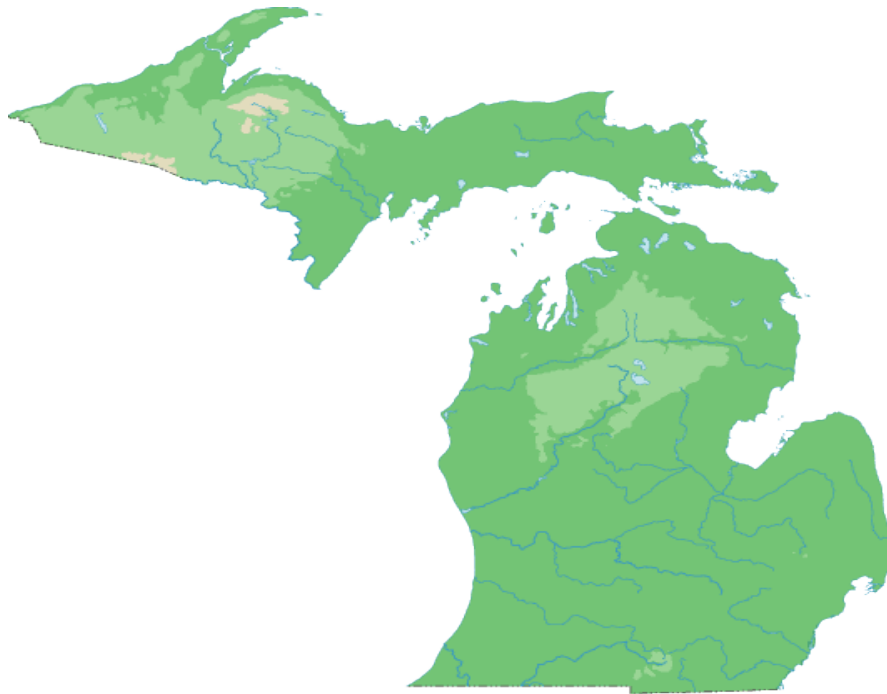


MICHIGAN ELECTION COALITION

# Election Protection “Hotspot” Report

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Michigan- 2008



[The content contained in this report summarizes the work of **Michigan Election Coalition** partner organizations throughout the state. The report is intended to highlight the areas where coalition partners have organized election protection efforts, as well as draw attention to vulnerable areas that could benefit from additional election protection efforts.

## Michigan Election Coalition Report on 2008 “Hot Spots”

Based on the foregoing analysis, the MEC has identified **twenty-five** Election Protection “hotspots” in **twelve** Michigan counties:

<b><u>Allegan County</u></b> Clyde Township	<b><u>Kent County</u></b> Grand Rapids	<b><u>Muskegon County</u></b> Muskegon Heights
<b><u>Berrien County</u></b> Benton Harbor	<b><u>Ingham County</u></b> East Lansing	<b><u>Saginaw County</u></b> Buena Vista Township Kochville
<b><u>Genesee County</u></b> Flint Grand Blanc Township	<b><u>Oakland County</u></b> District 13 Rochester West Bloomfield Township	<b><u>Washtenaw County</u></b> Ann Arbor Superior Township Ypsilanti Ypsilanti Township
<b><u>Kalamazoo County</u></b> Kalamazoo	<b><u>Macomb County</u></b> Mt. Clemons Sterling Heights Warren	<b><u>Wayne County</u></b> Dearborn Detroit Hamtramck Inkster

Currently, election protection efforts are underway in the following “hotspots”: **Flint, Kalamazoo, Sterling Heights, Warren, District 13, Rochester, Kochville, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Dearborn, Detroit, and Hamtramck.** The listed locations have been identified as Election Protection “hotspots” because they include communities with significant numbers of traditionally underrepresented voters, who have experienced election protection challenges in past election cycles.

## Introduction

The 2008 Presidential primary contests set record numbers for voter turnout. Even amidst the controversy surrounding Michigan's early primary, the state experienced its third highest turnout ever in a Presidential primary. Looking back to the 2004 General Election, more Michigan voters turned out to vote in this election than ever before – approximately 4.8 million of the state's roughly 8 million eligible voters. Given the significant increase in both national and local voter participation, it is likely that record numbers of voters will show up to the polls for the November 2008 General Election.

The prospect of an active and more engaged electorate lies at the foundation of democracy. Realizing this democratic ideal, however, often reveals the shortcomings in election administration, procedures, and processes. These election administration challenges can be reformed and full civic participation realized through the efforts of organizations involved in election protection advocacy.

The purpose of this report is to 1.) highlight Election Protection “hotspots” in the state of Michigan; 2.) identify Michigan Election Coalition (MEC) partners with a presence in these “hotspots”; and 3.) describe Coalition partner's election protection efforts in the identified “hotspots”.

### What is Election Protection?

Election Protection - activities that seek to reduce the obstacles that a voter may face when voting. These activities include processes related to voter registration, absentee ballots, voter intimidation, and any hurdles experienced on Election Day.

### *What factors determine an Election Protection “hotspot”?*

For purposes of this report, “hotspots” are geographic locations that represent areas that have reported or may report election protection issues; communities with traditionally underrepresented voters; and areas associated with high political contention. Generally speaking, known Election Protection issues have occurred in the past and are likely to occur again. This includes geographic areas that have experienced the following election administration problems:

- inadequate election resources (malfunctioning and/or jammed tabulators, insufficient ballots, insufficient voting booths)
- confusing voter ID requirements
- poorly trained poll workers
- long lines
- registration issues

- inadequate accommodations for the disabled
- no language assistance, despite large numbers of English learning voters

In addition, “hotspots” include recognition- that often times, election administration problems occur in geographic areas that are largely populated by historically underrepresented groups. This includes:

- Communities of color
- Low income communities
- English learning communities
- Students
- individuals with felony convictions

“Hotspots” are additionally identified as areas of high political contention. These areas are important because where an election is close, voters who vote in areas of high political contention, sometimes report illegal voter challenges and intimidation.

The information obtained in this report was collected through several meetings with coalition partners of the Michigan Election Coalition (MEC). The MEC is a project of Michigan Voice collaborative of State Voices (formerly the Center for Civic Participation). This report is intended to be used as a coordinating tool for election protection advocacy. The report will not only highlight the work of partner organizations in particular “hotspots”, but it will also bring attention to areas, communities, or issues, where more election protection efforts are needed.

This report concludes with recommendations to improve the election administration challenges that burden the full civic participation of Michigan voters.

## GENNESEE COUNTY

### Flint

In Flint, coalition partners are organizing GOTV efforts among individuals with felony convictions, as well as GOTV efforts in the foster youth community. These registrations gathered by Unlock the Vote and Foster the Vote!, respectively, are intended to expand the electorate to non-traditional voters. Another component to the programs is to provide voter education, so that these newly registered voters will be informed, responsible, and active members of the electorate.

### **MEC Partner Organizations leading Election/Voter Protection Efforts in Flint:**

#### *Unlock the Vote*

Neila Johnson, Director  
unlockthevote@yahoo.com.

#### Covered Communities in Flint:

- ✓ Individuals with felony convictions

## KALAMAZOO COUNTY

### Kalamazoo

In Kalamazoo, USSA has focused its election protection efforts through outreach among college students. Specifically, USSA is organizing student leaders at Western Michigan University to hold voter registration drives on campus. To ensure successful voter registration drives, USSA will coordinate with other coalition partners to provide voter registration trainings for Western Michigan University student organizers. USSA also plans to recruit students to apply for poll worker positions in Kalamazoo on Election Day.

### **MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Kalamazoo:**

#### *USSA*

Jonathan Doster, Michigan Field Organizer  
michigan@usstudents.org

#### Covered Communities in Kalamazoo:

- ✓ Western Michigan University students

## KENT COUNTY

APIAVote-Michigan is distributing voting rights information (including photo ID law clarification and 866-OUR-VOTE number) via an educational handout, at voter registration drives -- community events, houses of worship (churches, temples, gurdwaras), festivals, etc."

### MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Macomb County:

#### *APIAVote*

Stephanie Chang, Chair  
stephanielilychang@gmail.com

#### Covered Communities in Kent County:

- ✓ English- learners
- ✓ Groups with low voter-turnout

## MACOMB COUNTY

APIAVote- Michigan has established a language access committee to advocate for and assist with implementation of policies or voluntary procedures that include translated ballots, election materials, and interpreters at the polls for the Asian American community in Macomb County. Specifically, this group is targeting the cities of Warren and Sterling Heights as areas that could benefit from increased language access advocacy. Additionally, APIAVote is planning several GOTV events which include a YouTube video contest, organizing phone banks, and canvassing among Hmong and Bangladeshi college students. APIAVote-Michigan is also distributing voting rights information at voter registration drives -- community events, houses of worship, festivals, etc. APIAVote-Michigan plans to partner with the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF) to mobilize volunteers for AALDEF's exit polling and election protection project for the general election.

MEC Coalition Partner, MOSES, reported that they are coordinating voter registration drives in churches in Macomb County. MOSES will also organize voter mobilization efforts in Macomb County, like phone drives, candidate literature drops, canvassing, and door-knocks. MOSES will target communities in Macomb County that have been traditionally identified as low voter turnout communities.

### MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Macomb County:

#### *APIAVote*

Stephanie Chang, Chair  
stephanielilychang@gmail.com

#### Covered Communities in Macomb County:

- ✓ English- learners
- ✓ Groups with low voter-turnout

## **MOSES**

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## **OAKLAND COUNTY**

APIAVote- Michigan's language access committee is working to advocate for and assist with implementation of policies or voluntary procedures that include translated ballots, election materials, and interpreters at the polls for the Asian American community in Oakland County. Given the high Asian American LEP population in Oakland County, APIAVote-Michigan is also exploring possible county ordinance language that would mandate translated election materials in Oakland County. APIAVote-Michigan is distributing voting rights information (including photo ID law clarification and 866-OUR-VOTE number) via an educational handout, at voter registration drives -- community events, houses of worship (churches, temples, gurdwaras), festivals, etc. APIAVote-Michigan will also extend its partnership with the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF) to mobilize volunteers for AALDEF's exit polling and election protection projects to Oakland County. Specifically, APIAVote will target the cities Troy, Novi, and Canton.

### District 13

MOSES will also coordinate voter registration drives in churches in Oakland County's District 13. MOSES' voter mobilization efforts in Oakland County will target communities that have been traditionally identified as low voter turnout communities. Particularly, MOSES will work in Oakland County's District 13 to mobilize that district's immigrant community.

### Rochester

In Rochester, USSA will continue its student led voter registration drives on the campus of Oakland University. USSA will coordinate with other coalition partners to provide a voter registration training for Oakland University student organizers. USSA will also work to recruit students to apply to become poll workers on Election Day.

## **MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Oakland County:**

### **APIAVote**

Stephanie Chang, Chair  
stephanielilychang@gmail.com

### Covered Communities in Oakland County:

- ✓ English- learners
- ✓ Groups with low voter-turnout
- ✓ Oakland University students

## **MOSES**

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## **USSA**

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### **Election Protection concerns reported in Oakland County:**

- ✓ During the August 5 Primary, poll workers in Precinct 22 in Royal Oak reported that the tabulator at her precinct malfunctioned most of the morning. One voter reported that the machine “jammed on her” and that poll workers said it “jammed” several times already.
- ✓ During the August 5 Primary, a voter in Precinct 8 reported that a sign was prominently displayed that read ID was required to vote. When she reported the problem to the election official, she was told that IDs were required. She pressed the issue by explaining the affidavit option and the worker conceded that the voter was correct. The sign remained after the voter exited the precinct.
- ✓ During the August 5 primary, a sign, prominently displayed in Grand Blanc Township/Precinct 8, read that voters must have ID to vote. A poll worker stated that voters needed an ID to vote. The incident was reported to the SOS.

## **SAGINAW COUNTY**

### Kochville Township

USSA will organize students at Saginaw Valley State University to hold campus-wide voter registration drives. MEC coalition groups will partner with USSA to provide a voter registration training for Saginaw Valley State University student organizers. USSA will also work to recruit SVSU students to apply for poll worker jobs on Election Day.

### **MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Saginaw County:**

#### **USSA**

Jonathan Doster, Michigan Field Organizer  
jquinn.doster@gmail.com

#### **Covered Communities in Saginaw County:**

- ✓ Saginaw Valley State University students

## WASHETENAW COUNTY

### Ann Arbor

APIAVote- Michigan's language access committee is advocating for the implementation of policies or voluntary procedures that include translated ballots, election materials, and interpreters at the polls for the Asian American community in Ann Arbor. APIAVote-Michigan is also distributing voting rights information via an educational handout, at voter registration drives -- community events, houses of worship, festivals, etc.

USSA is organizing students at the University of Michigan to hold voter registration drives on campus. USSA will coordinate with other coalition partners to provide a voter registration training for the University of Michigan student organizers. USSA will also work to recruit students to apply to become poll workers on Election Day.

### **MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Ann Arbor:**

#### *APIAVote*

Stephanie Chang, Chair  
stephanielilychang@gmail.com

#### *USSA*

Jonathan Doster, Michigan Field Organizer  
jquinn.doster@gmail.com

#### Covered Communities in Ann Arbor:

- ✓ English- learners
- ✓ University of Michigan students

### Ypsilanti

USSA is organizing students at Eastern Michigan University to hold voter registration drives on campus. USSA will coordinate with other coalition partners to provide a voter registration training for Eastern Michigan University student organizers. USSA will also work to recruit students to apply to become poll workers on Election Day.

### **MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Ypsilanti:**

#### *USSA*

Jonathan Doster, Michigan Field Organizer  
jquinn.doster@gmail.com

#### Covered Communities in Ypsilanti:

- ✓ Eastern Michigan University students

## WAYNE COUNTY

APIAVote- Michigan's language access committee is working to advocate for and assist with implementation of policies or voluntary procedures that include translated ballots, election materials, and interpreters at the polls for the Asian American community in Wayne County. APIAVote-Michigan is distributing voting rights information (including photo ID law clarification and 866-OUR-VOTE number) via an educational handout, at voter registration drives -- community events, houses of worship (churches, temples, gurdwaras), festivals, etc. Additionally, APIAVote-Michigan plans to partner with the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF) to mobilize volunteers for AALDEF's exit polling and election protection project for the general election. APIAVote will target Dearborn, Detroit, and Hamtramck.

### Dearborn

In Dearborn, ACCESS is working in majority Arab-American communities to increase voter participation through GOTV campaigns. ACCESS is using the Voter Activation Network (VAN) to target "unlikely voters". This group defines "unlikely voters" as voters who did not vote in 2 of the last 3 federal elections. In other words, these are voters who voted only once in the last 8 years. East Dearborn has been identified as an area to increase GOTV efforts, because not only is there a high concentration of unlikely voters, but there is also a large population of low income immigrant communities, who traditionally have low voter turn out rates. Additionally, ACCESS is encouraging voters in Dearborn to fill out applications for absentee ballots. During the month of September, ACCESS members will visit Mosques and other places of worship to help seniors and other voters fill out applications to receive absentee ballots.

To better accommodate members of the Arab-American community who need language assistance, ACCESS will recruit bilingual Arab-Americans to apply to become poll workers. ACCESS will also recruit and train bilingual poll watchers and/or challengers to be present on Election Day.

USSA is organizing students at University of Michigan Dearborn to hold voter registration drives on campus. USSA will coordinate with other coalition partners to provide a voter registration training for University of Michigan Dearborn student organizers. USSA will also work to recruit students to apply to become poll workers on Election Day.

## MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Dearborn:

### *ACCESS*

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### *APIAVote*

Stephanie Chang, Chair  
stephanielilychang@gmail.com

### *USSA*

Jonathan Doster, Michigan Field Organizer  
jquinn.doster@gmail.com

#### Covered Communities in Dearborn:

- ✓ English- learners
- ✓ Arab-American community
- ✓ Groups with low voter-turnout
- ✓ University of Michigan Dearborn students

## Detroit

MEC partners are organizing many GOTV efforts in Detroit. Groups like Planned Parenthood will match their member lists against the voter file to encourage individuals identified as unlikely voters to exercise their right to vote. As mentioned above, Unlock the Vote and Foster the Vote! will continue their respective voter registration efforts in Detroit by conducting voter registration drives targeting individuals with felony convictions and foster youth.

MOSES will also organize voter mobilization efforts in Detroit. MOSES will target communities in Detroit that have traditionally identified as low voter turnout communities. Particularly, MOSES will work in Highland Park to mobilize voters.

The Advancement Project will focus its advocacy work around provisional ballots. The Advancement Project's goal is to promote public awareness around provisional ballots by disclosing to the voter facts and information pertaining to what it means to cast a provisional ballots mean and how provisional ballots are counted. The Advancement Project is also involved in litigation to challenge two statewide voter purge programs that could potentially disenfranchise hundreds of thousands Michigan voters in the November 2008 presidential election.

## MEC Partner Organizations leading Election Protection Efforts in Detroit:

### *ACCESS*

Fayrouz Saad, Civic Engagement Coordinator  
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### *Advancement Project*

Brandon Jessup, Michigan Advocate  
brandon.jessup@gmail.com

#### Covered Communities in Detroit:

- ✓ English- learners
- ✓ Groups with low voter-turnout
- ✓ Foster Youth
- ✓ Individuals with felony convictions

*APIAVote*

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*Unlock the Vote*

Neila Johnson, Director  
unlockthevote@yahoo.com

Election Protection concerns reported in Wayne County:

- ✓ During the August 5 Primary, a poll worker in Detroit was sleeping at the table; the worker did not know the district, had an attitude, and was generally unable to answer one voter's questions.
- ✓ During the August 5 Primary, a polling place in southwest Detroit opened late.
- ✓ During the August 5 Primary, at a Gross Point precinct, a poll worker told voter no ballot without photo ID. Voter mentioned the affidavit and another worker corrected the information. The voter was allowed to vote

## **VOTER EDUCATION**

The ACLU of Michigan will distribute wallet cards which highlight important Michigan voting rights, including, the right to vote without photo identification and the right of individuals with felony convictions to vote. The cards will also provide the number to an election protection hotline that will take reports of election protection issues on Election Day. The ACLU of Michigan will partner with other MEC organizations to distribute the wallet cards. The cards will be distributed mainly to communities of color, who have traditionally low voter turn out. Additionally, the ACLU of Michigan will work with its eight student chapters around the state to educate students on their voting rights and distribute the voting rights card.

## **VOTER ADVOCACY**

The Michigan NAACP has partnered with the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law and the National Campaign for Fair Elections to staff the 1-866-OUR-VOTE Hotline. The Michigan NAACP Legal Redress Committee members will work with representatives from the Lawyer's Committee to establish local call centers and recruit volunteers for the Hotline. The volunteers will answer phone calls and provide immediate assistance to voters on Election Day.

## **VOTER VERIFICATION**

Publius is developing a new voter registration verification tool, which would allow instant verification of a voter's registration status by phone/smartphone. This system can be used by organizations for in the field mobile voter record and polling location verification.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

MEC Coalition organizations are diligently working in areas and communities throughout the state of Michigan to coordinate election protection efforts in preparation for the November 4th General Election. These organization's election protection efforts have highlighted the following common election administration issues that should be addressed prior to Election Day:

1. Actions to improve the voter registration process, especially transparency in list maintenance procedures
2. Actions to improve confusing voter identification requirements
3. Actions to improve access to for English-learning communities
4. Actions to improve accommodations for the disabled.
5. Actions to improve poll worker training
6. Actions to diversify the hiring of poll workers to include students, people of color, and bilingual individuals

Finally, this report highlights the absence of election protection in some key areas in the state, where election protection advocacy is needed. As mentioned above, additional Election Protection "hotspots" were identified in locations where voters have reported past election protection issues. The areas also include communities heavily populated with traditionally underrepresented voters. Advocacy and resources are needed in these additional "hotspots" to ensure adequate election protection and full voter engagement on Election Day.