Michigan Local Officials’ Views on Election Administration in their Jurisdictions

November 6, 2017
A brief overview of Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS) survey program

Findings on township and city officials’ views on election administration from Spring 2017 Wave of the MPPS, including:

- confidence in the accuracy of Michigan elections
- problems experienced in election administration
- plans to update voting equipment
- support and opposition to potential election reforms
The Michigan Public Policy Survey

- **Census survey** – all 1,856 counties, cities, villages, and townships
- **Respondents** – chief elected and appointed officials
- **Administered** – online and via hardcopy
- **Timing** – Spring and Fall each year since 2009
- **Topics** – wide range, such as fiscal health, budget priorities, roads, public safety, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, service privatization, employee policies, labor unions, environmental sustainability, Great Lakes, citizen engagement, much more.
MPPS is not a typical opinion poll

- 70+% response rates
- **Transparency**
  -- Questionnaires online
  -- Pre-run data tables online
  -- Sharing of (anonymized) datasets with other researchers
- Expert advisors on questionnaire content
- **Research partnership with Michigan local government associations**
  -- MAC, MML, & MTA
- Borrowing from other proven sources such as NLC and ICMA
Spring 2017 MPPS Election Battery

872 townships responded (70% of all statewide)
  678 township clerks
  +
  473 township supervisors & managers

247 cities responded (88% of all statewide)
  196 city clerks
  +
  210 city mayors & managers
Confidence in election accuracy very high

Overall, to what extent would you say you are confident in the ability of your jurisdiction to administer an accurate election?

- Very Confident: 91%
- Somewhat Confident: 8%
- Not Very Confident: 1%
- Don’t Know: 1%

CLOSUP
Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

GERALD R. FORD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Confidence in election accuracy very high

Overall, to what extent would you say you are **confident** in the ability of your jurisdiction to administer an accurate election?

Overall:

- **Very Confident**: 91%
- **Somewhat Confident**: 8%
- **Not Very Confident**: 1%
- **Don't Know**: 1%

By type and position:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Very Confident</th>
<th>Somewhat Confident</th>
<th>Not Very Confident</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Township Clerks</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Township Supervisors and Managers</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Clerks</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Mayors and Managers</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confidence in election accuracy very high

Overall, to what extent would you say you are confident in the ability of your jurisdiction to administer an accurate election?

Overall:

- 91% Very Confident
- 8% Somewhat Confident
- 1% Not Very Confident
- 1% Don’t Know

By jurisdiction size:

- <1,500: 91% Very Confident, 8% Somewhat Confident, 1% Not Very Confident, 1% Don’t Know
- 1,500-5,000: 91% Very Confident, 8% Somewhat Confident, 1% Not Very Confident, 1% Don’t Know
- 5,001-10,000: 92% Very Confident, 8% Somewhat Confident, 0% Not Very Confident, 0% Don’t Know
- 10,001-30,000: 87% Very Confident, 10% Somewhat Confident, 1% Not Very Confident, 4% Don’t Know
- >30,000: 88% Very Confident, 4% Somewhat Confident, 4% Not Very Confident, 4% Don’t Know
Election Problems: Recruiting workers and Cost

To what extent, if any, would you say the following have or have not recently been problems with election administration in your jurisdiction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Not a Problem at All</th>
<th>Not Much of a Problem</th>
<th>Somewhat of a Problem</th>
<th>A Significant Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting poll workers with necessary skills</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting enough poll workers</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost on jurisdiction’s budget</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election equipment failures/malfunctions</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable internet for communication with Secretary of State</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll worker errors in following election procedures</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long wait times for any voters</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaccurate voter registration lists</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbances at polling places</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Election Problems: Recruiting poll workers

To what extent, if any, would you say the following have or have not recently been problems with election administration in your jurisdiction?

Recruiting skilled workers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Township Clerks</th>
<th>Township Supervisors and Managers</th>
<th>City Clerks</th>
<th>City Mayors and Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Significant Problem</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat of a Problem</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Much of a Problem</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a Problem at All</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruiting enough workers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Township Clerks</th>
<th>Township Supervisors and Managers</th>
<th>City Clerks</th>
<th>City Mayors and Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Significant Problem</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat of a Problem</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Much of a Problem</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a Problem at All</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State of Michigan is requiring cities and townships to update their voting equipment by August 2018... Overall, to what extent do you support or oppose the State’s initiative to have cities and townships update their voting equipment?

- Strongly support: 36%
- Somewhat support: 19%
- Neither support nor oppose: 8%
- Somewhat oppose: 2%
- Strongly oppose: 3%
- Don’t know: 2%
Most support State’s plan to update equipment

The State of Michigan is requiring cities and townships to update their voting equipment by August 2018... Overall, to what extent do you **support or oppose** the State’s initiative to have cities and townships **update** their voting equipment?

Overall:

By type and position:
To what extent would you **support or oppose** the following possible changes to election administration in Michigan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Strongly oppose</th>
<th>Somewhat oppose</th>
<th>Somewhat support</th>
<th>Strongly support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No-excuse absentee voting</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronize MI voter lists w/other states’ lists</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter regulation of voter registration drives</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stricter voter ID requirements</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-registration of 16-year-olds</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require employers to provide time off to vote</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site early voting (before Election Day)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County takeover of local election administration</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same-day voter registration (on Election Day)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(responses for “neither” and “don’t know not shown)
Local Officials’ Views on Election Administration

Summary

• Michigan local officials are nearly unanimous in their confidence that they are conducting accurate elections

• However, there are some that indicate problems, particularly with poll worker recruitment and costs
  (but among larger jurisdictions, also equipment failures, long wait times, errors by poll workers, disturbances at polling places, etc.)

• Most approve of current State of Michigan plans to update voting equipment, particularly clerks

• There is majority support for election reforms such as:
  • absentee voting with no excuse required (66% support vs. 19% oppose)
  • synchronizing voter lists with other states (50% vs. 10%)

• But majority opposition to election reforms such as:
  • same-day voter registration on Election Day (66% oppose vs. 17% support)
  • optional county government takeover of local election administration (57% vs. 23%)
  • on-site early voting prior to Election Day (50% vs. 32%)
The Michigan Public Policy Survey (MPPS)

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