ELECTION SECURITY IN MICHIGAN
October 2016

A number of news stories have recently circulated that question the integrity of the election process. There are numerous checks and balances in the voting and vote tabulation processes in Michigan, involving election officials in each precinct, city, township and county in the state in 1,520 separate jurisdictions. The Bureau of Elections (BOE) works very closely with the county, city and township clerks who administer elections throughout the state. BOE extensively and regularly communicates with and trains clerks, who in turn train all election workers who assist on Election Day. These training programs help to ensure consistent procedures are in place throughout the state that follow the extensive requirements outlined in Michigan Election Law. Some relevant points of note:

- Voters must register to vote at least 30 days prior to Election Day. Voters must certify that they are U.S. citizens and residents of the Michigan jurisdiction in which they are registering. Voters further affirm these citizenship and residency qualifications each time they apply to vote.

- The State Qualified Voter File (QVF) assigns voters to the proper jurisdiction based on the voter's address. For voters with a Michigan driver's license or Personal ID card, the address on the driver's license/ID card and voter registration record are the same, which helps to ensure the voter record remains continuously up-to-date and that a single record is in place for each voter. The QVF has automated functions to transfer voters to the proper jurisdiction as they move within the state. Verification procedures are also included to ensure voters who move and register to vote in another state are removed from the Michigan voter file.

- Ongoing updates from the Social Security Administration and the State Department of Health and Human Services are used to continuously remove records of deceased voters from the QVF.

- The QVF is regularly monitored by professional IT staff within the State Department of Technology, Management and Budget (DTMB), which has a dedicated Enterprise Security office that continually scans all of the Department of State's network systems to detect and block hacking attempts and other types of suspicious activity. The QVF system is backed up daily, and each individual change to each individual record is maintained permanently. Counties and local jurisdictions also maintain copies of their own individual QVF files, which provide additional backup to clerks at the local level. Recent news stories related to the attempted "hacking" of voter registration systems involved two states (Arizona and Illinois). Michigan was not affected.

- The QVF is used to prepare precinct lists prior to every election. Only eligible voters are issued ballots. Each person appearing to vote has his/her identity and voter registration status verified by poll workers before being issued a ballot.

- The composition of poll worker teams in each precinct represents both major political parties, and minor parties where possible. Many of the steps involved in issuing and tabulating ballots are cross-checked by more than one worker.

- Michigan utilizes optical scan voting equipment statewide which includes use of a paper ballot. Note that recent news stories questioning the security of voting systems focus on electronic touch-screen voting systems (commonly referred to as Direct Recording Electronic devices, or DREs), which are not used in Michigan. The articles also regularly mention that states using optical scan voting systems and paper ballots have the utmost in voting system security. The availability of the paper ballots to verify vote tabulation and their use in recounts after every election further confirms the high accuracy of the optical scan voting systems used in Michigan.

- The tabulation equipment programs (used to actually read ballots and compile totals) are tested in a public forum prior to each election. Each jurisdiction conducts an extensive "public accuracy test" and, using test ballots, confirms that the equipment is tabulating votes properly. After the public accuracy test is completed, the program cards that handle tabulation are locked and sealed into the tabulator machines – meaning they cannot be tampered with or removed without detection. They are secured using specialized seals with serial numbers that are recorded on pollbooks maintained by the clerk's office. The recording of these numbers is witnessed and verified by multiple election officials prior to, during and after the election.

- Ballots for absentee voters that are submitted prior to Election Day are tracked and secured as they are received, and are not opened and tabulated until election night. Clerks verify that the signature on file for each voter matches the signature on the absent voter ballot application and ballot return envelope.

- At the end of election night, precinct workers confirm that the total number of voters as recorded during the ballot issuance process matches the number of ballots issued and tabulated. These totals are re-confirmed as results are turned over from the individual precincts to the clerk's office. Multiple copies of the unofficial results are provided to the city or township clerk, the county clerk, and the Board of County Canvassers.

- Tabulators are not connected to the internet or any other electronic device during the period the polls are open and as results are generated after the polls close.

- There is not a single "election results" computer or file that tabulates election results at the State level; each county canvasses its own results in a decentralized process.

- Note that election night results are always reported as unofficial results. After the election, results from each precinct are re-reviewed and re-verified over a two-week

period, before being officially certified by the Board of Canvassers in each County, which is an evenly divided, bipartisan board composed of 4 members (2 nominated by each major political party). For federal and state-level races, county results are further certified by the Board of State Canvassers, which is similarly comprised of 4 members, including 2 nominated by each major political party. All documents related to the federal election are maintained for a minimum of 22 months after the election.

These systems and processes have been developed over many years to ensure a fair and secure election process. Election Day processes are well-documented and open to any interested parties. Because of these structured processes and checks and balances, documented cases of election fraud in Michigan are extremely rare. However, especially in a large statewide election, it is not uncommon for the media, social media sites, and blog sites to raise general concerns such as those you may have seen. Generally, these articles do not mention Michigan.