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**RECENT POLL AMONG MICHIGAN RESIDENTS SHOWS STRONG SUPPORT FOR
TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT**
Constitutional Convention Opposed by Electorate

LANSING --- While some elected officials in Lansing have recently suggested that eliminating township governments in Michigan and assigning their responsibilities to county governments could help balance the state budget, a recent statewide poll shows that Michigan voters would strongly oppose such a proposal. Voters' opposition to this idea stems from the survey's findings showing that Michiganders highly value and heavily rely on local governments for valuable services, and this finding is no less true among township residents.

Furthermore, respondents view local government as an access point to the legislative process, a place for citizens to share ideas and voice concerns. Townships, in particular, are highly valued by the residents for their responsiveness, and township residents reported a high degree of trust toward their township officials. These are some of the conclusions of a poll of 600 voters in Michigan, conducted for the Michigan Townships Association by Marketing Resource Group between Dec. 1 through 6, 2008, covering a broad array of topics from the mood of the electorate to how residents value government and residents' thoughts on a constitutional convention.

Compared to other levels of government (e.g. county, state, federal), respondents to the poll say they trust local government most to manage the issues most important to them. "Michigan residents believe local government does a better job than county, state or federal government when it comes to improving their quality of life, keeping their families safe and quickly responding to their needs," said Paul King, Director of Research Services for MRG. "Especially among those who live in townships, respondents have a better relationship with their local officials than they do with administrators and staff at other levels of government."

When it comes to discussions that have been initiated by some in Lansing to eliminate townships in Michigan, "voters would soundly reject such an idea," said King. Sixty-two percent say they would oppose a proposal to eliminate township governments in Michigan and assign their

responsibilities and services to county governments, with 46 percent saying they'd strongly oppose it. Only 30 percent of respondents say they support eliminating township governments, with most of them saying they support it only "somewhat." Furthermore, after providing respondents with some of the ramifications of eliminating townships in Michigan, support for the plan diminished to less than 20 percent.

"Policymakers in Lansing have been discussing local government reforms in response to the chronic state budget deficit, but missing from their discussions has been an understanding of the preferences of Michigan's citizens," said Larry Merrill, executive director of the Michigan Townships Association. "We commissioned this poll to determine if our hunch is correct, that the public has a deeper connection with their township governments than has been recognized by some policymakers. The poll confirms that Michigan citizens do not support eliminating townships just for the sake of reform, especially when diminishing or eliminating townships would actually increase the cost of government and alienate half of Michigan's citizens from fully participating in local democracy."

Following are additional highlights from the poll:

- **Two-thirds of voters say they approve of the jobs that their township, city and village officials are doing.** Those results are fairly consistent in all regions across the state, with one exception – the City of Detroit – where 76 percent say they disapprove.
- **A significant plurality (47 percent) of respondents said that they trust and respect local government most.** Eleven percent said most of their trust and respect went to county government, ten percent said state government, and only seven percent said federal.
- **A plurality of respondents (42 percent) said that we have about the right number of local units of government in Michigan,** while 40 percent said we have too many and only 7 percent said we have too few.
 - After providing respondents more data to simply inform them of the current population in Michigan as well as the current number of counties, townships, cities and villages, **a majority (52 percent) now say that Michigan has the right amount of local governmental units. Of the remaining 30 percent who still believed that there were too many governments, 3 percent believed that there were too many counties, 6 percent too many townships, 5 percent too many cities and villages with the remainder having no specific opinion.**
- **Nearly two-thirds of voters (62 percent) say they would oppose a proposal to eliminate township governments in Michigan.** Forty-six percent said they'd strongly oppose it.
 - Every demographic group, including all age groups; all income levels; males and females; and Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike oppose this proposal.
- After hearing some of the consequences of eliminating townships, such as its effect on taxes, government costs, response times and services, **nearly three-quarters of**

respondents (74 percent) now say they would oppose this proposal. Sixty percent say they would strongly oppose it.

- A plurality of respondents (45 percent) said that they would vote against a constitutional convention.

This telephone survey was conducted among a random sampling of 600 registered voters in Michigan. The statistical margin of error is plus or minus 4.1 percent, using a 95 percent degree of confidence. The sample was stratified by voter turnout in Michigan to represent the current voting population in the state. Conducted between Dec. 1 through 6, 2008, the survey consisted of 600 eight to ten minute telephone interviews.

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