

**Statement by the Michigan Election Reform Alliance
House Committee on Elections
November 17, 2014**

Thank you Madam Chair.

My name is Walter Sorg and I am here as a member of the Council (or board of directors) of the Michigan Election Reform Alliance. We are a state-based 501(c)3 organization with the mission of protecting and enhancing the integrity of our electoral process.

We are opposed to HB 5974 because of the long-term damage it could cause to Michigan's political influence in the nation, and because it could add needless expense to the our presidential elections.

Influence in Congress comes from the combination the number of members, and seniority of those members. Michigan's gradual loss of influence in Congress caused by population shifts was drastically accelerated this year with the retirement of four senior members: Representatives Camp, Rogers and Conyers; and Senator Levin.

HB 5974 would diminish Michigan's national influence even more. The bill effectively puts 1-to-5 electoral votes in contest rather than 16. This reduces Michigan's influence in electing a President to that of a third-tier state such as Utah, Nebraska or Hawaii and gives far more influence to smaller states such as Indiana, Minnesota and Iowa.

It also makes the possibility of expensive statewide recounts far more likely because a shift of just 1.5% could switch an electoral vote.

MERA's research on aging tabulators, published earlier this year, showed that this is close to the average margin of tabulator error, so unless we hand-counted the entire state we would be allowing the aging machines to influence the election of the President of the United States.

The bill sponsor has stated that his purpose is to encourage national candidates to pay more attention to Michigan. Even when candidates do not campaign in person, they invest heavily in Michigan to the tune of tens-of-millions of dollars.

Michigan could lose the bulk of those campaign expenditures simply because the "Return on Investment" is reduced. Instead of spending that money in the hope of winning 16 electoral votes, they would be facing the same media costs for a potential gain of 1-to-5 electoral votes.

The fact that this change away from winner-take-all is being promoted by the national chairman of one political party, and only being discussed in some states which share a common political profile, suggests the true objective is something other than improving the integrity of the electoral process. If states such as Texas, Oklahoma or Arkansas were also considering this change we would give it more credence.

As a unilateral action this bill only serves to make reduce Michigan's national influence, and reduce the impact of Michigan's voters on national policy. We urge its defeat.

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