IEC petition issues on 2002 ballot

Earlier this year, the Issues and Education Committee participated in collecting signatures for two ballot proposals. Both drives successfully garnered the required number of signatures and both will appear on the November ballot.

Straight party voting

In December, 2001 the Michigan legislature passed a law ending the 110-year right to vote a straight party ticket. The Issues and Education Committee joined other concerned citizens in working to make sure voters were given a chance to decide for themselves whether or not to give up the option.

Because the petition drive was successful, voters will have the opportunity to vote straight party in this November’s election. At that time, they will also decide whether or not to retain the right for the future.

Some of us vote in areas that aren’t very busy. We might even wonder where our fellow citizens are on election day. However, in some polling places, especially in urban areas during heated elections, the lines can get quite long.

Factor in a long wait with sometimes long and complicated ballots, and you can see that voting can be a serious commitment of time, energy and scheduling for busy, working families, especially those who have issues with transportation, child care and other concerns. So, why compound the problem by forcing voters to wade through the ballot when they know they want to vote for candidates from a single party?

The Michigan County Clerks Association, the Council of Election Officials, the Michigan Election Reform Coalition, and many individual Democratic and Republican elected officials say they shouldn’t.

A lot of concerned citizens agree and want to keep straight party voting as an option. Say “no” to the ban on straight ticket voting.

True collective bargaining

When is a negotiated labor/management contract not binding? When it is signed by the State of Michigan and state civil service workers.

The Michigan Constitution gives the Civil Service Commission sole authority to set wages, benefits and other conditions of employment for state classified civil service employees. The Civil Service Commission allows state classified employees to collectively bargain, but it can always take away that permission and currently makes unilateral changes to any contracts whenever it wants. For example, the Commission has made over 100 changes to the collective bargaining contract with UAW local 6000 after the contract was negotiated.

It pays to vote union!

Position paper #5 in the 2002 Elections Series
The Issues and Education Committee of the Clerical Technical Union of MSU
IEC petition issues on 2002 ballot

continued

The proposed constitutional amendment would give all state classified employees true collective bargaining rights that cannot be taken away or unilaterally changed. The proposal would also allow state classified civil service employees to take unresolved contract disputes to binding arbitration, similar to what police and firefighters currently have.

Critics have charged that the proposal will be too costly. Governor Engler cited fear of its passage as one of three reasons he needed to veto revenue sharing payments for local governments. (The legislature overrode that veto.)

However, supporters believe that the proposal will save money in the long run.

“Most of the issues in dispute during negotiations have nothing to do with money,” according to the Michigan Employee Rights Initiative (MERIT), a coalition of all unions that represent State employees. “They have more to do with seniority rights and working conditions. . . . The current system favors the employer, so when we don’t agree, they go to civil service to get what they want. In fact, even when we’ve reached an agreement over some issues, the commission has changed the rules after negotiations to nullify what we agreed to.”

MERIT includes locals in the UAW, SEIU, AFSCME, SEIU, and the Michigan State Police Troopers Association.

Critics also say that the proposal will lead to strikes, but, MERIT points out, the amendment does not include the right to strike. It provides outside binding arbitration on contracts. That means when the parties cannot agree, a neutral third party hears the arguments on both sides and makes a decision based on that information.

Help out your union brothers and sisters by voting YES! on proposal 2 on Tuesday, November 5. Remember, supporting Michigan workers makes us all stronger.