



June 28, 2018

Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Regional Chamber Statement of Support for Voters Not Politicians

On November 6, 2018, the people of Michigan have the chance to fundamentally improve the efficacy and stability of State government and federal representation. The A2Y Chamber thinks they should take this opportunity by supporting the Voters Not Politicians (VNP) ballot initiative. There are many reasons to support VNP, but in summation it will allow for fairer elections that will produce a more stable policy environment, benefiting our citizens, our businesses, and our civic structures.

Seats in the Michigan Legislature (both House and Senate) and Michigan's districts in the United States House of Representatives are created in a partisan and secretive fashion. There is a long bi-partisan tradition of this behavior. The end result is that state legislators draw their own districts in order to maximize political gain, creating partisan seats. 2014 was the last general election where all US House and State legislative seats were all on the ballot. Of the 162 different races, only 20 (12%) were decided within ten points, and only six (3.7%) were decided within five points. Michigan is very evenly divided in terms of its partisan preferences, but instead of selecting our representatives in higher turnout November general elections, we select them in partisan primaries in low-turnout August elections. A final problem is that the districts are not geographically compressed, often consisting of communities with few connections, included solely to get a partisan composition.

The negative results of our system are many. They include disincentives to operate in a bi-partisan or moderated fashion, as well as dramatic changes in policy with every election. Those issues that are pushed in the Michigan Legislature are not designed to appeal to the overall electorate, but are used to attract support from partisan bases in August. This is especially bad for the business community because it prevents long-term policy and regulatory stability.

The VNP initiative seeks to change this broken system by taking redistricting out of the hands of self-motivated political operators. The VNP structure will empower an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to draw districts in a transparent, accountable process, which seeks consensus rather than maximized partisan power. The Commission will have 13 members: 4 members from each of the two largest political parties (currently Republicans and Democrats) and 5 members who are not affiliated with either major party. Commissioners will be picked from 200 finalists out of 10,000 randomly selected voters. Lobbyists, former elected officials, and partisan operators will be barred from service on the Commission for six years. Finally, the Commission will offer a chance for both parties to block the appointment of up to 5 of the 200 finalists. The Commission will operate in an independent fashion using a process that protects their independence, demands consensus, and is completely open and transparent. More details are available at <https://www.votersnotpoliticians.com/>

The VNP initiative will allow us to produce representation in the Michigan Legislature and US House of Representatives which is less partisan, more representative, and selected by the majority of Michiganders. It uses the experience of several other states which have put similar processes into place. It will produce legislators motivated to do their work in a way that produces more bi-partisan and consensus driven outcomes. The business community will directly benefit from the stability this will produce. The A2Y Chamber strongly supports Voters Not Politicians and encourages our members to support it on November 6, 2018.