



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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BALLOT PROPOSAL LANGUAGE

**House Bill 4093 with committee
amendments
First Analysis (2-17-94)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Joseph Young, Jr.
Committee: Education**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Some people are concerned that voters become alienated and discouraged when faced with ballot questions containing confusing or difficult language. It has been recommended that a plain language requirement be placed in state election law for ballot questions in order to encourage citizen involvement in public policy debates and decisionmaking.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to require that ballot questions submitted to the voters of the state or a political subdivision of the state be clearly written using words that have a common everyday meaning to the public.

The law now says that a question must be worded "so as to apprise the voters of the subject matter of the proposal or issue, but need not be legally precise." The bill would retain that wording and add the new standard. (The election law, pursuant to the state constitution, also requires, for constitutional amendments and other statewide propositions, that the secretary of state prepare for the ballot form a statement of the amendment or other proposition in 100 words or less, exclusive of caption.)

MCL 168.485 et al.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is no information at present.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

When voters are asked to make decisions at the polling place about important public issues, they ought to be presented with ballot questions that are expressed in plain language.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Department of State testified in support of the bill as amended. (2-15-94)

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