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Senate Bill 983 (Substitute S-2 as passed by the Senate)  
Sponsor: Senator Bev Hammerstrom  
Committee: Government Operations

Date Completed: 9-7-00

### **RATIONALE**

The Michigan Election Law prescribes the division of local units of government into election precincts. An election precinct must be contained in its entirety within a city, ward, township, or village. The Election Law also provides for the division of a single election precinct into two or more precincts based upon population and voting methods within a local unit of government. Precincts may be consolidated, once divided, but only if the election commission or other officials in charge of elections determine that there are 400 or fewer registered voters in a local unit that uses paper ballots, or fewer than 3,000 registered voters in a local unit that uses voting machines. It has been suggested that, for certain elections, when it is anticipated that voter participation in an election will be low, local officials be allowed to consolidate election precincts for that election, under certain conditions.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to provide that, if a city, ward, township, or village were divided into two or more election precincts, the city, ward, township, or village election commissioners could, by resolution, consolidate the election precincts for a particular election. Election precincts could not be consolidated for a general November election, a primary election immediately before a general November election, or another statewide or Federal election. In making the determination to consolidate, the election commission would have to take into consideration the number of choices a voter would have to make, the percentage of registered voters who voted at the last similar election in the jurisdiction, and the intensity of the interest of the electors in the jurisdiction concerning the candidates and proposals to be voted upon.

To consolidate election precincts for a particular election, the election commissioners, or other designated election officials, would have to do both of the following:

-- Provide notice to the registered electors of the

affected election precincts of the consolidation of precincts for the election, and the location of the polling place for the precinct or precincts for that election. Notice could be provided by mail or other method designed to provide actual notice to the registered electors.

-- Post a written notice at each election precinct polling place stating the location of the consolidated precinct polling place.

The notice requirements would not apply if the polling places for the precincts to be consolidated were located in the same building.

A consolidation of precincts could not be made less than 60 days before a primary, general, or special election. If a city, ward, township, or village consolidated election precincts under the bill, each affected precinct would have to be treated as a whole unit and could not be divided during consolidation.

Proposed MCL 168.659

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

Local election officials have pointed out that some elections, particularly those that involve only local issues, often attract little voter interest. One local election official testified that at one election, the local unit, which contains four election precincts, had attendance at the polls of only 2% of the registered voters. This results in election workers' sitting at polling places for many hours with virtually nothing to do. This not only wastes taxpayer money, but also makes it harder for local officials to find people to work in the precincts on election day. Under specified conditions, the bill would give local election officials the option to consolidate election precincts when voter turnout was expected to be low, thus

cutting election expenses and reducing an administrative burden.

Legislative Analyst: G. Towne

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State government. The fiscal impact on local government is indeterminate. Fulfilling the elector notification requirement could require additional expenditures; however, the consolidation of the precincts could save local units of government money overall. Administrative costs could be reduced since it is possible that fewer precinct workers would need to be hired.

Fiscal Analyst: J. Runnels

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.