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Sept. 8, 2006

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Illegal, Fraudulent, Insufficient Signatures Disqualify Proposal 6

Unanimous Board of State Canvassers vote followed testimony that one signature appeared on petitions in 19 different places!

LANSING, Mich. — Proposal 6 failed to qualify for the November 7 statewide ballot because its supporters, funded by out-of-state extremists, collected massive numbers of illegal and fraudulent signatures, the Board of State Canvassers determined today.

Michigan becomes the third state this year where Proposal 6-like amendments have been disqualified from the ballot due to illegal, fraudulent and insufficient signatures and other irregularities. Witnesses cited one instance where the same person signed Proposal 6 petitions 19 times. One in every six signatures on the petitions was found to be a duplicate. The four-member Board of State Canvassers voted unanimously not to certify the proposed amendment, versions of which are being circulated in many states by a small group of anti-government extremists and their front groups.

By voting not to certify the controversial amendment, the Canvassers largely affirmed a challenge to the Proposal 6 petitions filed last Wednesday by Defend Michigan, No on Proposal 6, a coalition of more than 100 Michigan-based business, labor, public safety, health care, education and human service organizations fighting the measure. The challenge asked Canvassers to deny certification because:

- The petition form was improper and illegal.
- The petition language was in fatal violation of the Constitution and state election law.
- Supporters failed to submit enough valid signatures and, in fact, turned in more than 100,000 illegal duplicate signatures.

“The level of fraud and abuse in the Proposal 6 petitions is unprecedented in my three decades of experience in Michigan election law and ballot campaigns,” Defend Michigan attorney John Pirich said. “There were more than 100,000 duplicate, fraudulent and improper names on the petitions.”

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Proposal 6 is a controversial, confusing and deceptive proposed constitutional amendment. If Proposal 6 passes, Michigan citizens would face a future of deep cuts to police and fire protection, health care, education and transportation services, and economic development – just like Colorado, the only state to pass a similar amendment. Colorado voters suspended the state’s Proposal 6-like amendment last year after 12 years of cuts to essential public services and hundreds of local tax increases.

“With the disqualification of Proposal 6, a clear and present danger to Michigan police and fire protection, jobs and economic development, health care and education services is now removed,” said Sharon Parks, a member of the Defend Michigan executive committee. “The out-of-state extremists who brought Proposal 6 to Michigan and broke our election laws and abused the constitution have been sent packing.”

In addition to asking the Board of State Canvassers to reject the proposal, Defend Michigan is encouraging the Michigan State Police and the Attorney General’s office to investigate.

Proposal 6 supporters hired a company named National Voter Outreach (NVO) to collect petition signatures in Michigan. The Defend Michigan challenge notes that NVO itself filed a complaint May 22, 2006 with the Michigan State Police alleging that some of its own petition circulators were turning in invalid names. Newspaper stories about the complaint reported that NVO representatives told police that their own circulators turned in fraudulent signatures, including the names of dead people. Sources indicated that thousands of dollars were paid to circulators who obtained these invalid signatures. In addition, circulators and supporters of Proposal 6-like ballot campaigns in other states this year have been the subject of investigations sparked by allegations of improper and illegal signature collection activities.

Controversy has also surrounded NVO’s efforts this year to collect signatures to place Proposal 6-like amendments on the ballots in Missouri, Oklahoma and other states as well. In Missouri, the Secretary of State ordered it off the ballot. The Oklahoma Supreme Court last week tossed the amendment off the ballot for lack of signatures.

“Michigan voters deserve to know that laws were broken by the backers of Proposal 6, many of whom are from other states,” Parks said. “Reforms are needed that preserve access to the ballot for Michigan citizens, but that make it harder for out-of-state extremists and others to break the law and abuse the constitution in the process.”

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