

## **Defend Michigan's Efforts Keep Ill-advised Proposal to Limit State Spending off Ballot for Now** *But Outside Interests Vowing to Try Again in 2008*

Everyone who cares about Michigan breathed a temporary sigh of relief when the State Board of Canvassers unanimously agreed that the Stop OverSpending proposal failed to get enough valid signatures to qualify for the Nov. 7, 2006 ballot.

The citizens of our state owe a huge debt of gratitude to a broad bipartisan coalition of groups and individuals from every corner of Michigan who joined together to fight outside interests bent on putting a stranglehold on how we do business here. Through the Michigan League for Human Services, a broad public education effort was undertaken to inform organizations about the practical impact and dangers of the SOS proposal.

Let's be clear: The SOS effort in Michigan was not homegrown. Similar proposals are being pushed all over the country by extremists from various national groups, including Americans for Limited Government; the Americans for Prosperity Foundation; the National Taxpayers Union; and, Americans for Tax Reform.

Just as a similar law did in Colorado, Proposal 6 would have severely hamstrung our delivery of health care, education, public safety, transportation and other essential services. It also would have hurt business and negatively affected a host of quality of life issues for working families throughout Michigan.

The Defend Michigan coalition was prepared for a hard-fought and expensive campaign had Proposal 6 been on the ballot. Fortunately, a lot of heavy lifting and an aggressive legal challenge saved the coalition from having to raise millions of dollars to counter the well-funded out-of-state groups behind SOS.

Defend Michigan exposed serious problems with the signature-gathering process employed by SOS proponents, including numerous cases of duplicate signatures. Those discoveries led the State Board of Canvassers to rule that Proposal 6 fell well-short of the required number of signatures to qualify for the ballot. The Michigan Court of Appeals and the Michigan Supreme Court later upheld the Board of Canvassers' decision.

Michigan wasn't the only state to face a potential constitutional amendment to limit spending. Similar proposals were advanced in numerous other states.

National Voter Outreach --- the signature-gathering firm brought on board by the East Coast millionaires funding the SOS effort in Michigan and other states --- used the same questionable techniques in Oklahoma, Nevada and Missouri. Similar proposals in those states also were kept off the ballot because of the methods used by the paid-by-the-signature circulators working for NVO. In Nevada, petition language that didn't match the words turned in to election officials resulted in the proposal's rejection.

Unfortunately, SOS proposals will appear on the ballot in Maine and Oregon. Legal challenges remain in Nebraska and Montana.

There is no doubt that the SOS proponents are tenacious and litigious. We know they will be back.

How can we be so sure?

For starters, we take them at their word. They have stated publicly that they will try again in 2008 to put this on the ballot in Michigan.

We have to be ready for them.

In Colorado --- the only state to have passed a similar law, the spending limit proponents tried three times before finally convincing voters to adopt their version of SOS. The good news is that Colorado eventually suspended the law when they saw how it put them at a competitive disadvantage by hurting education, health care, public safety and road funding. The bad news is that it took 12 years of suffering before Colorado shelved the law and only temporarily.

We can't let that happen in Michigan.

SOS is a grave threat to the quality of life and public and private services that we all value.

That's why the Defend Michigan Executive Committee will continue to meet and to share information with you about ballot outcomes in other states. We intend to keep a close eye on SOS activities in Michigan and across the country.