



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Controversial and Deceptive Constitutional Amendment Would “Shaft Our State”

New Bi-Partisan Coalition, Colorado Leaders Warn Michigan of Cuts to Health Care, Education, Police and Fire Protection

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan communities will experience sharp cuts in education, health care, public safety and other critical programs if voters approve the deceptively named “Stop Overspending (SOS)” constitutional amendment, the Defend Michigan Coalition warned today.

At a Lansing news conference, members of the Defend Michigan Coalition urged Michigan voters not to sign petitions that are being circulated across the state to place the proposed SOS constitutional amendment on the Nov. 7 General Election ballot. The coalition was also briefed by two Colorado leaders who helped educate Colorado citizens about a similar constitutional amendment in their state, called TABOR, which was first enacted in 1992. They have firsthand knowledge of the harm that can be done by the amendment and worked hard to pass the referendum that suspended it in Colorado last year.

“Michigan already has 1,600 fewer police officers on the street since 9/11, and the SOS amendment would further devastate essential local services like public safety,” said Grand Rapids Mayor and Michigan Municipal League board member George Heartwell, a member of the Defend Michigan Coalition.

The Defend Michigan Coalition is working to educate Michigan citizens about the certain negative consequences of the controversial SOS amendment, which is being spearheaded by a small group of anti-government extremists in Michigan who are being funded largely by anti-government extremists from other states. The broad, bipartisan coalition includes organizations that provide essential quality of life services to Michigan residents and communities including health care, K-12 and higher education, road construction and maintenance, police and fire protection, environmental protection, human services and more.

“We are here to defend Michigan college students and their families against higher tuition increases, because that’s precisely what will happen if the SOS amendment gets on the ballot and passes,” said Michael Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan.

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SOS is modeled after an amendment passed in Colorado in 1992 called the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). After TABOR passed, Colorado witnessed a significant decline in public services:

- K-12 spending as a share of personal income fell from 35th to 49th in the nation.
- Higher education funding per resident student dropped by 31 percent.
- The share of low income children with health insurance fell to 50th in the nation.
- The percentage of pregnant women receiving adequate access to prenatal care declined from 23rd to 48th in the nation.
- The share of children receiving their full vaccinations plummeted from 24th to 50th in the nation in 2003.

Following major reductions in essential quality of life services, Colorado voters in 2005 suspended and fundamentally changed TABOR. The effort was led by the Colorado business community and the state's Republican governor. SOS proponents have until July 10 to turn in enough valid signatures — 317,757 — to qualify for Michigan's Nov. 7 statewide ballot.

An analysis of SOS completed by the Michigan League for Human Services found that SOS is more restrictive than Colorado's TABOR. For example, while the SOS proposal would return some revenues above the spending limit to the state's rainy day fund, a Senate Fiscal Agency analysis found that no deposits would have been made to the now-depleted fund over the last four years under SOS.

"In truth, and based on what happened in Colorado after voters their approved a similar measure, SOS really means Shaft our State," said Grand Blanc Mayor and Michigan Municipal League President Michael Matheny.

The League analysis also found that SOS would prevent Michigan from providing any new or expanded services that may be necessary in response to major economic dislocations, court mandates, natural disasters, or public health emergencies. SOS would also weaken essential public services that have already been significantly reduced and curtailed under the massive state budget cuts of recent years.

SOS also severely limits the ability of local governments to adjust even minor fees without having multiple costly elections to win voter approval. Under SOS, the spending restrictions imposed on government could only be changed through public elections or through "super-majority" (two-thirds) votes of both chambers of the Legislature.

"We are here to defend Michigan against attacks from anti-government extremists from here and other states who don't care if health care, higher education, public schools, the environment, police and fire protection, and senior citizens in Michigan are significantly damaged by their actions," said Sharon Parks, vice president of policy for the League. "SOS is a Trojan horse that will seriously damage quality of life in Michigan."

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The Defend Michigan Coalition

AARP of Michigan

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Michigan Council
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American Federation of Teachers (AFT) of Michigan

Area Agency on Aging Association

Citizens for Better Care

Clean Water Action

Gray Panthers of Metro Detroit

Michigan Association of Counties

Michigan Coalition for Children and Families

Michigan Collaborative on Juvenile Justice

Michigan Community Action Agency Association

Michigan Health & Hospital Association

Michigan Infrastructure & Transportation Association

Michigan League for Human Services

Michigan Municipal League

Michigan Non-Profit Association

Michigan Osteopathic Association

Michigan Primary Care Association

Michigan State AFL-CIO

Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute

Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan

Service Employees International Union (SEIU)

The ARC Michigan

United Auto Workers International Union (UAW)

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