

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY: MICHIGAN APPEARS READY FOR ELECTION REFORMS

Michigan citizens may be ready for election reforms that relax the state's tough term limits and create an independent commission to draw new voting districts, the latest results from Michigan State University's State of the State Survey showed.

About 61 percent of Michigan residents favored lifting the 14-year lifetime limit on state House and Senate terms to allow politicians to seek office again after a four-year break in service, said Charles Ballard, survey director and economics professor.

On a related question, nearly 54 percent of Michigan's residents favored another change in the state's legislative term limits – allowing all 14 years to be served in one chamber or the other or divide the 14 years between the two.

“There are chinks in the armor of term limits,” Ballard said.

The quarterly telephone survey interviewed 1,036 Michigan adults from May 18 through June 30.

In four previous State of the State Surveys – in 2004, 2006 and 2008 – more than 70 percent of Michigan citizens interviewed said they approved of term limits. The latest survey probed beyond that general approval, Ballard said.

“When we look beneath the surface, we are able to see things that wouldn't be apparent if we asked the question in the generic way,” he said.

Michigan voters amended the Constitution in 1992 to restrict state House members to three full terms and Senate members to two full terms, about 14 years. Previous to 1992, there were no limits on the number of House or Senate terms served.

On the subject of state legislative districts, 82 percent of the latest survey respondents said they favored districts drawn by an independent, nonpartisan commission. The commission would be charged with drawing the lines to make elections as competitive as possible and without favoring one party or the other.

“The support for an end to gerrymandering is really overwhelming, and among all groups, including Democrats and Republicans,” Ballard said.

Michigan's House and Senate districts, under state law, are now drawn by the Legislature under standards adopted in 1982.

The survey was conducted by the Office for Survey Research in the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research specializing in policy, leadership and research within MSU's College of Social Science. Results are posted at <http://www.ippsr.msu.edu>.

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