

# Legislative Analysis

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## BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS IN VOTING BOOTH & WITH ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Mary Ann Cleary, Director  
Phone: (517) 373-8080  
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

### House Bill 4992

**Sponsor: Rep. Eileen Kowall**

**Committee: Redistricting and Elections**

**Complete to 10-24-11**

### A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4992 AS INTRODUCED 9-20-11

House Bill 4992 would amend the Michigan Election Law (MCL 168.560 et al) to, among other things, revise the sections of the law that require ballot instructions about the method of voting, so that voters do not make errors that spoil their ballots. A more detailed description of the modifications follows.

Under the bill, each polling booth or voting compartment used at all elections would be required to contain the instructions as to the procedures for marking a ballot, as prescribed by the secretary of state. Further, instructions for an absent voter concerning the method of voting would have to be included with each absent voter ballot that is furnished to a voter.

In addition, House Bill 4992 would eliminate the detailed description of the *form* of a primary election ballot, removing the language that now specifies format, headings, and instructions to electors such as "make a cross or a check mark in the square to the left on not more than the number of names for each office as may be indicated under the title of each office." The bill would instead specify that the official primary election ballot would be prepared in a form prescribed by the secretary of state based upon the voting equipment being used in each county.

Likewise, the bill would eliminate the detailed description of the *arrangement* of the ballot, removing the language that now specifies how to vote straight party; how to vote for a candidate not on your party ticket; the need to keep as a unit one's votes for president and vice president, and governor and lieutenant governor; how to write-in a candidate, etc. The bill instead would require that the arrangement of the ballot containing the names of candidates for office be prescribed by the secretary of state based upon the voting equipment being used in each county.

### FISCAL IMPACT:

According the Department of State, House Bill 4992 would have no direct fiscal impact on the department. However, the bill would have a positive fiscal impact on local governments, specifically local election clerk offices. The savings would be realized through lower printing costs and greater efficiencies in processing the ballots.

Legislative Analyst: J. Hunault  
Fiscal Analyst: Ben Gielczyk

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.