



Political forums held on campus

MCCC collaborates with NAACP,
the Agora for three-night forum

Pages 6-7



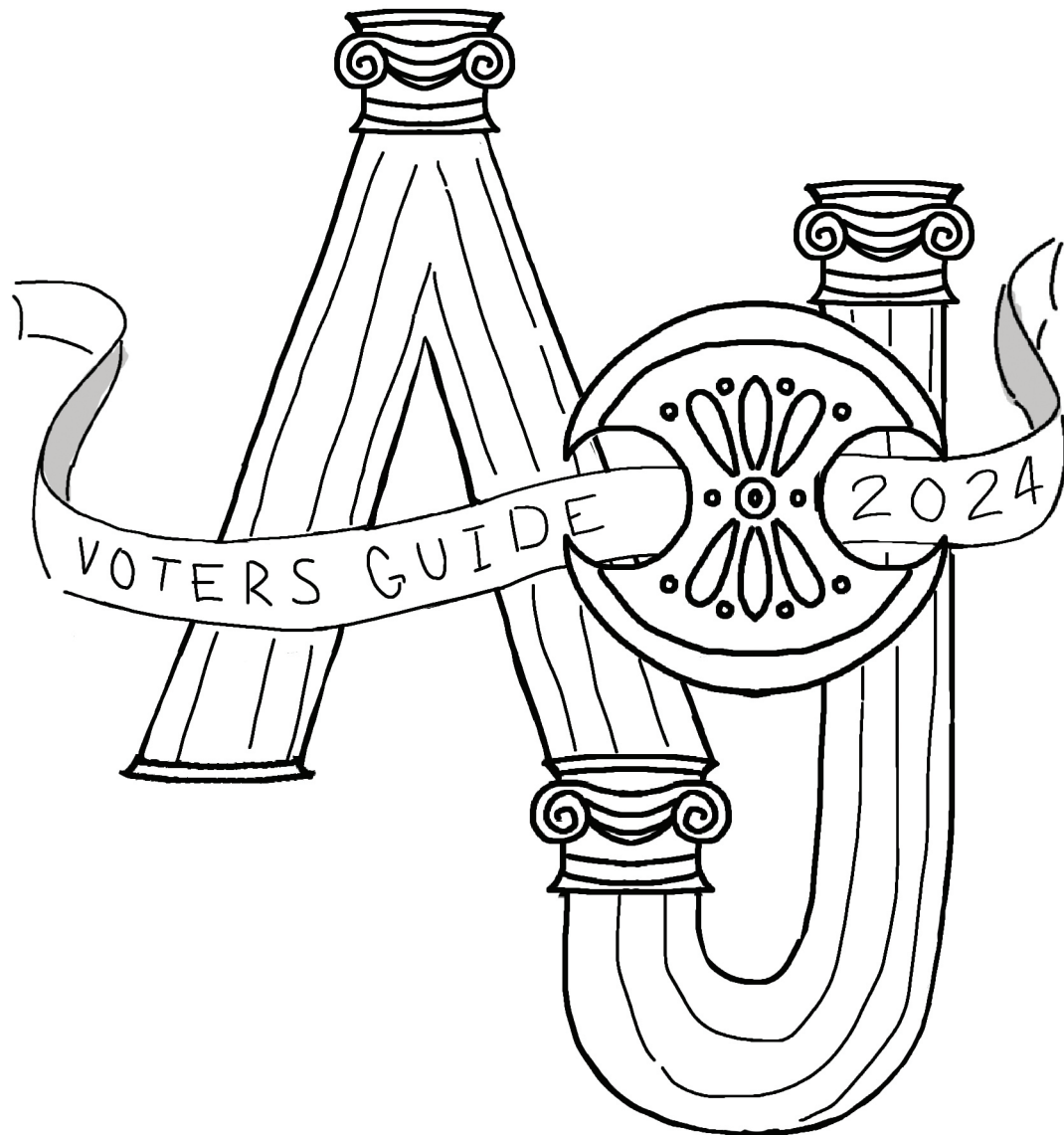
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Artwork by Scottie Ansel

Editorial

Silent millage decision poses risk to community education

With recent installation of signs outside of restrooms and discussions surrounding the expansion of the Elliot Larson Act, citizens of Monroe have stood against the college for MCCC's compliance with the law. In an election year with an upcoming millage renewal, signs have been put up around town saying "MCCC lets MEN in girls bathrooms" and "No \$ for MCCC" in opposition of voting yes for the millage.

MCCC, however, has opted to be silent about the two millage questions on the ballot.

President Kojo Quartey explained this as a silent millage, which is when there is no public comment or persuasion made. The millage is simply put on the ballot for a vote.

The editors at the Agora disagree with the silence. We think the decision for a silent millage was a risk that should not have been taken in a time of much needed information and education.

The millage doesn't expire this year. Joe Verkennes, director of marketing and communication, said the college is in the process of allocating funds for the phase three outline if it passed. Quartey said they had contemplated renovations, such as repairs to the H Building and updating the S Building for additional safety and adding more student-oriented spaces.

This is the kind of information the public needs to know, as well as the fact that this is simply a renewal.

Quartey said this is the first time in his pres-

idency they've done a silent millage, and he and other administrators decided to go this route because they did not want negative feedback. Quartey said the maintenance and improvement millage actually expires next year, but it's being put on the ballot for renewal this year. If it doesn't pass, it can be tried for renewal again next year.

While it's understandable to not want negative feedback in a time where there is plenty of negativity surrounding our school, the option of a silent millage feels risky. It almost feels like we're accepting defeat.

There's a chance this renewal could be voted down. There's always a chance for defeat. But to not campaign seems like a death wish, especially in a time of controversy and conflict.

Campaigning has worked before. It's more than a bit of work, yes. It's dedication and commitment. Door to door, house to house, time and effort and patience spent.

But it yields change.

Information is knowledge and the citizens of Monroe should have been informed on this millage.

Of course negative feedback is never wanted, but we're already swamped with it. We're being bogged down by narrow minded opinions day in and day out.

Why let it stop us now?

Negative feedback is inevitable. When standing up against oppression and discrimination, negativity is impossible to avoid.

Don't back away from the fear and the threat of pushback.

We know this is an uphill battle. But it is a battle that could be won with the power of

knowledge and understanding.

The Agora editorial board consists of the two editors.

The importance of voting

How role in Student Government helped appreciate voting

Voting is such an essential thing in democracy; it's what gives people the choice for their voices to be heard to choose a representative that they believe will serve their country well. Or even vote to remove such representatives.

Being in Student Government has taught me the importance of voting, with voting on student interest for what events to hold to improve students' lives here and get them involved in what interests them. Student Government votes in the college's shared governance on changes that will affect students directly. We handle student concerns and vote on whether to take it to shared governance or try to write a policy to change something on campus for those students, etc.

It is so essential to be registered to vote. Everything goes through a process, and everyone, especially college students, needs to know that process so that everyone knows how their opinions are represented in each part.

When students come to college, they are exposed to many different ideas, cultures, ideologies and people. This is when one's morality is solidified, one's political beliefs are changed or strengthened, and young people are most passionate about changing things. Where college students are educated on political bias, different politics, where those politics in history come from, and so many more beliefs.

One goes to college to seek higher education in all forms. Hence, it is vital to be registered so that someone can vote for those representatives they believe will uphold their beliefs and laws and benefit their country, state, and county effectively.

Choosing not to vote is just losing one's voice. Democracy was an idea that took



Photo provided by Alaina Mullins

Alaina Mullins
For the Agora

5000 years to create from an idea to a process; one choosing not to vote is losing a piece of that process.

Student Government held a voter registration event on campus on Sept. 17 for Student Engagement Day and Constitution Day. I, as well as the Student Government members, believe it is essential to vote.

We vote on many processes and policies in Student Government and participate in those processes. Our Founding Fathers voted on the creation of the Constitution. To avoid getting out there and voting is a disservice to oneself and one's own belief, one's idea of how America protects their freedoms, what problems need to be addressed, and what laws changed. Voting is the first step in bringing a change.

It is the first step in the process of transforming America. Everyone deserves to feel represented by their votes, even pre-registered Middle College students. That's why it's so important to be registered and why we held our event.

Your vote matters, so get registered.

Alaina Mullins is Student Government President.

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Editorial Policy

The Agora is published by the students of Monroe County Community College, 1555 S. Raisinville Rd., Monroe, MI, 48161. The editorial office is located in Room 213 of the Campbell Building.

Submissions: The Agora encourages submissions by anyone in the college community, including freelance articles, opinion columns or letters to the editor. All submissions must include a name, address and phone number for verification purposes. The Agora reserves the right to edit for clarity, accuracy, length and libel.

The Agora is a student-managed newspaper that supports a free student press. It is a member of the Michigan Community College Press Association, the Michigan Press Association, College Media Association, Associated Collegiate Press and the Student Press Law Center.

Story suggestions are welcome. Let us know what you would like to see in the Agora - it's your newspaper. Email submissions to agora@monroeccc.edu.

Nine candidates to run for MCCC Board of Trustees

Two board positions to be filled in upcoming election

Maggie Sandefur and Mick Valentino
Agora Editors

The MCCC Board of Trustees has two seats open in the upcoming Nov. 5 election. Nine candidates are running: Benny Capaul, Joel Spotts, Duane Lebrun, Charlie Abel, Jamie O'Brien, Doug Stevens, Kristy Svatek-Whitson, John Gonta and Linda Roberts. Krista Lambrix, vice chair, and Joel Spotts, trustee, have spots up for re-election this year. Lambrix is not running again.

Benny Capaul

Benny Capaul is an MCCC alum and licensed funeral director. Capaul was awarded 2021 Alumnus of the Year, and he said his great grandfather served on the Board of Trustees. Capaul said his focus is the mental health of students and staff, as well as making sure everyone feels safe and gets a good education. He said he can provide a young and fresh perspective alongside generations of service.

Joel Spotts

Joel Spotts is an MCCC alum and current trustee on the board. He was appointed following the resignation of Florence M. Buchanan. Spotts was a Monroe County Middle College student and was part of the Alumni Association after graduation. Spotts said he wanted to make sure MCCC is as much of a resource to the community as it can be, and he said he hopes to see the college at its best for current and future students.

Jamie O'Brien

Jamie O'Brien is a community member who studied at MCCC. O'Brien said she has



Photo by Reese Bowling

From left, Benny Capaul, Joel Spotts, Duane Lebrun, Charlie Abel, Jamie O'Brien, Doug Stevens and Kristy Svatek-Whitson speak at night three of MCCC's political forums. They are seven of nine candidates running for board positions, alongside John Gonta and Linda Roberts. Gonta and Roberts were not present for the political forum..

an engineering background, and said President Kojo Quartey said she'd be a good candidate to bring both mental and physical diversity to the board. O'Brien said she feels as though her experience teaching has provided her with wisdom to put to good use on the board. O'Brien said she hopes to put an end to the debates surrounding the bathroom policy.

Duane Lebrun

Duane Lebrun is an MCCC alum who would like to give back to the college. Lebrun said MCCC was responsible for starting his career at Detroit Edison, and he feels an obligation to run. Lebrun said he is now retired and has the time for the commitment to the board. He said he would like to see the college do more with financial matters, and he would also like to see anyone over 65 who pays tax-

es in Monroe County be able to take college classes for free.

Charlie Abel

Charlie Abel is a former MCCC employee who resigned in April 2023. He was a chief security officer for four years and with the security office for seven years. Abel said he wants to see the taxpayers' dollars be used better, and he said he would like to make the public more aware of President Quartey's salary. Abel said he would also want to focus on graduation rates and improve them if they were low.

Doug Stevens

Doug Stevens is a business owner and a

retired firefighter. Stevens said he would be able to utilize the skills he learned from being a firefighter and owning two businesses. He said he would dedicate the time to serve on the board. Stevens said he would like to see enrollment and graduation rates go up at the college.

Kristy Svatek-Whitson

Kristy Svatek-Whitson is an MCCC alum who ran for this position to serve her community. Svatek-Whitson said she is retired and can dedicate the time and energy to the college. She said she would like to help MCCC overcome hurdles it is facing, as well as incorporate a new policy that addresses spending and financial decisions at the college.

See trustee on page 4



Duane Lebrun stands to address the audience during the Oct. 9 candidate forum in the Meyer Theater. Seven of the nine candidates attended the forum.

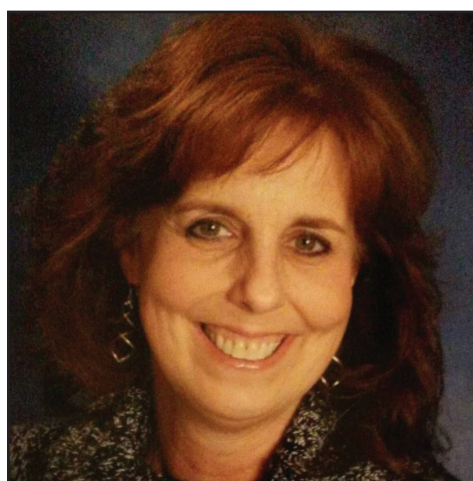
Photo by Reese Bowling

Two board positions open for election

TRUSTEE: from page 3

Linda Roberts

Linda Roberts is a former MCCC employee who retired in February. Roberts worked in the Registrar's office for over 20 years before retiring. Roberts said her experience working at the college would provide the board with an inside perspective if elected. She said she wants the college to be transparent about the millages and what taxpayer money is going toward.



Linda Roberts



John Gonta

John Gonta

John Gonta is a Wayne County Community College graduate and an attorney based in Monroe. Gonta said he would like to focus on recruiting, and his background as a recruiter for the Army National Guard would benefit him. He said he would like to see a stop in the rise of tuition rates and see a freeze in tuition. Gonta said he would also like to focus on community involvement and public comment and hear from everyone.

Voting pre-registration available in Michigan Citizens can also register, vote on same day

Jamie Hunt
Agora Staff

Residents of Michigan now have the opportunity to pre-register to vote if they're at least 16 years old.

Teens wanting to pre-register to vote can do so online at Michigan.gov/Vote, through the local clerk's office, or automatically while applying for a graduated driver's license at the secretary of state's office.

Individuals can also vote in person and register to vote on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 5, through their city or township clerk's office

as long as they're 18 and have proof of residency available.

Those who pre-register will be able to vote by absentee ballot or in person at an early voting site as long as they are 18 before Election Day.

In order to pre-register to vote, individuals must meet the federal identification requirement that could prove current Michigan residency.

Teens who pre-register to vote can have their application accepted. However, voter information cards will not be sent out until the individual is at least 17 and a half years

of age.

It is important to note that parents cannot pre-register for their children, but they are able to return the completed forms to the clerk's office if their child asks.

Children do not need approval from their parents in order to pre-register to vote and clerks are not required to contact parents for permission.

Parents are encouraged to discuss elections and politics with their children. However, it is illegal for them to attempt to influence their child's vote as that would be considered electioneering.

When pre-registering to vote, teens are able to pre-register with the address they are currently at or intend to be located at.

However, if an individual pre-registers at a different address than their parents, for example a temporary residency or a college campus, this will update the address on their state ID as well.

This address change could impact the teens' insurance and the parents' ability to claim the child as a dependent.

First-time voters share thoughts with PTK

Phi Theta Kappa members interviewed first time voters at MCCC to learn about affiliations, opinions and the political effects on campus.

Interviewer: Gabby Forrester

Q. Do you ascribe to a certain political affiliation? (Republican, Democrat, etc.)

A. I probably lean democrat.

Q. How are you feeling about the political climate of the upcoming election?

A. Not great.

Q. What makes you want to vote in the upcoming election?

A. It feels like the only way that you can gain any sort of control and really feel better about the political climate is to do something about it.

Q. What are the issues that you're looking to be solved by these candidates?

A. I would love for women to have control of their bodies, for us to not participate in a genocide, better access to healthcare, let's not lean so much on capitalism.

Q. Where have you gotten your information about the candidates?

A. I haven't done a deep dive yet, but a lot of what I know is from their previous actions. And of course, we've all seen the extensive advertising of each of them.

Q. Where have you gotten information about voting and registration?

A. I've voted and have gotten registration before, so I know just from, like, experience.

Q. Do you feel like the heavy political atmosphere is affecting campus life right now?

A. Only in the way that I've seen signs on the way to school about campus letting men in women's bathrooms which is not true and I wish people would actually listen to facts about that.



Jami Loose, community college student

Interviewers: Anna Muth and Joshua Marimpietri

Q: Do you ascribe to a certain political affiliation? (Republican, Democrat, third party)

A: I lean more Republican.

Q: How are you feeling about the political climate of the upcoming election?

A: It's very... very elevated. There's a lot of persona around our two people that are running on both sides, Democrat and Republican. And... it's going to be a tough one, I feel like, because of how quick things are happening. I mean, it's a close call for both sides, and I understand both sides' opinions.

Q: What makes you want to vote in the upcoming election?

A: For my future. I want to be able to buy a house, I want to be able to afford groceries. I can't afford an apartment right now on my own and that is something that I was looking into, but I just can't afford it.

Q: What are the issues that you're looking to be solved by the candidates?

A: I would like taxes to come down. Obviously, no tax on tips for waitresses. And, overall, prices to come down. Inflation to shrink.

Q: Where have you gotten your information about the candidates?

A: Google, TikTok, my parents, obviously your news stations. I work in the hospital, so I see both sides of all new stations all day.

Q: Where have you gotten your information about voting and registration?

A: My parents and my local government - because we live on Estral Beach, so it's a pretty small government.

Q: Do you feel like the heavy political atmosphere is affecting campus life?

A: I am more lenient to say my views in class because it's such a high . . . like, I don't want people to jump down my throat. I don't want to offend anybody. So, I feel like it does. . . yeah, slightly.



Samantha Ledger, community college nursing student

**See voter on
page 8**



From left, Professor Amanda Gregory speaks with MCCC Board of Trustees candidate Jamie O'Brien.



From left, Joe Bitz, Jerry McKart, Jesse Riggs, Danielle Hoover, Bill LaVoy, Dave Vensel, Brian Lamour, Brian Merkle and Roger Lewis, county-wide office candidates, attend the Oct. 8 political forum.



Dean of Student Services Gerald McCarty and Vice President of Enrollment Management Scott Behrens monitor time while each candidate responds to questions.

MCCC hosts three-night political forum on campus



From left, Rick Kull, Libbi Urban, William Bruck, Jamie Thompson and Dale Biniecki, U.S. and state-level representatives, attend the first night of MCCC's political forum, which was held Oct. 7.

MCCC, in collaboration with the Agora and the Monroe County NAACP, held political forums Oct. 7, 8 and 9 in the Meyer Theater. The political forum featured candidates for U.S. and state level representatives, county wide offices, county school boards and the MCCC Board of Trustees. Agora Editor Maggie Sandefur and Reporter Dana Willi served as the moderators all three nights.



Milward Beaudry, executive director of MPACT, helps film the three-day forum.



Seven MCCC Board of Trustees candidates speak during the second half of night three. From left, Benny Capaul, Joel Spotts, Duane Lebrun, Charlie Abel, Jamie O'Brien, Doug Stevens and Kristy Svatek-Whitson.



From left, state representatives Rick Kull and William Bruck speak before the night one forum.

Photos by Reese Bowling

Students new to voting offer election, political perspectives

VOTER: From page 5



Leahna Rath, psychology-focused
community college student

Interviewers: Anna Muth and Joshua Marimpietri

Q: Do you ascribe to a certain political affiliation? (Republican, Democrat, third party)

A: I'm kind of in the middle. I'm, like, all over the place.

Q: How are you feeling about the political climate of the upcoming election?

A: Well, it's kind of scary sometimes to see how people can, I guess, act towards other people.

Q: What makes you want to vote in the upcoming election?

A: I definitely think that every vote is important. So, even one vote can change the whole future. And I want to be a part of that to make sure we see actual change.

Q: What are the issues that you're looking to be solved by the candidates?

A: There's a lot that should be changed. The prices, that's one of the main things and there's so many people in the U.S.A. that are homeless and don't have food. And America being, like, the 'best country' or whatever, it seems kind of not true when we have all these problems with people not being able to survive.

Q: Where have you gotten your information about the candidates?

A: I've talked about it a little in my classes and from like the news, TikTok and a little from my parents.

Q: Where have you gotten your information about voting and registration?

A: I've gotten some things in the mail to me, and, like, my parents.

Q: Do you feel like the heavy political atmosphere is affecting campus life?

A: I definitely think it is. I feel like people kind of are on edge and may be scared to talk about how they feel. Or, the opposite, and kind of overload people and peer pressure them, I guess, to talk about it or even change their vote.

Interviewers: Anna Muth and Joshua Marimpietri

Q: Do you ascribe to a certain political affiliation? (Republican, Democrat, etc.)

A. Yes

Q. Would you mind sharing that or would you like to keep that private?

A. I don't really care, I lean towards Republican.

Q. How are you feeling about the political climate of the upcoming election?

A. A bit nervous, maybe uneasy. It's a lot to process, I think.

Q. What makes you want to vote in the upcoming election?

A. I am a strong believer that it's our civic duty as United States citizens. I think that we are very blessed here to be able to vote and I think we should use... we shouldn't take that lightly, I think we're very blessed.

Q. What are the issues that you're looking to be solved by these candidates?

A. The border issue. I really feel strongly about that - immigrants coming in here illegally.

Q. Where have you gotten your information about the candidates?

A. I would probably say online. Maybe news, news articles, CNN and Fox news, stuff like that.

Q. Where have you gotten information about voting and registration?

A. Probably my dad, honestly.

Q. Do you feel like the heavy political atmosphere is affecting campus life right now?

A. I would say yeah, a little bit. I'd probably say yeah. I feel like just the candidates are so different it's like you're either this or that I mean you can be middle but I don't know I feel like it is.



Alena Ellis, community college student,
criminal justice major

MCCC millage on ballot for renewal

Dana Willi
Agora Staff

Monroe County has two millage rate proposals on the upcoming Nov. 5 ballot.

A millage rate is a tax determined by a property's taxable value. Millage taxes often fund things like township tax, fire/police departments, museums. A portion of funding for public elementary, secondary, and college education institutions also comes from millage rates.

The first millage proposal aims to renew the current maintenance and improvement millage rate of \$.85 mills. This rate is a zero-increase renewal. Homeowners can expect to pay the same amount they're currently paying until 2030, should this renewal pass.

The second proposal on the ballot looks to restore the current operating levy from \$2.1794 to its originally agreed upon amount of \$2.25. Homeowners can expect a minor tax increase, should this override proposal succeed.

The amount saw a reduction after the Headlee Amendment entered the Michigan Constitution just two years prior to the passing of the 1980 operational amount in 1978.

The amendment protects people from unfair taxation. It prevents the millage rate from rising at times when the property rate increases faster than the rate of inflation. The rate can then only be restored by voters during election time.

The college's 2024-2025 proposed budget says funding is decided based on the priorities of safety, accessibility, technology, updating the learning environment and deferred maintenance.

Joe Verkennes, director of marketing and communications, said he could not yet clarify how funding would be dispersed. He said the college is currently in the process of planning their phase three outline to allocate funds. Phase one and two saw changes and expansions to campus projects.

Former MCCC faculty member, Dale Parker, commented on the millage renewal during a visit to campus. Parker began work at MCCC in 1998 and retired in 2021.

"It's very important everyone in Monroe County knows [the millage renewal will maintain its less than \$4 per month rate if passed and not increase the rate] cause it's for a good cause," Parker said.

Lt. Gov. Gilchrist said projects and renovations are helpful to the college.

"Projects such as these expand the doors for opportunity and help residents become the best version of themselves in Michigan,"



Signs have appeared around Monroe County requesting people vote "no" on MCCC's upcoming millage renewal. However, the college chose not to promote the millage and is not producing any supporting material.

Top photo by Mick Valentino

Bottom photo by Dana Willi

Gilchrist said while visiting campus for a groundbreaking ceremony.

The college currently levies a total of \$3.0294 mills per \$1,000 of taxable value on the homeowners, as reported by the Monroe County Equalization Department in the 2023 Apportionment report which can be found at <https://www.co.monroe.mi.us/Document-Center>.

If the millage renewal passes and the Headlee agreement override passes as well,

the people will face a \$3.1 (\$2.25 restored operational rate + \$.85 renewal rate) mill rate.

The \$.85 rate would secure \$6.7 million in funding for the college in 2026. The override would raise an additional \$535,912 in its first year.

"I urge you to go out and vote. You know how to vote, and so support your college, because this is the only place where individuals in our community will have this opportuni-

ty," said MCCC President Kojo Quartey.

For any questions regarding the millage, MCCC's website encourages questions to be sent to Verkennes. He can be contacted at 734-384-4207 or emailed at jverkennes@monroeccc.edu.

Polls open for General Election on Tuesday, Nov. 5. Visit <https://mvic.sos.state.mi.us> to find out what else is written on your district's ballot.

Nine-day voting available to Michigan residents

Primary, general election utilize early voting for first time in the state

Sidney Robison
Agora Staff

Michigan residents can now vote nine days before an election.

Early voting became a constitutional law in 2022.

Annamarie Osment, county clerk, said the proposal came into effect in November of 2022 and affects the entire state of Michigan.

Early voting for the Nov. 5 general election begins Saturday, Oct. 26, and ends Sunday, Nov. 3.

The now constitutional law requires prepaid postage for absentee ballots and

applications, requires local clerks to install one absentee ballot drop box for every 15,000 registered voters, requires at least nine days of early voting in state and federal elections, and allows a voter to request an absentee ballot for future elections, according to the Monroe County website.

“It was a constitutional change so you can’t just take it out by legislative changes,” Osment said.

Osment said the early voting process is only for certain elections in Michigan.

“The early voting is only required for state and federal elections, so we do not need to hold that for school elections or special elections,” Osment said.

The Feb. 27 presidential primary was the first time early voting took place in Michigan and voter turnout only slightly increased.

“We would like to see that number rise,” Osment said. “I think if people understand that they can get their absentee ballot and vote in the privacy of their own home and then come in and put the ballot into the tabulator, I think we would see that number rise.”

Absentee voters can bring their completed ballot to their early voting site to be tabulated, or they can hand-deliver the ballot to their local clerk’s office or secure ballot drop box. Absentee ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on Election Day, according to the secretary of state’s website.

Osment said the county clerk’s office gets a lot of questions, but they are mostly about if the early voting automatically means someone can vote twice.

Osment said the office has a qualified voter file to ensure someone does not vote more than once.

Residents can go to their local township office to vote nine days before the election.

For more information, visit <https://www.co.monroe.mi.us/409/Elections>.

For additional information about early voting, visit michigan.gov/vote or view this presentation <https://www.co.monroe.mi.us/845/EARLY-VOTING-INFORMATION>.

Koda’s Corner

By Alyssa Hall



Well, how should we attract people in Michigan to vote nine days before the General Election?



Look, everyone’s finally here... Think the pizza still tastes good?

County seeks poll workers for general election

Elizabeth Bradley
Agora Staff

Monroe County is hiring poll workers for the upcoming election, according to the county clerk.

Annamarie Osment, Monroe County clerk, said that each jurisdiction will have at least three inspectors, though larger jurisdictions usually have many more from differing party affiliations.

Osment said workers take an oath, set up polling sites, greet and assist voters, handle ballots, and use tabulators to count the votes in their jobs.

To become an election inspector, individuals must be at least 16 years old, a Michigan resident and voter, have no previous felonies or election crime convictions, must not be connected to anyone who is part of the elec-

tion and must affiliate with a political party, according to the state of Michigan website.

The state also provides recommended traits to have as a poll worker, such as organization, customer service, project management, and familiarity with technology.

Pay differs by county, township, and jurisdiction. However, Osment calculates a range of \$14-18 hourly.

The last training for this year is Oct. 16, at 10 a.m. and Oct. 17 at 5:30 p.m. Osment said that the county trains several hundred inspectors each year.

Osment said there are many local opportunities to participate.

If interested, contact your local clerk's office directly. They will tell you if there is a need and help you schedule a training date.

Agora

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Candidate Forum



Photo by Reese Bowling

William Bruck, right, speaks with a visitor to his information table Oct. 7 during the candidate forum at the Meyer Theater. Bruck, a Republican, is running for reelection as state representative for District 30. His Democratic challenger is Rick Kull.

Register and find your polling place
at nextgenamerica.org/vote



DON'T RUIN YOUR VOTER RECORD

Who you vote for is private. Whether you vote is public record. Make sure you're registered to vote at the address where you live while going to school.

Online + Mail Registration Deadline:
October 21, 2024

In-Person Registration Deadline:
November 5, 2024

Election Day:
November 5, 2024

Paid for by NextGen Climate Action

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Register and find your polling
place at nextgenamerica.org/vote



Be like Taylor.

Be a voter.

"I've done my research, and I've made my choice. **Your research is all yours to do, and the choice is yours to make.** I also want to say, especially to first time voters: Remember that **in order to vote, you have to be registered!** I also find it's much easier to **vote early.**"

- Taylor Swift

**Online + Mail Registration Deadline in MI:
October 21, 2024**

**In-Person Registration Deadline:
November 5, 2024**

**Election Day:
November 5, 2024**

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