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In Michigan, all federal, state, county, township, city, village, and school elections are restricted to three dates each year: May, August, November.

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The law already limits a municipality from going to voters more than 2 times in any calendar year.

While limiting, election dates offered three times each year, continue to provide libraries and other municipal and school bodies flexibility with imposing new millages or increasing or renewing an existing millage.

SB22, as introduced, would limit a local taxing unit submission of a proposal on a question of imposing a new millage or increasing or renewing an existing millage at an election held ONLY on the November regular election date as provided in section 641 of the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 116, MCL168.641.

MLA opposes SB22 for the following reasons:

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A millage loss could very well close the doors permanently for a library, so alternative dates to re-present their proposal to their community during the calendar year are essential. Restrictions to the number of times each year that a millage can be brought before voters are already limited. There is no wiggle room if a millage fails and libraries get only one shot per year.

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If voters can only vote in November, it could potentially take years before any new municipalities could be added within the boundaries of a district library to increase service.

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Prior to voter reforms like “No Reason Absentee Voting,” we know that November ballots were huge, packed often with convoluted and confusing ballot proposals and local ballots are often lost in the shuffle placed after lengthy state proposals, causing delays at polling locations and voter frustration.

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Since the Headlee Amendment causes millages to roll back beginning in the year they are authorized, this will cause further erosion of revenue from property taxes as libraries would certainly begin their process years prior to the actual vote.

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Ballot language is complex and requirements for elections could create a problem whereas a library would miss their opportunity to be on the ballot until the next election. If it is limited to only the November elections, the library would not have a millage or budget to operate under while waiting.

MLA will continue to watch this bill and will call on our MLA Members if necessary if we see any movement.