**January 26, 2011**

**Nearly two thirds of Michigan voters Oppose idea of letting government post notices online.**

A survey shows that 61% of Michigan voters oppose a plan to allow government to forgo placing “public notices” in newspapers and instead place them on a government web site. The Michigan Press Association commissioned a statewide poll, conducted by EPIC-MRA, to understand what’s on the minds of Michigan citizens when it comes to conserving scarce resources, keeping government transparent and protecting taxpayer rights.

The survey also showed that **nearly 70 percent of voters rarely visit a government web site… and almost a third of voters NEVER visit a government web site.**  When EPIC /MRA asked voters “How often do you log onto the web site of your county, city or township government”  29% said “never,” 16% said “seldom”  and 23% said “a few times a year” and 17% said “a few times a month.”

Legislation has been introduced in the Michigan House of Representatives that would allow notices of things like property seizures and zoning changes to be posted on a government website instead of a local newspaper. Government groups say this will save them money so they can keep police and fire crews on the street. But there are other ways to save money: some cities spend more on baseball umpires than they do on newspaper notices.

The EPIC - MRA surveyed 600 voters and asked if they “support or oppose the proposal to no longer require the publication of official action such as property seizures and zoning change notices in local newspapers, allowing instead, the posting of these notices on a web site maintained by the governmental body issuing the notice?” Of the respondents, 18% said they oppose the move and 43% said they strongly oppose the move. Just 15% of voters strongly support the idea.

“Government groups are pouring taxpayer dollars into the pockets of high-priced lobbyists so they can hide critical information on websites that next to nobody reads,” said MPA Executive Director Mike MacLaren. “Michigan newspapers – **which 87% of adults read during an average seven day period** -- provide an authentic, permanent and independent record of legal actions taken by government… the kind of record that proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that taxpayer rights are being protected.”

When asked how Michigan families that don’t have computers would find out about important government notices, government groups say they can always look up this information on the Internet at the local library.  But a survey conducted last summer showed **89 percent of Wisconsin households surveyed never go to the public library to use the library's computer system to access news or information on local or state government.**

Keeping public notices in newspapers protects taxpayer rights. “These notices are legal documents. Having a permanent and publicly-circulated record of government actions proves beyond a shadow of a doubt what formal action government did or didn’t take,” MacLaren said. “Government websites can be hacked and vital community information can be hidden. That’s bad news for citizens.”

-30-

**Mike MacLaren**

Executive Director   :   Michigan Press Association

827 N. Washington Ave.   :   Lansing, MI 48906-5199   V: 517-372-2424   :   [www.michiganpress.org](http://www.michiganpress.org)

The EPIC-MRA poll was conducted the week of January 24 and has a +/- 4% margin of error.

The Michigan Press Association promotes free speech, open government and an informed citizenry. Founded in 1868, it represents some 320 print and online newspapers that reach an audience of 6.9 million Michigan adults.