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NOMINATING PETITIONS IN SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

House Bill 5039 as introduced First Analysis (10-4-00)

Sponsor: Rep. Michael Green
Committee: Constitutional Law and Ethics

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Reportedly, Huron County has seven or eight one-room school houses, ranging from kindergarten through the third and eighth grades and with between 16 and 30 pupils. With such small schools, the current election law requirement that nominating petitions for school board members have 20 signatures apparently is a problem.

At the request of the superintendent of the Huron County Intermediate School District, legislation has been introduced to address this issue.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The Revised School Code requires that petitions nominating candidates for school boards be signed by a number of school electors of the district equal to at least one percent of the total number of votes received by the candidate for school board member who received the greatest number of votes at the last school board election, with a minimum of at least 20 signatures. The bill would amend the code to allow nominating petitions to be signed by at least ten school electors in school districts with 150 or fewer school electors.

MCL 380.1066

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill has no fiscal implications. (10-3-00)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

In extremely small school districts, the state requires that school board candidate nominating petitions have at least 20 signatures, even if that number is greater than the percentage requirement given in the law. While it might be relatively easy for one candidate to gather this many signatures, if multiple candidates run

for school board in a small district, this means that multiple petitions requiring at least 20 signatures are required – which may be a problem. The bill would reduce by half (that is, to 10) the minimum number of signatures required on nominating petitions in very small school districts – those with 150 or fewer school electors, which could encourage more people to run for school board in these small districts.

POSITIONS:

The Department of State supports the bill. (10-3-00)

Analyst: S. Ekstrom

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