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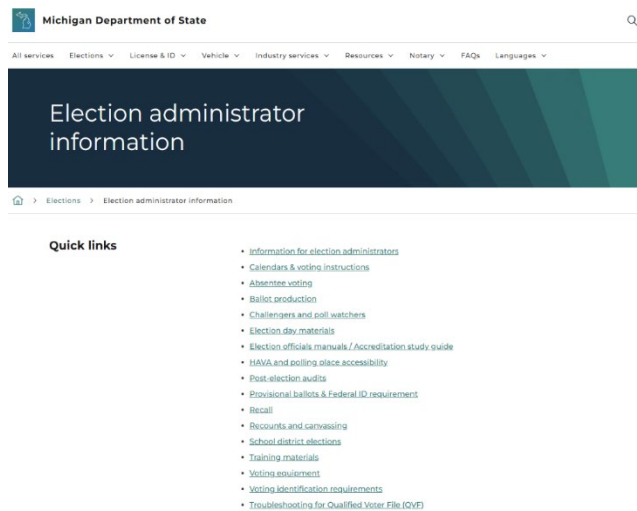
# Secure, Swift, Successful

Michigan's ePollbook Transformed Early Voting

<b>Award:</b>	National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) State IT Recognition Awards
<b>Category:</b>	Cross-Boundary Collaboration
<b>State:</b>	Michigan
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Michigan Bureau of Elections (BoE) in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget (DTMB) has implemented an Early Voting Electronic Pollbook (EPB) solution which enhances the experience for Michigan voters, local clerks, and election workers.



The EPB is aimed at improving the overall transparency and efficiency of early voting in the State of Michigan (SOM) whether votes are received in the mail, or at an in-person voting station, and supports the 2022 Proposal 2 (Prop 22-2) constitutional amendment that gives voters the right to vote early and in person.

To kick-off the overall project, input was solicited from multiple stakeholders through lean process improvement (LPI) workshops. The LPI brought together stakeholders from across the state to complete an analysis of current voting processes and the new legislation to design a system with customer needs and increased efficiency in mind.

Representatives from the BoE and DTMB embarked on a journey to automate a traditionally manual and labor-intensive process for voting prior to election day, with an emphasis on security, convenience, and increased voter turnout. A local clerk pilot group was established ahead of statewide voting to ensure readiness across the state.

Michigan voters can vote a minimum of 9 days early and register to vote up to and including Election Day. The EPB provides clerks the ability to track eligibility to vote and track who has cast a ballot, to prevent duplicate voting. Voters are issued a ballot and can complete it and personally insert it into the tabulator at their early voting site. The solution increases clerk efficiency, security, and voter satisfaction in both early voting and on Election Day.

## IDEA

### What problems or opportunities does the project address?

In November 2022, Michigan voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment that gave voters the right to vote early and in person at early voting sites before statewide and federal elections. Communities may also choose to provide early voting for local elections. The change in legislation did not include allocated funding for districts, and the proposal went into effect 90 days from the time of passing.

Voters in Michigan can register to vote up to and on Election Day, including during the early voting period. The early voting period ends on the Sunday before an election. Communities may decide to provide additional days of early voting, up to 28 days total. Early voting is provided for local elections (non-federal or state elections) at the discretion of the local clerk.

### Proposal 22-2 provides voters:

- ✓ A minimum of nine days (max of 28 days) of early, in-person voting across Michigan.
- ✓ The ability to request a ballot at any point, removing the 75-day prior limitation.
- ✓ Early voting sites open at least 8 hours each day during the voting period.



## Why does it matter?

Michigan voters advocated for early voting to enhance accessibility, convenience, and participation in the electoral process. The introduction of early voting was also a response to heightened political engagement and concerns over voter suppression.

By expanding voting options, Michigan aimed to ensure that all eligible voters had ample opportunity to participate, regardless of external pressures or challenges. Prior to [passing of Prop 22-2](#), early voting was limited to the absentee ballot process. With the anticipated increase of early voters, Michigan needed a secure and efficient process for casting and processing early votes, and the ability to effectively assist voters.

### What makes it different?

The EPB addresses the different needs between early voting and traditional absentee voting, while maintaining the integrity of the Election Day process. Both early in-person voting and absentee voting allow voters to cast a ballot prior to Election Day. However, there are key differences between the two methods of voting.

Early voting allows voters to cast a ballot similar to how they would do so at a polling place on Election Day. Voters are issued a ballot and can complete it and personally insert it into the tabulator at their early voting site, increasing voter trust.

Absentee voting allows voters to request a ballot by mail, online, or in-person at their local clerk's office. Voters can then complete their absentee ballot at home or at their local clerk's office and submit it in an envelope by mail, in person, or by drop box. After an absentee ballot is received by the local clerk, the voter's absentee ballot is processed and tabulated by the clerk.

In 2024, Michigan absentee voters had the option to take their absentee ballot to their early voting site or their polling place on Election Day and insert it directly into the tabulator.

### What makes it universal?

The EPB uses the state's Qualified Voter File (QVF) to validate citizens that are registered, eligible to vote, and at the correct location. Other states could similarly use their statewide registration systems to create pollbooks, ensuring each site has the exact, real-time eligible voter list for that jurisdiction.



Michigan's early voter experiences mirrors Election Day voting with the same ballot scanners, voter check-in process, and handling of voter assistance technologies. Uniformity builds voter trust and simplifies poll worker training, a benefit to any election body.

Michigan gave local election officials flexibility to expand beyond the mandatory nine days of early voting, if desired. With the support of an EPB like Michigan's, other states could adopt this hybrid approach, allowing jurisdictions to tailor based on laws, demand, and resources.

Michigan's EPB model is a balanced mix of security, voter accessibility, local control, and procedural uniformity. All qualities that states looking to modernize their election systems could adopt successfully.



## IMPLEMENTATION

The Michigan Department of State (MDOS) emphasizes values such as empathy, honesty, integrity, and reliability in its operations. These principles guide the BoE in delivering fair and equitable services to all Michigan voters. Fueled by a commitment to innovation and Michigan voters, the DTMB's Agency Services team embraced cutting edge technology to create the ePollbook. The ePollbook provides a means for the BoE to effectively facilitate and certify statewide elections in a prudent manner, while providing voters flexibility and increasing voter confidence. It also aligns with DTMB's mission to drive efficiency, connect customers to services, and enable government to serve Michigan's residents.

### How does this project fit into an enterprise view?

The DTMB Agency Services team leveraged the SOM Unified Information Technology Environment (SUITE) methodology. The purpose of SUITE is to ensure consistent processes are followed throughout the SOM. SUITE is based on industry best practices and includes following recognized methodologies - Project, Program, and Portfolio Management (3PMM), Systems Engineering (SEM), and Investment Management (IMM). The overall goal of SUITE is to integrate the 3PMM, SEM, IMM, and process management into unified, understandable, and agreed upon guidance for the delivery of successful Information Technology (IT) outcomes and to achieve business objectives.

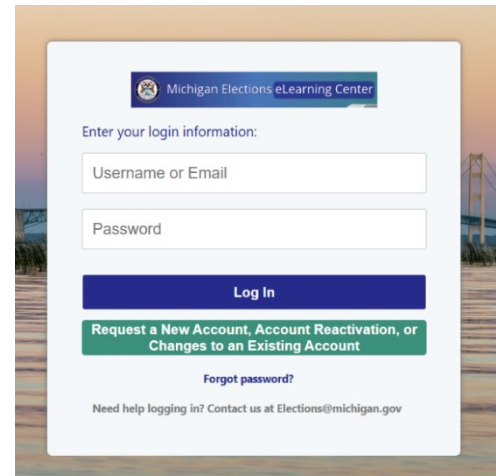
### What was the roadmap?

Successful implementation of a technology solution required collaboration of multiple stakeholders from the beginning. During the LPI, with an emphasis on voter experience and implementation of a technology solution, participants also considered the following objectives that lead to development of business requirements, user stories, a robust implementation plan, communication plan, training plan. This work and plans took into consideration the needs and experience of all stakeholders.

- ✓ Define and document a new MDOS voting process that fulfills early, absentee, and in-person voting requirements in alignment with Prop 22-2.
- ✓ Update existing process documentation and Prop 22-2 impacts on other MDOS processes or systems.
- ✓ Determine key training deliverables for clerks and MDOS staff for Prop 22-2 requirements regarding accurate and effective implementation of early voting process including, voter eligibility, ballot submission, and analyzing options for election records, equipment, and ballot chain of custody.
- ✓ Identify key updates to relevant technology needed to effectively carry out the requirements of Prop 22-2.
- ✓ Outline the minimum Prop 22-2 required changes for clerks from jurisdictions with strict funding limitations.
- ✓ Identify any aspect of Prop 22-2 that staff require further clarification to carry out

With a bipartisan approach, subject matter experts from across the state came together to analyze, ideate, design, and implement an electronic solution for early voting.

The Early Voting EPB is a web-based application with a secure, live connection to the QVF, that serves largely the same purpose as the SOM Election Day EPB but during the early voting period. Early Voting EPB training and resources were developed and shared with election stakeholders in the Michigan Elections eLearning Center. Since early voting occurs at least nine days prior to Election Day, while voters may also be returning absentee ballots, and because some voters have the choice of using multiple early voting sites, the EPB is connected to the internet to allow clerks and election inspectors to access and update voter records in real time. The EPB is also password-protected and requires several layers of authentication to access. Jurisdictions are required to use EPBs to manage Election Day precincts and early voting sites. During the early voting period, voters are issued a ballot and can then insert their ballot directly into a tabulator at their early voting site.



#### Planning and analysis:

- Assemble a project team, including election officials, IT experts, local clerks, and security specialists.
- Ensure state laws and constitution are understood, followed, and a process is in place for documenting the project plan and outcomes.
- Facilitate LPI workshops and conduct stakeholder surveys.
- Review current processes to identify opportunities for automation and efficiency.
- Create a priority-based project plan.
- Map out early voting sites based on voter density and geography.

#### Design and develop:

- Write requirements that will address the needs of stakeholders, is compliant with voting laws, and provides a secure solution.
- Design solution based on business requirements and user stories.
- Update procedures to align with new processes.
- Conduct testing.
- Draft and execute change management plan.

#### Implement:

- Pilot solution.
- Assign secure login credentials.
- State funding available to assist Clerks with acquisition of hardware.
- Provide FAQ helpdesk for local clerks.

#### Follow-up:

- Complete post-election audit against manual records.
- Follow post-election security processes.
- Conduct lessons learned.
- Monitor.

#### Who was involved?

- MDOS BoE



- DTMB Agency Services
- Local Clerks
- DTMB Project Management Office
- DTMB Office of Continuous Improvement
- MDOS Information Security Control Division
- DTMB Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection

### How did you do it?

The Michigan Legislature funded the application development as well as local government resources which supported the implementation of early voting.

## IMPACT

### What did the project make better?

Key EPB capabilities that allowed for efficient election management of early voting:

- Increased opportunities for voters to participate in casting their ballot in-person.
- Real-time information to improve the integrity of the election process.
- Registration and absent voter information available for every voter in the Election Day precinct or assigned to the early voting site.
- The ability to:
  - Quickly locate a voter's record by scanning a voter's Michigan driver's license or state identification card with a barcode scanner.
  - Assign and record the voter's ballot immediately upon confirming the voter's registration.
  - Look up the correct polling place for voters who appear at the wrong precinct or early voting site.
- Streamlined current voting technology to be more in line with industry and security best practices.
- Election inspectors assigned unique login credentials and secure grid card codes.
- Improved identification and collaboration of all internal and external stakeholders.

The screenshot shows the 'HOME > VOTER > VOTING HISTORY' page. It features a search bar for 'VOTER ID / NAME' with 'SEARCH' and 'CLEAR' buttons. To the right, there are filters for 'VOTED' status: 'IN PERSON (340)', 'AV (99)', and 'EV (3)'. Below the search bar, there are checkboxes for 'NOT VOTED' (with a count of 364) and 'FOR SCANNER' (with options for 'IN PERSON' and 'ABSENTEE VOTER'). At the bottom, there is a table with columns: 'IN PERSON', 'AV', 'EV', 'DLN', 'DOB', and 'VOTER NAME'. The table shows several rows of data with checkboxes in the first three columns. A pagination bar at the bottom indicates 'Page 1 of 17' and 'DISPLAYING 1 TO 50 OF 86 ITEMS'.

Other key strategies that contributed to successful early voting:

- Deployment of laptops equipped with EPB software to early voting sites statewide.
- Early voting site locations, dates, and hours are available up to 60 days prior to Election Day at [Michigan.gov/Vote](https://Michigan.gov/Vote) or by contacting the local clerk's office.

### How do you know?

In November 2024, Michigan saw record-breaking voter turnout.

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***Over 5.7 million ballots cast.  
1.2 million submitted through early in-person voting.  
2.2 million in absentee ballots.***

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The successful implementation of the EPB in Michigan's 2024 election:

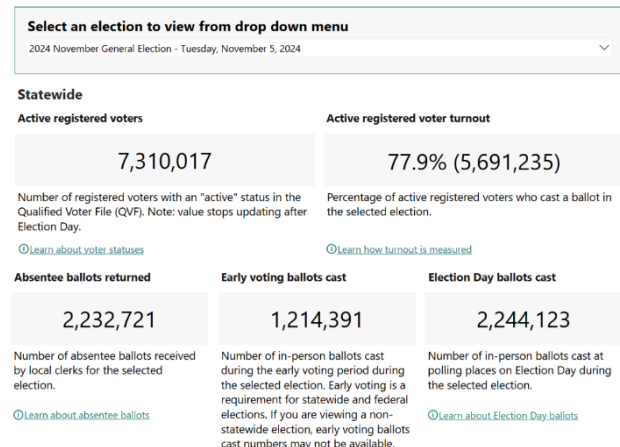
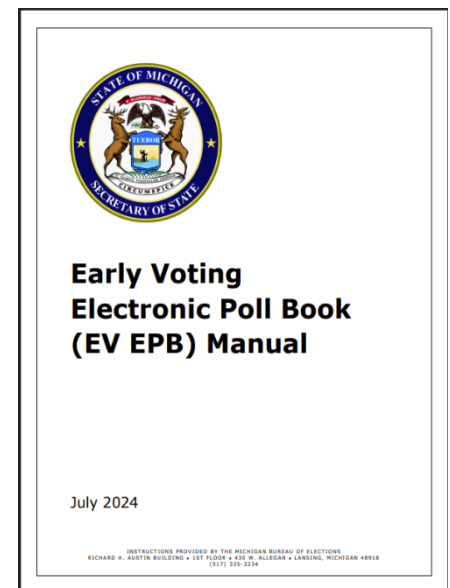
- Allowed voters to cast their ballots conveniently.
- Facilitated greater voter participation.
- Security protocols prevented unauthorized access and ensured that all data remained protected before, during, and after the election.
- Poll worker satisfaction increased, with 92% reporting that the EPB made their jobs easier and reduced Election Day stress.
- Spreading voting over several days eased the burden on election officials on Election Day and reduced the likelihood of long lines for voters.
- Check-in times on Election Day were reduced by 30%.

In addition to operational improvements, the EPB enabled seamless post-election audits by providing detailed electronic records of voter participation. This transparency helped reinforce public trust in Michigan's election results. By prioritizing security, usability, and efficiency, Michigan's EPB system is setting the standard for trusted election technology.

### What now?

Michigan's success with the EPB can be credited to strong partnerships between state and local election officials, a focus on cybersecurity, a commitment to continuous improvement, rigorous training programs, and dedication to Michigan voters. In the spirit of continuous improvement and voter transparency, with the help of Michigan's Voting Dashboard, not only can Michiganders vote easier, but they are also able to view voter history data from the State's Qualified Voter File.

Michigan's election system is among the strongest and most secure in the nation, with upgraded voting technology and processes, including automatic voter registration for citizens when applying for a driver's license or state ID. Building on this success in 2024, Michigan conducted a more targeted LPI with local clerks to further refine the ePollbook for ease of use, accessibility, and security functionality. Michigan plans to expand EPB capabilities for even greater flexibility while administering the 2026 November General Election, including expanding early voting to the Monday prior to Election Day.



*Pictured is the Michigan voting dashboard from the November 2024 General Election.*