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## THE "MASSACHUSETTS BALLOT" – A NOVEMBER DECISION

The November general election will see something relatively rare in Michigan in recent years—a referendum vote on an act passed by the legislature. Between 1930 and 1950, there have been ten referenda in Michigan on legislative enactments; since 1950 there have been none. Three acts have been adopted by referendum—regulation of dentistry (1940); registration of agents of foreign countries (1948); and the sale of oleomargarine (1950). The other seven legislative enactments were rejected.

### At Issue in 1964

At issue this November is Act No. 240 of the 1964 session, which, among other things, would eliminate the ability to vote a straight party ticket merely by marking a single "X" in the circle under the name of the political party or, on voting machines, by pulling a single party lever. Instead, a citizen would be required by the provisions of Act No. 240 to vote separately for each candidate for each office, whether he wished to vote for all candidates of one political party or not—the so-called "office type," or Massachusetts ballot.

The essential difference between the two types of ballots is shown in the illustrations of official ballots on the back page. On the left (Illustration #1) is the ballot form which will be used at the November election, which allows voting a straight party ticket with a single "X" mark. On the right (Illustration #2) is the ballot form of Act No. 240, Public Acts of 1964—the Massachusetts ballot—which will not be effective unless approved by a majority of the electors in November.

### The Massachusetts Ballot

Two factors may be said to be the essence of the Massachusetts ballot. First, the inability to vote a "straight-ticket" by a single "X" mark, or by pulling a single voting machine lever. Second, the requirement that each office, whether the ballot is set up by offices or in party columns, must be voted for separately and individually.

The use of the Massachusetts ballot is not uncommon, and in fact, separate votes for a candidate for each office on the ballot are required by 22 states. Fifteen of these states group candidates on the ballot by the office sought; the other seven states list each political party's candidate in a single party column. One state, Tennessee, allows "straight-ticket" voting in machine precincts, but the Massachusetts ballot is required in paper ballot precincts. Not counting Tennessee, the Massachusetts ballot states represented 49 per cent of the nation's 1963 estimated 50-state population.

### Pros and Cons

Commenting on the issue of the "straight" versus the "split" ticket, the Congressional Quarterly had this to say—

"Is the best informed or most intelligent ballot cast for candidates of only one party, or should the conscientious citizen split his ballot between candidates of the major parties? The debate between the 'straight' and 'split ticket' ballot is more than academic because the way the state sets up its general election ballot will strongly influence voting patterns. Connecticut, for instance, makes it extremely difficult for a citizen to split his ticket. As a result, the winning Presidential or gubernatorial candidate usually carries the rest of his ticket to victory with him and even the most popular Congressional candidate has difficulty winning in the face of a trend for the opposite party. Massachusetts, on the other hand, has the 'office type' ballot which requires a citizen to vote separately for each candidate. Thus Democratic Governors could be elected in the midst of Eisenhower sweeps and a Republican Governor in the midst of a Kennedy sweep in 1960. . . .

"Backers of a 'straight ticket' type ballot argue that it reduces 'whim' voting on the basis of individual candidates' names or nationality and that it tends to give one party control of all major offices, thus focusing responsibility on that party to fulfill its campaign pledges and maintain a high moral tone in government.

“The supporters of the ‘office type’ ballot say that it reduces voting on the basis of blind party loyalty and encourages the voter to give careful thought to his vote for each office. The result of intelligent ticket-splitting, they argue, is the election and retention in office of superior public servants. Straight ticket voting, they say, not only endangers the outstanding candidate of the minority party but gives the majority party a blank check to install any number of inferior candidates in public office.”\*

In Michigan, opponents of the Massachusetts ballot also argue that it would complicate voting; confuse voters; and cause long polling lines because of the extra time needed to mark the ballot.

### Conclusion

It should be kept in mind that “straight” ticket voting with a single “X” mark or single machine lever will be possible at this November general election, and that the Massachusetts ballot will not become law for subsequent elections unless it is approved this November as a separate issue on the ballot.

### STATES HAVING THE MASSACHUSETTS BALLOT

Arkansas	(O)	Montana	(O)
California	(O)	Nebraska	(O)
Colorado	(O)	Nevada	(O)
Florida	(O)	New Jersey	(P)
Hawaii	(O)	New York	(P)
Idaho	(P)	North Dakota	(P)
Kansas	(O)	Ohio	(O)
Maryland	(P)	Oregon	(O)
Massachusetts	(O)	Virginia	(O)
Minnesota	(O)	Washington	(P)
Mississippi	(O)	Wyoming	(P)
Tennessee	(O)		– on paper ballots only

(O) – Candidates’ names grouped on ballot by office.

(P) – Candidates’ names grouped on ballot by political party.

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Illustration #1

Michigan Ballot - 1964 General Election  
 (From Act No. 56, Public Acts of 1963, 2nd E.S.)

Name of Offices Voted For:	Vignette with Name of Party	Vignette with Name of Party	Vignette with Name of Party
PRESIDENTIAL Electors of President and Vice-President of the United States	<input type="checkbox"/> Name of Candidate for President. <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Candidate for Vice-President.	<input type="checkbox"/> Name of Candidate for President. <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Candidate for Vice-President.	<input type="checkbox"/> Name of Candidate for President. <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Candidate for Vice-President.
STATE Governor and Lieutenant Governor	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor Name of Candidate <input type="checkbox"/> Lieut. Governor Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor Name of Candidate <input type="checkbox"/> Lieut. Governor Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor Name of Candidate <input type="checkbox"/> Lieut. Governor Name of Candidate
Secretary of State	<input type="checkbox"/> Secretary of State Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Secretary of State Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Secretary of State Name of Candidate
CONGRESSIONAL United States Senator	<input type="checkbox"/> U. S. Senator Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> U. S. Senator Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> U. S. Senator Name of Candidate
Representative in Congress ..... District	<input type="checkbox"/> U. S. Representative Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> U. S. Representative Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> U. S. Representative Name of Candidate
LEGISLATIVE Senator ..... District	<input type="checkbox"/> State Senator Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> State Senator Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> State Senator Name of Candidate
Representative ..... District	<input type="checkbox"/> State Representative Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> State Representative Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> State Representative Name of Candidate
COUNTY Prosecuting Attorney	<input type="checkbox"/> Pros. Attorney Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Pros. Attorney Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Pros. Attorney Name of Candidate
Sheriff	<input type="checkbox"/> Sheriff Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Sheriff Name of Candidate	<input type="checkbox"/> Sheriff Name of Candidate

Illustration #2

Proposed "Office Type" - Massachusetts Ballot  
 (From Act No. 240, Public Acts of 1964)

<p>PRESIDENTIAL                      Electors of President and Vice President of the United States                      (Make a cross (X) in not more than 1 square)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> { John Smith Peter Jones Democrat</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> { John Doe Bill Roe Republican</p>	<p>CONGRESSIONAL                      Representative in Congress ..... District                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Peter Jones Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> John Smith Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Name Other Parties</p>
<p>STATE                      Governor and Lieutenant Governor                      (Make a cross (X) in not more than 1 square)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> { John Doe Bill Roe Republican</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> { John Smith Peter Jones Democrat</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> { Name Name Other Parties</p>	<p>LEGISLATIVE                      Senator ..... District                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Peter Jones Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> John Smith Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Name Other Parties</p>
<p>Secretary of State                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> Other Parties</p>	<p>Representative ..... District                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Peter Jones Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> John Smith Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Name Other Parties</p>
<p>CONGRESSIONAL                      United States Senator                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Peter Jones Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> John Smith Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Name Other Parties</p>	<p>COUNTY                      Prosecuting Attorney                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> Other Parties</p> <p>Sheriff                      (Vote for not more than 1)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Republican  <input type="checkbox"/> Democrat  <input type="checkbox"/> Other Parties</p>