

# Understanding the Michigan Legislature

## Purpose and Background of the Michigan Legislature

Like all States in the US, Michigan has a legislative structure that is responsible for creating and passing suitable laws and balancing the State's annual budget. There are specific processes that are followed to ensure that each representative is an active participant in decision making, and the expectation is that elected officials will consult with their constituents in order to properly represent the state's citizens as a whole.

## The House of Representatives and Senate

There are 148 members in the Michigan Legislature, consisting of 110 State Representatives and 38 Senators. Everyone who lives in Michigan is represented in Lansing by both a Senator and a State Representative. State Representatives serve 2 year terms, and may serve up to three terms (six years). Senators serve 4 year terms, and may serve no more than 2 terms (8 years) per our Constitution. In 2010, the State of Michigan will be holding elections for the Senate, the House of Representatives and for the Governor with the primary election taking place on August 3, 2010 and the final election on November 2, 2010.

## Determining District Representation

Every ten years, the United States conducts a census, which is a formal count of the population throughout the country. The data that is collected in a census is used to determine each area's representation at the State and National level, so that each district has as close to equal representation as possible. Based on the 2000 census, each of the 110 State Representative districts in Michigan covers approximately 90,000 residents and each Senate district represents 262,000 residents. In addition, the number of Congressional and House of Representative members for the State of Michigan at the Federal level (in Washington, DC) are also determined by the census. This coming year, (beginning in February 2010) a census will be taken and our current numbers of representatives could change due to the number of people who have moved out of Michigan.

## Contacting your Legislators

If you are interested in meeting with your Legislator, the best way to do so is to contact their office to make an appointment to meet them in your district. To find out how to contact them or to learn more information about your legislators, go to: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) or look in the front of your phone book under the Government Listings. You are also welcome meet your legislators in Lansing and to visit the Capitol where you can view the sessions of the House and Senate as they are taking place. The House sessions are normally held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 1:30 p.m. and Thursdays at 12:00 noon. Senate sessions normally begin at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. However, either house may designate a different hour for convening. For more specific information about meeting with your legislators, please refer to the handout entitled "Tips for Communicating with Legislators".

## Further Resources about Michigan Legislature

For a detailed guide that explains how the Michigan Legislature works and a full listing of the Legislators (including photos), request a copy of the "Citizen's Guide to State Government" from your local legislative office or look on line at: [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov).