

County Commissioner Eligibility Guidelines and Responsibilities

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Michigan's county boards of commissioners are elected to oversee a complex unit of local government. In Gladwin County our commissioners represent one of five districts within the county. Each Commissioner is asked to attend two regular monthly meetings of the County Board, monthly meetings of their local Township or City Boards, and any assigned committee meetings.

A candidate for the office of county commissioner must:

- Be a resident and registered voter of the district they wish to represent. Commissioners must remain residents and registered voter to maintain office, if elected.
- Not have been convicted of a violation of section 12a(1) of 1941 PA 370, MCL 38.412a, in the last 20 years.

1941 PA 370, MCL 38.412a, Sec. 12a.

(1) A member or employee of a county civil service commission or an officer or employee of a county which has adopted this act, being Act No. 370 of the Public Acts of 1941, shall not provide a copy of the examination given to applicants for appointments to the classified service pursuant to section 12 or a copy of the answers to the examination to an applicant or other person who is not a member or employee of the county civil service commission before the examination is held. A member or employee of a county civil service commission or an officer or employee of a county which has adopted this act who violates this subsection is guilty of a felony, punishable by imprisonment for not more than 1 year, or a fine of not more than \$10,000.00, or both, and shall not be eligible to be elected or appointed to any elective or appointive office of this state or a political subdivision of this state for a period of 20 years after conviction for a violation of this subsection.

Nominations and elections for commissioners must be by partisan elections. For the name of a candidate for the office of county commissioner to appear on the official primary ballot, a nominating petition or a nonrefundable filing fee of \$100.00 must be filed with the county clerk. The nominating petition must have been signed by a number of qualified and registered electors residing within the district as determined under section 544f of the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.544f. The deadline for filing nomination petitions or filing fees is the same as for a candidate for state representative.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Michigan State University professor Ken VerBurg published a *Guide to County Government*, in 2007. In his book he describes key roles of a county commissioner, three of these are Setting County Policy, Legislative Oversight, and Serving Constituents. In short, he describes each of these as follows:

Setting County Policies that deal largely with the county budget, appropriations, personnel, capital improvements, county services, and other internal matters. As the elected body overseeing the county budget, the Board of Commissioners analyzes the way county departments interact with each other, anticipates changes in the economy, and work to achieve and maintain fiscally responsible.

Legislative Oversight may be especially important for county boards. Limits on county lawmaking powers and statutorily assigned duties of elected county officers, creates a need for county commissioners to oversee the administration of county government. In so doing, they seek to assure that county administrators carry out their tasks effectively and efficiently, assessing the effects of programs that county funds are being used for.

Constituent Service is to check on problems of the residents, helping them to obtain the services of a county agency, or just providing information asked for. Representing voters to administrators is a function that few, other than elected officials, can perform. This involvement with residents also strengthens the oversight function because it gives commissioners a sense of how county programs are working.”