SIERRA CLUB
MICHIGAN CHAPTER

ELECTION REPORT 2026

A NOTE FROM THE POLITICAL TEAM

The Green Wave Has Arrived. Now Comes the Work. The 2026 election will be remembered as a defining moment in American politics. Across the country, voters delivered a significant rebuke to the Trump administration and Republican leadership, ushering in a blue wave poised to reshape the political landscape. Here in Michigan, Democrats reclaimed unified control of state government, opening the door to significant opportunities for progress on environmental issues.

Beyond the changes in party leadership, this election revealed something important about what voters expect from their elected officials. Candidates who focused on affordability, prioritized accountability, and promised to work for a government that works for people rather than powerful corporate interests overwhelming won their races. Michiganders headed to the polls with rising utility bills, energy costs, and the rapid expansion of hyperscale data centers at the front of their minds. Throughout the election cycle, voters increasingly demanded answers about who benefits from the massive corporate investments in AI data centers, who pays for the infrastructure, and who bears the consequences for our water, energy grid, and local communities.

That demand for accountability was also reflected in the overwhelming passage of Proposal 2, Michigan's Money Out of Politics initiative. Voters sent a clear message: Powerful corporate interests should NOT have outsized influence over the politicians elected to represent their interests. The approval of Prop. 2 is a significant victory for people-powered democracy and an important reminder of what grassroots organizing can accomplish.

Throughout this election cycle, our staff, volunteers, local groups, interns, and grassroots supporters worked across Michigan to support environmental champions, engage voters, educate candidates, and build political power. From knocking doors and making phone calls to organizing events and investing in competitive races, our collective efforts helped elevate environmental protection, utility affordability, and corporate accountability.

The results of this election create a generational opportunity for our work. With unified Democratic leadership returning to Lansing, we have a chance to advance meaningful environmental protections, protect the Great Lakes, address rising utility costs, and establish stronger safeguards for data center development. But electoral victories alone do not guarantee progress. We must continue holding elected officials accountable and ensuring that the needs of Michigan communities come before corporate profits -- regardless of party affiliation.

The 2026 election demonstrated what is possible when people organize, show up, and make their voices heard. We are proud of what our community accomplished, grateful to everyone who contributed, and energized by the opportunities ahead. The results opened the door. Now it is our job to turn that momentum into meaningful progress for the people of Michigan and our environment.

- *Tim Minotas & Marta Johnson*
  Sierra Club Political Team





THIS YEAR'S ELECTION SHOWS
PEOPLE POWER
IS FAR GREATER THAN
CORPORATE POWER

ELECTION AT A GLANCE

FEDERAL

Michigan's U.S. Senate race was one of the country's most closely watched contests. With Democratic Senator Gary Peters retiring, Democrat and Sierra Club-endorsed candidate Abdul El-Sayed defeated Republican Mike Rogers by an eye-popping seven points, with approximately 52.5% of the vote. El-Sayed's victory also made history, as he became the first Muslim elected to the United States Senate. Democrats also made gains in Michigan's congressional delegation. All 13 U.S. House seats were on the ballot, with Democrats winning several key races and flipping long-held Republican seats. Among the most notable victories were Christina Hines (MI-10), Will Lawrance (MI-07), Sean McCann (MI-04), and Donavan McKinney (MI-13).

The results here in Michigan also contributed to a broader national shift to the left. Democrats won control of both chambers of Congress, creating a significant change in the balance of power in Washington and a new check on the Trump administration's agenda.



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE FIELD!

SIERRA CLUB IN THE FIELD

In the final 10 days before the election, Sierra Club staff and volunteers partnered with Michigan United Action and Seed the Vote to canvass in Lansing in support of William Lawrence, Abdul El-Sayed, and Proposal 2 (Money Out of Politics). Four volunteers completed 12 canvassing shifts, knocking nearly 600 doors and helping about 60 voters make early-voting plans. Using deep canvassing techniques, volunteers engaged voters on the issues affecting their lives. Affordability, high rents, and frustration with government were recurring concerns. Volunteers also helped persuade at least three people who might not otherwise have voted. The effort brought together Michigan volunteers and supporters from across the country, demonstrating the value of strong partnerships and grassroots organizing in competitive races.

Left: Sierra Club West MI Organizer Tamara Horne led this effort for the Sierra Club

Sierra Club is a trusted third-party messenger for candidates, and in teaming up with other partners to back the El-Sayed and Lawrence campaigns, we pushed hard to highlight their commitments to strong climate and data center action, along with getting money out of our politics.

ELECTION AT A GLANCE

STATE EXECUTIVE

Michigan Democrats swept the three major statewide executive races, maintaining Democratic control of the Governor's office as well as the offices of Attorney General and Secretary of State. The victories came amid a broader Democratic wave across Michigan and the country. The Sierra Club endorsed all three candidates, and for the first time in eight years, Michigan will have a new governor, attorney general, and secretary of state. For the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter, these results create opportunities to advance better environmental and ratepayer protections, as well as strong regulations for data center development.



Jocelyn Benson

GOVERNOR

54.6% of the vote
43.7% opponent



Eli Savit

ATTORNEY GENERAL

52.5% of the vote
44.7% opponent



Garlin Gilchrist

SECRETARY OF STATE

53.8% of the vote
43.5% opponent

Fighting for CLIMATE JUSTICE IS ALSO FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY

ELECTION AT A GLANCE

STATE SENATE

Democrats retained control of the State Senate, widened their majority to 23-15, and returned unified control to the party in Lansing. With all 38 Senate seats on the ballot and about 50 percent open due to term limits, the election offered not only an opportunity to protect and expand the existing majority by supporting incumbent legislators, but also to build a new bench of legislators committed to championing Sierra Club priorities. The Michigan Chapter invested significant financial and grassroots resources in competitive Senate races, providing direct campaign support through PAC contributions, volunteer phone banking, door-to-door canvassing, and postcard outreach. Our field program focused on reaching voters in targeted districts such as SD-9, SD-13, and SD-30 and elevating environmental issues to help elect candidates who would prioritize protecting Michigan's natural resources and holding corporations accountable. Staff, interns, and volunteers helped mobilize supporters and engage voters directly, ensuring that environmental issues remained part of the conversation throughout the election cycle.



Dr. Theresa Brooks

SENATE DISTRICT 9

52.5% of the vote

45.5% opponent



Sean Carlson

SENATE DISTRICT 13

53.0% of the vote

47.0% opponent



Carol Glanville

SENATE DISTRICT 30

54.9% of the vote

45.1% opponent

ELECTION AT A GLANCE

STATE HOUSE

Michigan Democrats successfully flipped control of the State House after losing their narrow majority in 2024. The party needed to flip just four seats to regain control, a goal they exceeded by flipping 11 seats in competitive races across the state to achieve a comfortable 63-47 majority. The Michigan Chapter contributed heavily to these wins via high-profile candidate endorsements, financial support from our PAC, voter outreach, and grassroots organizing. We worked hard to ensure environmental champions committed to protecting Michigan's natural resources won their races. Similar to our work in the Senate race, our electoral work included direct voter engagement through door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, and postcard outreach, alongside digital communications and candidate engagement. Staff, interns, and volunteers helped mobilize supporters and reach voters in competitive districts, ensuring that largely bipartisan issues like environmental protection, utility affordability, and corporate accountability remained part of the conversation.



Sarah Pounds

HOUSE DISTRICT 54

52.81% of the vote
47.03% opponent



Joe McClusky

HOUSE DISTRICT 86

51.6% of the vote
48.4% opponent



Jan Maino

HOUSE DISTRICT 46

54.1% of the vote
45.9% opponent

ELECTION AT A GLANCE

ENDORSEMENTS AND TURNOUT

We entered Election Day this year with strong early voter participation. By the morning of November 3, more than 2.3 million voters had already cast ballots, representing 31.2% of the state's 7.42 million active registered voters. That included approximately 1.57 million absentee ballots returned and 743,450 ballots cast through early in-person voting. The busiest day during the nine-day early voting period was Sunday, November 1, when more than 114,000 Michiganders voted in person.

These numbers reflect the growing role of early and absentee voting in Michigan elections. For comparison, the state recorded approximately 4.34 million ballots in the 2018 midterm election and more than 4.5 million in 2022. The 2024 presidential election saw 77.9% turnout, a record for Michigan.



"I am incredibly grateful for Sierra Club's support and partnership throughout our campaign. Having people and organizations who share our commitment to protecting Michigan's environment, holding polluters accountable, and building healthier communities makes a difference. This work is bigger than any one campaign- it is about working toward having a collective majority of community minded partners ... We're proud of what we've accomplished together, and excited about getting work done this upcoming legislative term."

- Jaime Churches, Representative-Elect HD 27

ENDORSED CANDIDATES

Total Candidates Endorsed: 76
Candidates Won: 71
Win Percentage: 94%

EVERY ELECTION IS A CHANCE TO CHANGE OUR STATE FOR THE BETTER

SPOTLIGHTS FROM THE SEASON!

PROPOSAL 2: MONEY OUT OF POLITICS WINS BIG



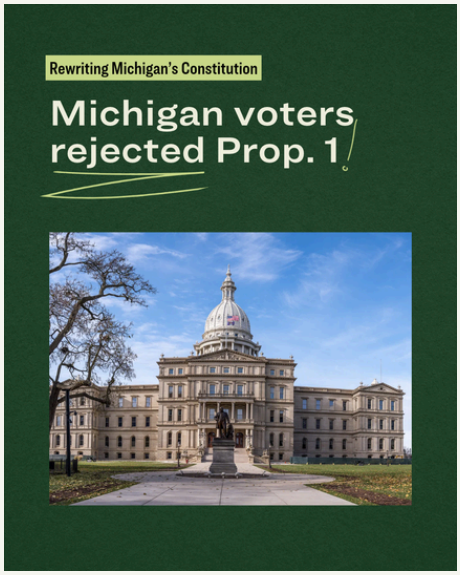


Michigan voters overwhelmingly approved Proposal 2, the Money Out of Politics ballot initiative, with more than 81% voting yes. This indicates a unified support among voters for stronger limits on the influence of monopoly utilities and other corporate money in state politics. Sierra Club Michigan Chapter staff and volunteers helped make this victory possible by supporting this effort from the very beginning. We spent the first half of the year collecting signatures to get the measure on the ballot, an effort supported by Michigan Sierra Club's very own Marta Johnson, who gathered thousands of signatures on her own.

For environmental advocates, this victory clears a new path for fighting the negative influence utility companies have on clean energy progress in Michigan. Financial influence from the likes of DTE and Consumers Energy in state politics has repeatedly complicated efforts to hold utilities accountable, advance renewable energy initiatives, and protect ratepayers from unstable fuel costs. Proposal 2 strengthens safeguards against campaign contributions from regulated utilities and requires more political spending transparency for more effective oversight. This is an important step toward ensuring energy policy is shaped by Michigan residents — not the financial interests of monopoly utility companies.

PROPOSAL 1: GOES DOWN IN FLAMES

Michigan voters decisively rejected Proposal 1, a request for the Michigan Legislature to hold a constitutional convention, with nearly 74% voting no. The proposal would have convened 148 elected delegates in 2027 to draft a general revision of Michigan's constitution, potentially reopening all 12 articles for consideration. While any proposed changes would ultimately have required voter approval, a convention would have created a dangerous opportunity by lawmakers to unilaterally revise longstanding constitutional protections and safeguards.



For Michigan's environmental community, the stakes were significant. The state constitution provides important foundations for protecting natural resources, public lands, and the Great Lakes. Opening the entire State Constitution to revision would have risked those protections and opened the door for powerful special interests to influence changes to environmental safeguards or public accountability. The defeat of Proposal 1 preserves the existing constitutional framework and avoids the uncertainty of a wholesale rewrite. It also reinforces that voters prefer changes to our constitution to be deliberate and targeted.

LOCAL GROUPS

THE HEART OF GRASSROOTS POWER

The engine behind the Michigan Chapter's political power has always been our local groups and volunteer leaders. By combining the Sierra Club's expertise in environmental advocacy and policy with our deep roots in the local community, the partnership between staff and volunteers has successfully elevated the voices of residents in decision-making processes and amplified grassroots efforts to create a healthier, more sustainable future. This collaboration has wider-reaching impacts than just environmental wins – it also strengthens the bonds of solidarity within our communities, ensuring that the fight for environmental justice remains inclusive and community-driven.

Our local Crossroads Group and Southeast Michigan Group hosted events, canvassed neighborhoods, made phone calls, and distributed educational materials to inform residents about the importance of voting for candidates who prioritize climate justice and environmental health. Our local groups and activists brought local concerns to the attention of the Michigan Chapter's volunteer-run Political Committee, and their internal advocacy within our own processes held us accountable to our commitment to the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing. These efforts helped increase voter turnout and empowered residents to play a key part in shaping policies that affect their environment and their quality of life. The wins achieved this election cycle highlight the power of collective action and ensure that environmental and social justice issues remains at the forefront of local and state election discussions for the Michigan Chapter.

2 Canvassing Events	21 Events Attended	4,300 calls made	3,000 postcards/letters sent to voters
41,000 texts sent	41 signs displayed in neighborhoods		1 signature collection event for Proposition 2

ELECTION WORK

FUNDRAISING

The Sierra Club PAC's fundraising efforts garnered impressive results in the 2026 election cycle. We were able this year to hold our first in-person PAC fundraiser in six years, and raised enough money to disperse among our large slate of Sierra Club-endorsed candidates. This year, the PAC was also able to raise enough funds to provide stipends to Sierra Club political interns in the fall.

Unlike large industry polluters and dark money Super PACS, the Sierra Club Michigan Chapter relies on small dollar donations from our grassroots base. Our political program is successful because of the many supporters who donate throughout the year. To donate to the Sierra Club's PAC, go to the url below.

bit.ly/SCMIPAC

$135,000

Raised from

459

Donations

$107,000

Spent on the Sierra Club political program including

43

Donations to candidates

$87,985

To State & Local Candidates

$5,500

To National Candidates

ELECTION WORK
INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In a reversal from previous election cycles, our interns worked directly with our Sierra Club staff this year, rather than embedding in campaigns for our endorsed candidates. We made this change in order to more effectively target our resources to **intentionally support environmental champions in competitive races,** and to communicate to leadership that party affiliation alone is not enough to warrant access to Sierra Club resources. We also prioritized quality over quantity with internship recruitment, and our 2026 intern cohort included **six** wonderful students who worked closely with the Political & Legislative team to achieve our goals this election cycle.







The experience of witnessing, and fortunately working alongside, The Sierra Club campaign for the recent election was inspiring. The electoral results we, and so many others across the country, achieved demonstrate how powerful community organizing can be. Thanks to this opportunity, I am more educated and optimistic about the political character of Michigan. - Emerson Holmes

***Emerson Holmes* on the experience of being a Sierra Club Political intern**

"Being an intern for the Sierra Club has given me an opportunity to become significantly more involved in Michigan politics. I am now able to say that I was an active participant in one of America's most important and decisive elections, which is an experience that I wouldn't trade for the world. I have enjoyed my time at the Sierra Club and will cherish many of the memories I have made within the organization. I want to especially thank Tim Minotas and Marta Johnson for giving me and guiding me through this opportunity."

Jake Laehn on the experience of being a Sierra Club Political intern

ELECTION WORK
COMMUNICATIONS & FIELD

Better understanding and leveraging the ways in which we campaign in person and online are becoming more and more important in this digital age. This year, Sierra Club devoted considerable time to getting the word out about our candidates and the election through emails, social media, our website, and talking directly to voters at the doors and on the phones.

WEBSITE

The Chapter posted a full report on the endorsements made for 2026 at the federal, state, and local level.

EMAIL

Nearly 30 general and targeted emails were sent to our **+70,000 member & supporter base**

Social Media

Nearly 1.5 million
Total Views

Average **600** Accounts
Reached Per Post



Doors

52
Door Knocking Shifts

22,295
Doors Knocked



Phones

23
Phone Bank Shifts

5,550 calls/53,000 texts
Calls/texts Made

WHAT'S NEXT: TURNING MOMENTUM INTO PROGRESS

The 2026 election creates a new political landscape in Michigan and provides us with a unique opportunity to advance the environmental priorities we fight for daily. With unified Democratic control in Lansing, we can more effectively push for stronger protections for our Great Lakes, cleaner and more affordable energy for Michigan residents, safer drinking water, and greater accountability from utilities and corporations.

In the months ahead, we will work to turn campaign commitments from our endorsed candidates into real policy victories. Right away, that means intentionally engaging with the incoming administration and newly elected lawmakers on top issues like advancing a data center moratorium and stronger safeguards for hyperscale data center development, as well as pushing for better utility affordability and accountability. We will also track legislative action by our endorsed candidates and hold these officials accountable to their commitments.

Our work extends beyond the Capitol. We will continue organizing communities, mobilizing members and volunteers to contact lawmakers, participating in public hearings and in-district meetings, and hosting lobby days to advance some of our most critical issues. We will strengthen our local groups, build on the relationships developed during this election, and bring more people into our movement.

We are energized to work with elected officials who share our priorities and challenge those who fall short, regardless of party.

The 2026 election showed us what can be achieved through organizing and people power. WE NEED YOU to be part of that work. Stay engaged with your local Sierra Club group, join an upcoming action or organizing meeting, and make your voice heard with your elected officials. Now is the time to turn our momentum into meaningful progress for Michigan's people, communities, and environment.

WE THANK YOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN

OUR PROGRAMS