

# Potential Impact of the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative (MCRI)

*A research brief based on research conducted at the  
Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan*

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In November 2006, Michigan voters will decide whether to adopt a constitutional amendment banning affirmative action in many different facets of civic life. The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative (MCRI) is a proposed amendment to the state Constitution that would ban both discrimination and affirmative action programs that give consideration to groups or individuals based on their race, gender, color, ethnicity or national origin for public employment, education or contracting purposes.

## **The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative**

- Proposed amendment to the state constitution of Michigan.
- Would prohibit affirmative action that considers race, gender, ethnicity and national origin in public education, public employment and government contracting at all levels of state and local government.
- Public institutions affected by the proposal include state government, county and municipal governments, public colleges and universities, community colleges, and K-12 school districts.
- Modeled after California's Proposition 209, a nearly identical constitutional amendment adopted by California voters in 1996.

## **Likely Results of MCRI Passage**

- Elimination of scholarships, fellowships and grants, at all levels of education, that take gender, race, ethnicity or national origin into account.
- Elimination of voluntary K-12 school integration efforts.
- End of efforts to ensure adequate representation of women and minorities on boards and commissions, including advisory boards dealing with corrections, education and public health.
- Elimination of targeted programs and services such as recruitment or apprenticeship programs designed to increase opportunity for minorities and women in the skilled trades.
- Prohibition of affirmative action programs in public college admissions, but not of special considerations for other groups such as residents of particular areas of the state, veterans, those who apply for early admissions, "legacy" students whose parents, grandparents or siblings attended the institution, or athletes awarded scholarships in varsity sports.

## **The Benefits of and Need for Diversity as Identified by Researchers and Employers**

- In education, students of all races who live and learn among diverse peers in both formal classroom and informal settings in which they are challenged to absorb and respond to new points of view develop the capacity for more original and critical thinking.
- Students develop democracy skills, including greater tolerance for differences as a normal part of life, when they live and learn among diverse peers.
- Students must master the 21st century skill of "intercultural competence" in order to navigate successfully in today's globalized society.
- The U.S. military has found that affirmative action is necessary to "fulfill the military's, and thus the nation's, compelling national security need for a cohesive military led by a diverse officer corps of the highest quality to serve and protect the country."
- Some corporations have chosen to stop sending recruiters to particular universities, citing a lack of diversity in the student body as the reason for the decision.

## The Michigan Context

- Michigan's lack of employees and employers in the middle-and high-wage knowledge-based industries is the cause of Michigan's slowed job growth, according to recent research.
- Michigan leaders believe that recruiting and retaining knowledge workers requires that Michigan cities be revitalized and hospitable to a diverse citizenry.
- A 2006 survey of business executives in 5 states found that they believed an educated workforce to be much more critical to business creation than favorable tax policy.
- Segregation has major consequences for access to good schools and good jobs – or any jobs – and 3 of the top 10 most segregated cities in the U.S. are in Michigan.

## The passage of Prop 209, (*virtually identical to the proposed MCRI*) led to the following results in California:

*decreases in*

- the percentage of women working in the skilled trades
- government contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- hiring of minority and female professors in the University of California system
- enrollment of minority students at the University of California
- the number of minorities graduated from the University of California system as doctors, lawyers and other professionals

*affected a variety of outreach efforts*

- eliminated summer science programs for girls
- ended the notification of minority- and women-owned businesses of opportunities to bid on government contracts
- resulted in many California public entities eliminating targeted outreach programs for education and employment, such as programs helping minorities and women become apprentices in the skilled trades
- ended funding for training of minority professionals in fields like medicine and nursing, in which they are under-represented

## **Additional information on this topic available on the Center for the Education of Women website: [www.cew.umich.edu](http://www.cew.umich.edu)**

*New: The Potential Impact of the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative on Employment, Education and Contracting* (June, 2006)  
Research paper by Susan W. Kaufmann

*Report Summary: The Potential Impact of the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative on Employment, Education and Contracting*

*Press release: The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative on Employment, Education and Contracting*

*The Gender Report: The Gender Impact of the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative* (January, 2006)

Research paper by Susan W. Kaufmann and Anne K. Davis.

*Research Brief: The Gender Impact of the Proposed Michigan Civil Rights Initiative*

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