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Michigan voters to decide on medical marijuana, stem cell research

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LANSING – The field of statewide ballot proposals for 2008 appears to be set at two – medical marijuana and embryonic stem cell research – following approval of ballot wording by a state elections panel today.

The proposal to permit the cultivation, possession and use of marijuana by patients with certain debilitating illness, like muscular dystrophy and HIV-AIDS, was designated as Proposal 1 by the Board of State Canvassers.

A constitutional amendment to lift restrictions on research using human embryos, aimed at seeking treatments and cures for chronic illness and injury, was designated Proposal 2.

Following the directive issued Wednesday evening by the state Court of Appeals, the board declined to designate a third proposal – the Reform Michigan Government Now! plan – for the Nov. 4 ballot. Supporters of that proposal said they will seek review of that decision by the state Supreme Court.

The board also adopted the 100-word summaries of the two proposals that will appear on the ballot. The language for the two proposals is as follows:

Proposal 08-1

A legislative initiative to permit the use and cultivation of marijuana for specified medical conditions

The proposed law would:

- Permit physician approved use of marijuana by registered patients with debilitating medical conditions including cancer, glaucoma, HIV, AIDS, hepatitis C, MS and other conditions as may be approved by the Department of Community Health.
- Permit registered individuals to grow limited amounts of marijuana for qualifying patients in an enclosed, locked facility.
- Require Department of Community Health to establish an identification card system for patients qualified to use marijuana and individuals qualified to grow marijuana.

- Permit registered and unregistered patients and primary caregivers to assert medical reasons for using marijuana as a defense to any prosecution involving marijuana.

Should this proposal be adopted? Yes or no.

Proposal 08-2

A proposal to amend the state constitution to address human embryo and human embryonic stem cell research in Michigan

The proposed constitutional amendment would:

- Expand use of human embryos for any research permitted under federal law subject to the following limits: the embryos --
 - are created for fertility treatment purposes;
 - are not suitable for implantation or are in excess of clinical needs;
 - would be discarded unless used for research;
 - were donated by the person seeking fertility treatment.
- Provide that stem cells cannot be taken from human embryos more than 14 days after cell division begins.
- Prohibit any person from selling or purchasing human embryos for stem cell research.
- Prohibit state and local laws that prevent, restrict or discourage stem cell research, future therapies and cures.

Should this proposal be adopted? Yes or no.