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Group Closer to Reforming State Government

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A group moves one step closer to making some big changes to Michigan's government. A group called reform Michigan government now has turned in half-a-million signatures they hope will overhaul state government. The group says its turned in far more than the signatures needed to put the proposal on the November ballot. Turning in the signatures is just the beginning of what is to be a long fight ahead. A ballot proposal targeting the Michigan government has gained momentum.

Dianne Byrum, spokesperson for reform MI gov. Now: "This is an opportunity to make government work for people in Michigan, and this is real change, real reform that is going to make government more accountable for people."

The proposal outlines more than 30 changes to the state's constitution.

Dianne Byrum: "It cuts the size of state government, it makes the elected officials more accountable, it reduces legislative and all elected officials salaries for the judiciary, the executive and the state legislature."

But the proposal has caused a lot of skepticism, and those who oppose the reform say the devil is in the detail of the 12-page petition.

Bill Knowling, spokesperson for MI Republican Party: "We're calling it the deform Michigan government now, because what they're proposing to do is completely rewrite and substitute the Michigan constitution for one that they've written."

And republican Bill Knowling says it's what's in the fine print that should raise a red flag among voters.

Bill Knowling: "One thing that they do in here, they don't talk about, is that they would completely change how Michigan's legislative districts and congressional districts are drawn up every ten years."

Dianne Byrum: "It's time that government streamline and reduce the size and cost of government, and this is a proposal that will do exactly

that."

And while Byrum says the reform group began with a grassroots committee out of Hastings, Analyst Patrick Anderson says the group's goal is not good for Michigan's voters.

Patrick Anderson, CEO of Anderson Economic Group: "The one clear goal is to get rid of republicans on the Supreme Court, which is not something I think the constitutional amendment should be doing."

Despite the opposition, it could now be up to voters to decide if a government reform will be the letter of the law. The Secretary of State office now must validate the proposal to determine whether the group has the 380,000 valid signatures needed. If the proposal qualifies without any court challenge, it would then be placed on the November ballot.



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