Expanding Access: Arabic Ballots in Dearborn & Hamtramck, MI

National Association of State Election Directors, July 2022
Michigan Election System Overview

- 1,520 city/township clerks run elections
- 83 county clerks also have election functions, including producing ballots
- Michigan Secretary of State (Bureau of Elections) provides training, guidance, instruction on election law
Translating Election Materials: Historically

- Only four Michigan municipal jurisdictions covered by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act
- Only two languages covered

Michigan:
- Clyde township
- Covert township
- Fennville city
- Hamtramck city

| Hispanic. | Hispanic. | Bangladeshi. |
Limitations of Voting Rights Act Coverage

Covered Jurisdictions

Covered jurisdictions are determined by the Census Bureau based upon a formula set out in the Voting Rights Act. The most recent determinations for Section 203 were made on December 8, 2021.

Covered language minorities are limited to American Indians, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Spanish-heritage citizens - the groups that Congress found to have faced barriers in the political process.
# Michigan Arab-American Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Dearborn city, Michigan</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>326,569,308</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>94,328</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan</td>
<td></td>
<td>131,619</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td></td>
<td>202,192</td>
<td></td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alsatian</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,609</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td></td>
<td>19,364,103</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arab:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2,056,584</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>44,044</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2020 Translation Efforts

This page provides election information in various languages. Select the language needed from the choices listed above.
2022 Translation Timeline

- March 23, 2022: Dearborn City Council passes resolution calling for ballots to be translated into Arabic
- June 3: Ballot printing begins
- June 18/23: Ballots start being mailed to voters
- August 2: Statewide Primary Election
Ballot Translation Challenges

- Legal Requirements
- Funding
- Logistics
### Ballot Translation Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Vendors</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire translator</td>
<td>Distribute proofs</td>
<td>Verify ballot layout</td>
<td>Provide legal guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate ballots/files</td>
<td>Send vendor files</td>
<td>Run initial ballot testing</td>
<td>Enforce ballot rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate materials</td>
<td>Test BMD files</td>
<td>Program BMD files</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hamtramck

• Entirely within boundaries of Detroit

• Most diverse city in Michigan by national origin

• Already covered by Section 203 (Bangla)
Outcomes

Arabic language ballots now available in Dearborn and Hamtramck

July 01, 2022

Arabic language ballots are available for the first time in state history at clerk offices in the cities of Dearborn and Hamtramck.

After last-minute efforts, Dearborn and Hamtramck may soon get Arabic ballots

Niraj Warikoo
Detroit Free Press

Published 10:27 p.m. ET July 1, 2022 | Updated 10:34 p.m. ET July 1, 2022

• Ballot translation complete in time for voter ballot mailing
• Ballot marking devices include Arabic audio files
Conclusions

• Even under compressed timeline with inexperienced city, county, and state jurisdictions, expanding access to communities is possible

• More lead time would lead to better, broader access improvements

• Support and funding from local governments and communities is critical