

## Don't toss city's ward residency rule

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*Readability: 11-12 grade level (Lexile: 1250L)*

Proposal A would allow candidates to run without living among constituents

There's always a learning curve for any newly elected member of city council. One thing they aren't supposed to have to learn, however, is what makes the wards they serve tick.

After all, they represent their constituents. They know their concerns. They've lived among them.

That wouldn't be the case, however, if voters on Tuesday approve Proposal A. The proposal would eliminate the existing requirement that candidates for city council live at least one year in the wards they wish to represent. If it passes, council candidates would only have to live in the ward from the day they are elected or appointed to office.

Granting newcomers to city council - or any elective body - the time necessary to learn certain things about their new job is a given. But having to allow them time to get to know the wards they're supposed to be representing is ridiculous. At a minimum, people representing their wards should understand from Day 1 the needs and wishes of their constituents on everything from housing, traffic and development issues to safety, recreation and business issues.

Passing Proposal A would provide ample opportunity for people who know few-to-none of these things a seat on City Council.

Proposal A also eliminates the requirement in the city **charter** that calls for city administrators and department heads to live in Ann Arbor and to be registered city voters. The requirement does not conform with state law, which in 1999 disallowed residency requirements for municipal officials.

The proposal also does away with the requirement that people who serve on city commissions, boards and

committees be registered voters in the city, though they still would reside in the city. The idea has merit, as it would allow Ann Arbor to benefit from the expertise of certain students and foreign nationals living here.

But eliminating the one-year ward residency requirement for council candidates makes this a proposal we can't support. We urge residents to vote "no" on Proposal A.