



# News Release

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## **Watkins Encourages Voters To Defeat Proposal 4** Constitutional Amendment Will Tie Hands of Lawmakers As They Grapple With Current and Future Budget Shortfalls

Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Watkins opposes a November ballot proposal which would amend the Constitution to mandate the way the state can manage its tobacco settlement revenue.

“From a Constitutional perspective, we cannot handcuff a new group of state legislators as they tackle the state’s budgetary crisis in January. They will need flexibility, not albatrosses tied around their necks,” Watkins said. “The ‘Healthy Michigan’ ballot proposal also denies all future Governors a line-item veto on use of these funds and would almost completely eliminate legislative oversight of all state expenditures.”

Watkins also argues that dollars allocated under Proposal 4 (Proposal 02-4), if passed, would go to mostly private organizations that did not exist before Proposal 4 was created. These organizations, he said, could then spend public money almost completely free from public scrutiny.

If Michigan voters approve it, Proposal 4 could also effectively kill the Michigan Merit Award Scholarship Program by requiring that Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement dollars would be distributed only to certain health-related organizations and providers.

“This ballot proposal is not about debating the merits of the Merit Program - that’s a discussion for another time and place,” Watkins said. “Proposal 4 limits the state’s ability to preserve these and other state resources for our schools and children, and that is why I encourage Michigan’s voters to defeat Proposal 4 in November.”

Since its implementation, the Merit Award Scholarship Program has helped decrease the high costs associated with obtaining a college education for 138,000 students and jeopardizes the award for the 250,000 students who already have qualified for future scholarships.

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