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## Voters: Cutting Road Funding Hurts the Most

*MIRS/Rossman Group/Denno-Noor Poll Shows Cuts In Road Funding Would Be Hardest for People Personally*

**LANSING, Mich.** — According to polling data released today, Michigan voters clearly stated that when it comes to cutting funding for state programs, leave roads out of it.

“We wanted to learn which services, out of a handful of the proposed cuts that have been thrown around publicly and/or suggested in the Governor’s State of the State Address, would hurt voters the most personally,” said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. “The results demonstrated that the potential cut that impacted the public the most was limiting road repairs.”

This according to a recent state-wide survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research, in partnership with The Rossman Group, one of Michigan’s top public relations and issue management consulting firms, and Michigan Information & Research Services, Michigan’s leading daily legislative and state government newsletter. MIRS was recently voted the preferred newsletter of Lansing’s political insiders.

The question was worded as follows:

*“The state is facing a one to three billion dollar deficit, and many people are talking about drastic cuts to state services. Which service cuts would have the greatest impact on you or on your family – (ROTATE) consolidating local school districts, eliminating townships, limiting road repairs, or a freeze on state spending on new college buildings and land expansion?”*

According to the results, 34 percent of Michigan residents, more than a third, said that limiting road repairs was their top concern. Ten points back, at 24 percent, was consolidating local schools. In third place with 19 percent was a freeze on state spending on new college buildings and land expansion, Seven percent responded none of the above and another 8 percent didn’t know.

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“Although all cuts are in play in this legislative session,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink, “the political winds seemed to blow hardest in the directions of these potential service cuts following the Governor’s State of the State Address. By double digits, people would be more concerned about tampering with road repairs than potentially major upheavals in local school districts or local governance.”

“One-third of the voters in the state do not want the legislature to consider ‘limiting’ road repairs as they seek to solve the state’s budget mess,” added Reurink. “I want to point out that this survey was completed in late February – before the winter thaw declared it pothole season. Had we performed this survey now, it’s quite likely that voter concerns about roads would be significantly higher.”

The following chart demonstrates where responses landed on this issue among Michigan’s geographic regions\*:

	<u>SE MI</u>	<u>Central MI</u>	<u>West MI</u>	<u>Tri Cities/ Thumb</u>	<u>Upper L.P.</u>	<u>U.P.</u>	<u>Oakland</u>	<u>Macomb</u>	<u>Detroit</u>	<u>Balance of Wayne</u>
<b>Consolidate Local Schools</b>	17%	32%	27%	19%	24%	28%	24%	20%	22%	22%
<b>Eliminate Townships</b>	9%	4%	11%	11%	9%	11%	10%	12%	5%	8%
<b>Limit Road Repairs</b>	35%	30%	38%	34%	39%	39%	34%	28%	24%	36%
<b>Freeze State Spending on College...</b>	26%	21%	15%	23%	18%	11%	19%	24%	15%	16%
<b>None of Above</b>	7%	5%	7%	5%	6%	6%	6%	10%	22%	5%
<b>Don’t Know</b>	7%	9%	3%	8%	3%	6%	6%	6%	12%	13%

\*All numbers rounded. Thus, totals may exceed 100 percent.

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“It’s also interesting to note,” added Denno-Noor President Dennis Denno, “that once you get past limits on road repair, there were disparities in responses based on geography. For example, after limiting road repair, Rural Michigan was more concerned about school consolidation (32 percent), while southeast Michigan ranked a potential freeze on state spending on new college buildings and land expansion second – and was the highest of any region (26 percent). The numbers on eliminating townships registered consistent across all geo-breaks except Central Michigan (4 percent) and Detroit (5 percent), where it was barely a blip. But Detroiters weren’t keen on any cuts, in fact, ‘None of the Above’ finished ahead of all options with the exception of limiting road repair.”

“When we really probe for how voters feel rather than what they think, we tend to get responses that reflect their most emotional reaction,” added Rossman-McKinney. “Which means, discovering that issue which could potentially have the greatest impact on *their* quality of life. At this time, voters react most emotionally to limits on road repairs. Townships, though, are fair game”

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**Methodology:**

**This survey was part of the inaugural Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno-Noor Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between February 21 and February 23, and the participation was stratified based on census data and past voter behavior. A screen was employed to include only those participants who said they intended on voting, either at the polls or by absentee ballot, in the November 2008 Election. The margin of error is plus/minus 4 percent.**