



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 1, 2007

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## Poll: Michigan Divided on Future of Labor Unions

*A Plurality of Michigan Voters Feel Labor Unions Now Hinder Economic Growth*

**MACKINAC ISLAND, Mich.** — Michigan voters have very mixed feelings when it comes to the relevance of labor unions in supporting the state's future economy. Of those surveyed, 43 percent indicated that they believed that labor unions have achieved their objectives and now are hindering economic growth, while 40 percent believe that labor unions still have an important role to play.

"Historically, labor unions have provided the catalyst for many reforms and benefits for blue collar workers across our nation," said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. "However, voters in Michigan aren't so sure that there is a role for labor unions in our future economy. In fact, a plurality of the state's electorate believes that labor unions are now hindering economic growth."

This according to a recent state-wide survey conducted by Denno-Noor Research, in partnership with The Rossman Group, recently named Lansing's Most Effective Public Relations Firm by a survey of political insiders, and Michigan Information & Research Services, Michigan's leading daily legislative and state government newsletter. MIRS was also recently voted the preferred newsletter of Lansing's political insiders.

The question was worded as follows:

*"Many credit labor unions with important reforms like the eight-hour work day, health benefits and safer working conditions. In the future, what do you think the role of labor unions in this country should be? Do labor unions have an important role to protect and advance workers' rights, or have labor unions achieved their objectives and now hinder economic growth?"*

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“Not surprisingly, the more Democrat the voter, the more likely they are to be supportive of the role unions can play in Michigan’s economic future – 71 percent of strong Democrats supported this position,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink. “Conversely, 60 percent of strong Republicans believe that labor unions are a hindrance to our state’s economic growth.

“The age of a respondent also plays a role in their attitudes towards labor unions, as 53 percent of those between the ages of 36 and 49 believe that unions have already served their purpose and are no longer relevant,” added Reurink. “Race also played an important role in attitudes, as 67 percent of African-American voters believe that unions remain necessary to protect workers, while white voters believe that unions are a detriment to economic growth by a 10 percentage point margin (47 percent to 37 percent).”

The following chart demonstrates where responses landed geographically on the issue of the future relevance of labor unions\*:

	<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>Unions Have Important Role to Play</b>	32%	30%	38%	43%	38%	<b>53%</b>	40%	38%	<b>64%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Unions Have Achieved Objectives and Now Hinder Economic Growth</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>44%</b>	38%	32%	<b>44%</b>	<b>46%</b>	18%	42%
<b>None of the Above/Unsure</b>	9%	19%	24%	13%	25%	16%	16%	16%	18%	14%

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

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“The only geographic regions to favor a future role for labor unions were the Upper Peninsula (+21 percent), the city of Detroit (+46 percent) and the balance of Wayne County (+ two percent),” said Denno-Noor President Dennis Denno. “Aside from the Upper Lower Peninsula, where the issue was evenly split, the rest of the state feels that labor unions are now hindering our state’s economic growth – most vehemently in southeast Michigan (less Oakland, Macomb and Wayne Counties) and Central Michigan. Clearly, the more connection a voter has to labor unions, the more supportive their response.”

“This is an important issue facing the state as we seek to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing economy,” said Rossman-McKinney. “As Michigan moves from a manufacturing-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, the public views labor unions as less and less relevant. We know that labor and legacy costs are inflating the price of American-manufactured automobiles, allowing for greater foreign competition. The state is truly split on this issue, as for the last 100 years we have been a union state and we’re proud of that heritage. But younger voters and conservatives in particular are now viewing labor unions as a drag on our economy. I know this is an issue that the UAW and its President, Ron Gettlefinger, are confronting on a daily basis as union membership continues to decline.”

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**Methodology:**

**This survey was part of the Rossman Group/MIRS/Denno-Noor Quarterly Survey of the Michigan electorate. 600 respondents were surveyed between May 14 and May 17, 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 four percent.**