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## Voters Cite Lack of Political Leadership as Greatest Barrier to Regional Cooperation

*Voters also Identify Lack of Consensus on Priorities as Cause for Regional Disconnection*

**MACKINAC ISLAND, Mich.** — Regional cooperation has been a hot topic in Lansing over the last six months as state lawmakers seek to balance the state budget and encourage local consolidation of services.

“While legislators and business, community and political leaders are gathered on Mackinac Island for the Greater Detroit Chamber Mackinac Policy Conference to discuss issues of importance to the metro-Detroit region – voters are pointing their fingers at a lack of political leadership as the top barrier to greater regional cooperation,” said Kelly Rossman-McKinney, CEO of The Rossman Group. “While the electorate is fairly well divided on the issue, Michigan voters cite a lack of political leadership (22 percent) as the number one reason that we aren’t getting along, followed by a lack of consensus on priorities (17 percent), opposition to diversion of local tax revenues (15 percent) and disagreement over who should pay for services (14 percent).”

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.

Respondents were asked the following question about the barriers to greater regional cooperation:

*“Many support the concept of regionalism, defined as local governments working closer together to lower costs and reduce duplicated government services. What do you think is the biggest barrier to local communities working regionally (ROTATE) racial bias and segregation, lack of political leadership, lack of consensus on what local priorities should be, disagreement on who should pay for what services, or that you don’t want local taxes diverted to other communities?”*

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“There was no real consensus as to where the blame should be laid for lack of regional cooperation,” said MIRS President John T. Reurink. “Racial bias and segregation ranked lower than we would have expected, but there was a clear distinction on this response along racial lines as 18 percent of African-Americans cited this as a reason for regional disconnection, while only four percent of agreed.”

The following chart demonstrates where responses landed geographically on the issue of the importance of the city of Detroit’s economy to the rest, as well as Detroit residents’ perceptions of the importance of Michigan’s economy to the city:

	<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>Balance of Wayne</u>	<u>Detroit</u>
<b>Racial Bias and Segregation</b>	2%	5%	4%	4%	0%	11%	8%	4%	8%	13%
<b>Lack of Political Leadership</b>	25%	19%	<b>20%</b>	<b>24%</b>	16%	<b>37%</b>	<b>26%</b>	18%	18%	<b>26%</b>
<b>Lack of Consensus on Priorities</b>	<b>30%</b>	12%	16%	15%	16%	11%	13%	14%	<b>24%</b>	18%
<b>Disagreement on Who Should Pay for Services</b>	12%	16%	18%	13%	13%	26%	9%	14%	12%	15%
<b>Do Not Want Taxes Diverted to Other Communities</b>	14%	12%	17%	12%	13%	0%	20%	18%	18%	15%
<b>All of the Above</b>	7%	7%	5%	12%	9%	5%	8%	10%	2%	3%
<b>None of the Above/Unsure</b>	11%	<b>28%</b>	19%	21%	<b>34%</b>	11%	17%	<b>22%</b>	18%	10%

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

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“Geographically, voters aren’t quite sure what to blame for lack of regional cooperation, as evidenced by the fact that “none of the above/unsure” was the top response in Central Michigan (28 percent), the Upper Lower Peninsula (34 percent) and in Macomb County (22 percent),” said Denno-Noor President Dennis Denno. “Meanwhile voters in Southeast Michigan (30 percent) and in the Balance of Wayne County (24 percent) ranked “lack of consensus on priorities” on top. Every other geographic region ranked “lack of political leadership as the top barrier to regional cooperation – the Upper Peninsula (37 percent), Oakland County (26 percent), the city of Detroit (26 percent), Tri-Cities/Thumb region (24 percent) and West Michigan (20 percent).”

“It’s noteworthy that in each of the metro Detroit regions – the city of Detroit, Macomb County, Oakland County and in the Balance of Wayne County – ‘lack of political leadership’ ranked as the number one or two barrier to regional cooperation,” said Rossman-McKinney. “Metro-Detroit voters’ message to solve this problem, as Ricky used to say to Lucy, is – ‘honey, you got some *splainin* to do!’”

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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.**