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SUBURBS ALLIANCE SAYS VOTE “NO” ON PROP’S 2, 4 AND 5 *Region’s Economic Prosperity and Social Equity on the Line*

FERNDALE – The Michigan Suburbs Alliance Board of Directors has unanimously approved opposition statements to proposals 2, 4 and 5 that will appear on the statewide ballot in November. Citing the negative impacts on economic prosperity and social equity that the three proposals would have, the nonprofit coalition of built-out, inner-ring suburbs urges voters to reject the outlawing of affirmative action, unreasonable eminent domain restrictions and earmarked funding for education.

Proposal 2: Say No to the “Michigan Civil Rights Initiative”

Southeast Michigan is the nation’s most economically and racially segregated region, and the most in need of strategies to ensure the kind of equity that leads to lasting prosperity. Proposal 2, or the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, would eliminate programs that have ensured that girls’ sports are as equally available as boys’, fostered women- and minority- owned businesses, and encouraged men to enter programs where they are underrepresented such as teaching and nursing.

“We are still struggling to guarantee equal opportunity in Michigan and living out the legacy of segregation,” said Executive Director Conan Smith. “Ending affirmative action without the funding or planning for an alternative approach will put our communities and the region back decades.”

Proposal 4: Say No to Unreasonable Eminent Domain Restrictions

An essential tool for urban redevelopment is the power of governments to condemn property so that it may be used for public benefit. This is one way governments acquire land for roads and public utilities. Rarely, eminent domain is used to assemble land for critical economic development projects that provide jobs in severely depressed areas. Recent state Supreme Court decisions have established reasonable and carefully crafted rules to ensure this power is not abused. This proposed constitutional amendment would impose excessive fees and reverse the

rules of proof in using this tool. More importantly, it would make the use of eminent domain to eradicate blight nearly impossible.

“The judicious and careful use of eminent domain for economic development can help southeast Michigan’s sluggish economy revive,” said Smith. “We should keep this tool in the belt to help manage economic crises when they arise.”

Proposal 5: Say No to Guaranteed Funding Increases for K-16 Education

The problem with Proposal 5 is not in education, but in budgeting. Guaranteed increases to one service will inevitably cripple others – like community health, children’s welfare and support for city programs. The Citizens Research Council estimates that the impact on the FY07 state budget will be between \$565 and \$707 million. Moreover, money is not the key to a better education for our kids in Michigan. Our state ranks 11th in the nation for per pupil spending but 30th for educational achievement. Compare that to Minnesota where kids get the nation’s best education and the state spends \$900 less per student (ranking 21st nationally in spending).

“It’s completely understandable that education is a top financial priority,” Smith said, “but we need to avoid mandatory spending increases – especially ones that will jeopardize the viability of our already overburdened cities.”

The Michigan Suburbs Alliance works to unite and strengthen metro Detroit’s mature suburbs by elevating regional cooperation, reforming public policies, and innovating redevelopment strategies. To learn more about the Suburbs Alliance, visit www.suburbsalliance.org.

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