from one party campaign within their own party to receive endorsement to run. In the most recent presidential election, Democrats Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, Chris Dodd, Joe Biden, Mike Gravel, Dennis Kucinich and Bill Richardson all attempted to receive the endorsement to be the sole Democrat in the 2008 presidential election. These primaries tell the party the popularity of each candidate, which not only demonstrates who has the best chance of winning the presidential election, but also gives insight into possible vice presidential running mates and popular appointment possibilities should the party win the office. With proper planning and strategizing, primary elections could be just as important as the general election.

Primary elections come in two varieties, with rules set by the political party hosting the primary. Some primaries are open and some are closed. Closed elections require that only registered party members can cast a vote. Open primaries allow any registered voter to cast a ballot. There are two possible strategies here. If you are a Republican in a heavily Democratic district, you have two choices: you can cast a vote for an absolutely awful opposing candidate, skewing numbers and hopefully upending a strong opponent's candidacy; or, you can cast a vote for the opponent that you are least opposed to, hoping to ensure that if the other party does win, at least the winner is tolerable. These two options can work even better in contested districts. Voting in the primary of the opposing party could produce an opponent that would be easier for your party to beat.

Primary elections are also a means to oust an incumbent in a safe district. An incumbent in a safe district has the name recognition and political party connections to remain in office quite easily. Unless they have been caught in a big scandal or failed their electorate in some other important way, the chance of them losing their re-election is almost zero. That being said, if the opposing party has very little chance of winning the general election, then the primary is the best place for another candidate to win. If the incumbent loses the primary, they would be unable to run as a candidate from their political party. This would force them to either change to another party, become an independent or give up. Just because a candidate doesn't run as a D or an R doesn't mean they can't still win. Sen. Joseph Lieberman from Connecticut is an independent. However, losing the endorsement from their political party is enough of a detriment that it would remove enough wind from most politicians' sails that they would simply give up.

The year 2010 is a very important year for elections. As some citizens may know, another census will be taking place in 2010. A census, for those who are not aware, is the U.S. Government taking a roll call. Each individual resident is counted and categorized under a number of questions to give the government an accurate picture of the demographic of each district. This allows cities, counties, states and other such bodies to judge their population rates and also the makeup of their citizens. One of the other important features of the census is that it is the

framework for deciding how many Representatives a state can send to the United States House of Representatives. Currently, Michigan has 15 representatives. Projections from such sources as the Wall Street Journal show Michigan losing enough population to lose at least one, maybe even two representative seats. [5] This would mean that Michigan would have a smaller voice in national politics. Due to the population shifting and loss of a seat, Michigan will undergo a redrawing of the political districts. This means that, like the state budget, the Executive Branch and the State House and Senate each develop its own map of Michigan districts. With each chamber and the executive developing their own vision of Michigan districts, it is easy to see that whichever political party is in control of each body will attempt to slightly skew the map so that they maintain power during the next election cycles. Districts can be shoved together to eliminate competition, dissected to eliminate opposing safe districts or swallowed whole by stronger districts to solidify power. This makes the next election significant. Whoever the Michigan voters elect into power will likely control the political climate in Michigan for the next 10 years.

Another important feature on the 2010 ballot will be the possibility of a constitutional convention. Every 16 years, Michigan voters are presented with the opportunity to revamp the Constitution of the State of Michigan. This could completely change how Michigan government operates. More information about the constitutional convention can be found on the State of Michigan's website. I encourage everyone to go to www.michigan.gov, type "constitutional convention" into the search bar, and learn as much as possible about this important feature of Michigan government. In short, voting yes to hold a constitutional convention would set the groundwork for delegates to be selected to debate, write and vote on a new constitution for the State of Michigan. This could be the venue for very controversial topics to be decided, such as term limits, tax codes, tort reform, abortion, illegal substances or any other topic that the elected legislature has failed to adequately influence. These two major issues alone make the 2010 election more than worthy of being the first election for someone to vote in.

I recently enjoyed my right to vote in the 2009 election. It may have seemed trivial to some, including a city mayor, three school board members and a proposal about raising taxes for a new community center. However, every time someone is elected to office, they are given control over public funds to spend however they see fit. Are you doing your due diligence to ensure that person is reasonably intelligent and responsible so that those public funds will not be misused? If you truly do not care about the political process and who is elected to represent you and speak for you, then by all means stay home on Election Day and allow my vote to count for more than it should. However, if you want to have a say in how your tax money is spent, if you want to see elected officials be held accountable for their action or inaction, and if you want the legitimacy to be able to complain about what is happening in government, go vote. Let your voice be heard.