Why aren't voters allowed to decide?

Your Opinion
January 22, 2026

The Lake Township Board adopted ordinance changes despite clear and repeated public opposition. Residents made their position known through surveys, public comment and attendance at meetings. When those concerns were ignored, citizens turned to the lawful remedy available to them: the referendum process.

They organized. They gathered the required number of signatures. They met the legal threshold. They did exactly what the law allows voters to do when they disagree with their local government.

Yet, voters were still denied a vote because a procedural issue was raised after the petitions were submitted and it was used to prevent the question from appearing on the ballot. As a result, residents who clearly stated they do not want these ordinance changes were never given the opportunity to vote on them.

This raises a fundamental question: if voters have repeatedly expressed opposition, why are they not allowed to decide the issue at the ballot box?

Importantly, the township board is not powerless in this situation. The board has the authority to place questions on the ballot. Even in the absence of a successful referendum, the board can choose to let voters decide.

The referendum process exists to give citizens a direct voice when elected officials move forward despite public resistance. When procedural barriers prevent that vote – and the board declines to act – residents are left without a meaningful way to decide an issue that directly affects them.

No one is asking for special treatment. Residents are asking for the opportunity to vote on ordinance changes they have clearly and consistently opposed.

If township leadership believes these changes reflect the will of the community, the path forward is clear: place the ordinances on the ballot and allow voters to decide.

Until that happens, the question remains – why are voters being denied a vote on ordinances they have made clear they do not want?

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