



# Michigan Legislative Update

SUMMER EDITION 2021



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**How to Find Your Legislator can be anywhere**

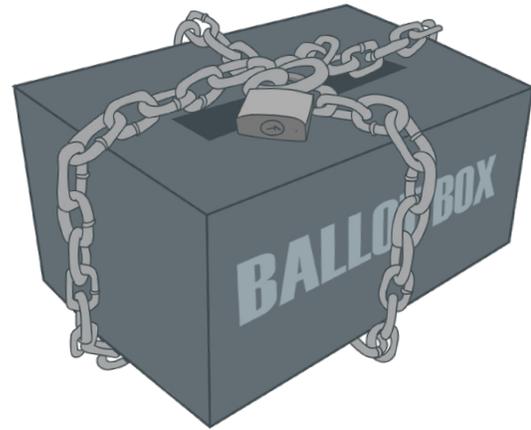
## VOTING SUPPRESSION disguised as VOTER SECURITY

After historic voter turnout in the 2020 Presidential election, which saw extremely high numbers of absentee voting and first-time voters becoming registered to vote, there was much disinformation spread concerning the presence of voter fraud. Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey said, "We haven't found any evidence of fraud that would have changed the outcome, but we found plenty of evidence of people questioning whether or not the process (had) adequate integrity." It seems their response to whether the process had adequate integrity is to introduce a package of bills that mainly reduce voting availability.

There have been 39 bills introduced in the Michigan State Senate with the sponsors describing them as measures to make it easier to vote, however after a deeper look into them, this is not the case. While some of the legislation introduced in the package of bills would expand voting rights, many would make it harder for many Michiganders to vote, both in person and absentee.

Among other changes, the bills would require absentee voters to mail in a paper copy of their ID with their ballot application, shorten the deadline for returning absentee ballots via drop boxes, bar clerks from purchasing prepaid postage for absentee ballot return envelopes and limit the Secretary of State's ability to help voters request an absentee ballot, require video surveillance of drop boxes for absentee ballots and allow only political parties to designate election challengers.

Senate bill 285 would require applicants requesting an absentee ballot by mail to include a photocopy of their ID and would also eliminate the option for voters without ID to sign an affidavit of identity when voting in-person. This would require all voters hoping to vote by mail to have a xerox machine or printer with scanning abilities in their home to vote, which would impact low-income households the most.



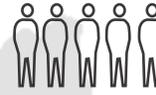
Senate bill 310 would eliminate the Secretary of State's ability to send all registered voters absentee ballot applications without requests, which was vital and helped tremendously to increase voter turnout in 2020.

Senate bill 287 will ban pre-paid return postage for absentee ballots to be sent out by local governments, increasing the probability that ballots will not be returned.

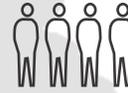
Senate bill 286 would bar voters from returning absentee ballots in a drop box after 5 p.m. on Election Day. They would have to be locked at that time, the current law is 8 p.m. on Election Day. This disproportionately affects working people, most of whom do not get out of work until 5 p.m., no longer providing adequate time for them to drop off their ballot.

Senate bill 334 would only allow the processing of ballots to begin one day early. This was a major problem in 2020 and was the reason so many precincts could not report results for days after the election. Bigger cities do not have the capacity to process hundreds of thousands of ballots with just one day advance.

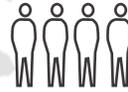
This package of bills includes Senate Bills 272-311, all of which are sponsored and cosponsored by Republican legislators. To find out which legislator sponsored the bills, you can go to [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov) and search by bill number. To find out if one of the sponsors represents you, go to <https://senate.michigan.gov>. If you would like to request an absentee ballot to vote in your upcoming elections, you can go to [Michigan.gov/Vote](http://Michigan.gov/Vote).



independent members



self-declared Democrats



self-declared Republicans

# Redistricting Commission Continues to Move Forward

**T**he Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission has selected its 13 commissioners to start working on the redistricting of Michigan. This comes after months of legal battles from the Michigan Republican Party and the Michigan Freedom Fund Executive Daunt (funded by a special interest group called the National Republican Redistricting Trust) attempting to overturn the 2018 ballot proposal that was voted on by the people of Michigan. Proposal 2, passed in 2018 with 61% favorability, allowed for the drawing of Michigan's state and federal political districts to be determined by a commission made up of Michigan residents every 10 years. These lawsuits have all been thrown out by the higher courts deeming Proposal 2 constitutional. Despite this, the Michigan Republican Party says they will still search for ways to overturn these decisions.

The 13-member redistricting commission will have five independent members, four self-declared Republicans and four self-declared Democrats. They will determine how the 2022 state House, state Senate and US congressional districts will be drawn. The members of the commission cannot be elected officials, candidates, lobbyists, political consultants, or staffers. Family members of politicians are also barred from participating within six years of their politically affiliated position.

These commissioners will also have the responsibility of drawing the US congressional districts. Michigan will drop from 14 congressional districts to 13 because of its slow population growth shown by the census. The districts will look very different in the coming years so be sure to stay updated as your district could change.

There were 9,367 applications received this year and the 13 commissioners have been selected from them. They are **Douglas Clark (R)**, **Juanita Curry (D)**, **Anthony Eid (N)**, **Rhonda Lange (R)**, **Steven Terry Lett (N)**, **Brittini Kellom (D)**, **Cynthia Orton (R)**, **M.C. Rothhorn (D)**, **Rebecca Szetela (N)**, **Janice Vallette (N)**, **Erin Wagner (R)**, **Richard Weiss (N)**, and **Dustin Witjes (D)**. A new commission will be selected in 10 years when it is time to draw the districts again, so be sure to send in an application. You can find more information about meeting schedules, watch past meetings and learn about the application process at <https://www.michigan.gov/micrc>.

# Elected Officials

## FIGHTING FOR US



Governor Whitmer State of Michigan

This past year has been extremely tough on the working families in Michigan. Our members have seen this firsthand. We, as UAW members, must make sure our elected officials are doing their best to keep us working but also have the ability to provide for our families when we can't.

Governor Whitmer and her administration have been working tirelessly to make sure that Michiganders who have lost work because of the virus and the precautions that need to be taken receive the help and benefits they need. In April of 2020, Governor Whitmer created the COVID-19 Task Force on Racial Disparities to help focus on the inequalities that communities of color are facing. The governor also initiated the Futures for Frontliners program that offered frontline workers tuition-free access to community college in Michigan. This program saw hundreds of thousands of applicants. Governor Whitmer, working with the MDHHS has helped save thousands of lives through COVID-19 orders, keeping Michigan at the bottom of the list in the US when it came to COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. This is until recently. When the state reopened, our cases have risen sharply, however the number of Michiganders who have been vaccinated is rising fast, helping to keep deaths down.

In a press conference on April 22, 2021 Governor Whitmer and the deputy director of the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity announced a webinar training would be held on how to organize a union. The deputy director, Sean Egan planned to team up with the National Labor Relations Board field examiner Dan Molenda to host the training webinar. Unfortunately, Molenda had to reschedule for a later date. This training was met by criticism from a Republican-led Senate panel that decided to threaten to reconsider the Department's budget if the training were held. Every worker has the right to organize and should have educational resources provided to them if they choose.

The Clean Slate legislation was also signed into law by the governor. This was a package of bills to reform Michigan's criminal expungement laws which has made it easier for people who have committed certain felonies and misdemeanors to have their records wiped clean. This will give countless Michigander's opportunities that they may not have been available to receive before, jobs being one of the most important.

The Michigan Clean Water Plan was also announced in 2020 in which the governor plans to invest \$500 million into Michigan's water systems. It would provide investments for communities by helping to provide safe, clean water and would support over 7,500 jobs. Governor Whitmer signed an executive directive to declare racism as a public health crisis and created Michigan's first Black Advisory Council. She also created the first Equity and Inclusion Officer position in the Governor's office. In March of 2021, Governor Whitmer announced the Rebuilding Michigan program, which will start work on 21 state highways. The program will rebuild and resurface close to 920 miles of state highways and freeways and maintenance on another 830 miles, creating hundreds of well-paying jobs for the residents in Michigan.



## UAW Retirees Staying Active

Greetings to all the Michigan UAW retirees and their families. We want to thank you for everything you have done to make this union strong and for making your voices heard on local and state issues. UAW Michigan retirees represent many different sectors of our union, State workers, gaming, auto, parts suppliers, and technical office and professional workers, to name a few. Within the three UAW Michigan regions, 1, 1A and 1D, there are 206,266 retirees, and when you add in their spouses and other family members, this group represents a powerful voice for our legislative activities.

Recently, the UAW Medical Benefits Trust, the group that administers the healthcare benefits for UAW-GM, Ford, and Chrysler retirees and their dependents, conducted an audit of people who joined the Trust between 2010 and 2014. This group had never been audited. The Trust worked with a group called Dependent Verification Service Customer Care Center and they audited 133,000 households nationwide.

In future editions of this newsletter, we will strive to keep you informed by presenting state legislation that could impact retirees and their families, and we could be asking for you to get involved by calling your state elected officials, attending their coffee hours, sending emails, and most importantly voting in all local, state, and federal elections.

In closing, we encourage you to get more involved with the UAW political process. You can do this by voluntarily donating to V-CAP, volunteering with your regional CAP representative, joining your county Democratic Party, or maybe even running for office.

# Flint Water Crisis Updates

In August of 2020, after two years of negotiations, a deal was struck between Michigan and the people of Flint who were affected by the lead-contaminated water. The initial agreement gives about 80% of the settlement to children who were minors when they were first exposed to the lead-tainted water, with much of it designated to children who were 6 years old or younger. Another 2% would go to special education services in Genesee County, 18% would be spent on adults and property damage, with about 1% going toward claims for business losses.

**In order to receive any of these payments, residents of Flint would have to meet at least one of four requirements:**

- Owned or lived in a house that received water from the Flint Water Treatment Plant from April 25, 2014, until the settlement is signed.
- Owned or operated a business that received water from the Flint Water Treatment Plant from April 25, 2014, until the settlement is signed.
- Ingested water from the Flint Water Treatment Plant on 21 out of any 30-day stretch from April 25, 2014, until the settlement is signed.
- Were exposed to water from the Flint Water Treatment Plant from April 25, 2014, to Dec. 31, 2016, and were diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease.

In January of 2021, nine people were charged by Solicitor General Fadwa Hammoud and Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy for their involvement in the Flint water crisis. Those that were charged included Former Governor Rick Snyder, ex-Department of Health and Human Services Director Nick Lyon, Snyder's former aide Rich Baird, Snyder's former Chief of Staff Jarrod Agen, former Flint emergency managers Darnell Earley and Gerald Ambrose, Flint's former Director of Public Works Howard Croft, Nancy Peeler, DHHS's former director of the Program for Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, and Michigan's former Chief Medical Executive Dr. Eden Wells.

Former Governor Snyder faces two counts of willful neglect of duty, a one-year misdemeanor that carries a potential \$1,000 fine.

Lyon faces nine counts of involuntary manslaughter - 15-year felonies with a potential \$7,5000 fine - and one count of willful neglect of duty.

Baird faces four felony charges: one count of extortion, one count of perjury, one count misconduct in office and one count of obstruction of justice. His extortion charge carries up to 20 years in prison and a potential \$10,000 fine, his perjury charge carries up to 15 years in prison, his misconduct in office charge carries up to five years in prison and a potential \$10,000 fine and his obstruction charge carries up to five years in prison and a potential \$10,000 fine.

Agen faces a perjury charge, a 15-year felony.

Earley faces three counts of misconduct in office, five-year felonies with a potential \$10,000 fine.

Croft faces two counts of willful neglect of duty, and Ambrose four counts of misconduct in office.

Peeler was charged with one count misconduct in office and one count of willful neglect of duty.

Wells was charged with nine counts of involuntary manslaughter, one count of willful neglect of duty and two counts of misconduct in office.

On March 18, 2021, Genesee District Judge William Crawford denied former Governor Rick Snyder's motion to cancel proceedings, which Snyder argued that since he was in a seat in the state government in Lansing at the time and not Flint, his actions taken or not taken should not apply. In an opinion read from the bench, Judge William Crawford said in a hearing that his interpretation of law disagreed with those arguments. He said, **"for several reasons, including the fact that as a top statewide official, Mr. Snyder's actions or inactions in the Flint disaster - as the indictment states - crossed county borders and were not limited only to the seat of state government."**

## WHO REPRESENTS YOU?

### HOW TO FIND YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE,

State Senator, US Senators and US Representatives and how to make sure you are prepared for Election Day. In order to be a good citizen, you've got to fully participate in your democracy. How? Start by finding out who represents you at the state and national level, and make sure your ability to vote is in order!

■ **YOU CAN START HERE:** [www.fec.gov](http://www.fec.gov) Just type in your ZIP code and you'll get the name of your US Representative in Congress.

■ **THEN VISIT HERE:** [house.michigan.gov](http://house.michigan.gov)

■ **CLICK** the **"Representatives"** tab at the top, and use the search function to determine your State Representative.

■ **LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, GO TO:** [senate.michigan.gov](http://senate.michigan.gov). You can find your State Senator by name, map, or address.

■ **FINALLY**, head over to [Michigan.gov/SOS](http://Michigan.gov/SOS)

**ONCE THERE**, check out the Michigan Voter Information Center under the **"Election"** tab, where you can confirm that you are registered to vote and verify your voter information. You can also download your absentee ballot application, track your absentee ballot, and look over a sample ballot for the upcoming election.