

# PROTECTING DEMOCRACY



JOIN THE FIGHT TO STOP  
VOTER SUPPRESSION

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## KEEPING MICHIGAN'S ELECTIONS SECURE AND ACCESSIBLE



### TARGETING VULNERABLE VOTERS

*Proposed ID Laws Create  
Barriers Across Michigan*

Because of the work done by the ACLU of Michigan and our allies, our state has had a voter ID law that successfully balances voter access and election security for more than a decade. As it is now, anyone without a valid photo ID can cast a ballot if they sign an affidavit affirming their identity.

It's that simple. But the Republican-controlled Legislature proposes requiring anyone who fails to bring photo ID when voting at the polls to file a provisional ballot, forcing them to go their clerk's office within six days with their photo ID for their vote to count. If they have no photo ID, their vote isn't counted at all. Either way, requiring photo ID creates needless barriers, and mostly impacts vulnerable communities, including:

#### **Black people and other people of color:**

- Research shows that minority voters in Michigan are about five times more likely to lack access to ID than white voters.
- Voters living in 100 percent Black precincts were 16 times more likely to cast an affidavit ballot than voters living in precincts with no Black residents.

#### **People living on low incomes:**

- Even if photo IDs are offered for free or at a reduced cost, the underlying documents required to obtain ID cost money, and place a needless burden on people with low incomes.
- The cost of document fees, travel expenses and waiting time range from \$75 to \$175.
- Roughly half of the affidavit ballots cast were in precincts with a median household income of \$34,680 or less.

#### **People with disabilities, the elderly, students, and rural residents:**

- Members of these communities would be disproportionately burdened by the cost, travel time, loss of pay from work missed and lack of transportation if forced to go to their clerk's office after Election Day to have their vote count.



*Although drop boxes were widely used in the 2020 election to cast ballots, some of the proposed anti-voter bills include restricting drop box hours and add costly regulations that will make them unaffordable for many communities.*

# TAKE ACTION

CALL YOUR LAWMAKER AND  
TELL THEM TO VOTE NO ON  
VOTER SUPPRESSION BILLS AT  
517.760.6214



# WE WON'T BE SILENCED

Sylvia Orduño and other grassroots activists had worked intensely for months to educate and register Detroit voters before the 2020 presidential election. Then they did all they could to mobilize people to mail and deliver their ballots while a pandemic continued to rage. “We wanted to make sure that voters were able to exercise their lawful right to vote,” says Ms. Orduño.

Their efforts were a resounding success. But they didn’t do it alone. The ACLU of Michigan led a statewide Election Protection Program (EPP) in partnership with more than 140 organizations. The goal was to educate every Michigander, especially communities often the target of voter suppression, including Black people and other people of color, women, the elderly, poor people, formerly incarcerated citizens, and young people, about their new voting rights added to the state constitution. Those new rights include expanded early voting and vote by mail options and were adopted with a ballot initiative overwhelmingly passed in 2018 and led by the ACLU of Michigan.

Together, the EPP groups launched MichiganVoting.org, which included know your voting rights materials in English, Spanish, Arabic and Bengali, we sent letters to 1,500 city and township clerks urging them to follow all voting rights laws, and dispatched dozens of clerk engagement teams to clarify election laws, including urging them to issue absentee ballots to voters who apply for one by mail or online within 24 hours of receiving the application. And we asked the Michigan Secretary of State to mail every voter an absentee ballot application — and she did. All contributing to historic voter turnout despite a deadly global pandemic.

Though the election, by and large, went smoothly statewide, trouble started brewing as ballots were being counted. That’s when Ms. Orduño and other city residents received word that they were needed to respond to a mounting problem at the TCF Center, where the votes of Detroit and other Wayne County residents were being counted. She and others, including members of the ACLU of Michigan, responded immediately. “What I saw were people of privilege pouring in from other cities and counties trying to use fear and intimidation in an attempt to keep our voices from being heard,” says Ms. Orduño, a Latina resident of Detroit. “It was a very frightening experience.”

Inflamed by what has since been dubbed “The Big Lie” — the now widely debunked falsehood that the election was stolen — many people from the suburbs, mostly white, gathered outside the convention center demanding that officials stop the vote count, a racist effort at its core.

Together we defeated the coordinated attempt to keep votes from being counted in a city where Black people and other people of color comprise the overwhelming majority of residents. With failed efforts to stop the count and block certification of the election behind us, the full firepower of the ACLU of Michigan and our allies are now taking on a new battle: voter-suppression bills.

So far this year, more than 400 pieces of legislation intended to restrict voting access have been introduced in 49 states.

In Michigan, as this mailer went to print, the ACLU of Michigan and our allies have been fiercely fighting to stop passage of 39 election-related laws designed to make voting more difficult.

“These bills are an attempt to undermine our democracy, and mostly keep Black and Brown people from voting,” says Merissa Kovach, policy strategist for the ACLU of Michigan, and who testified at legislative hearings about how the bills will disenfranchise voters. “If they were to become law, they would restrict access to ballot boxes, curtail absentee voting and make it easier for partisan officials to overturn legitimate election results.”

In part, these bills seek to gut the voting rights amendment to the state constitution that the ACLU of Michigan spearheaded three years ago, and that included an audit system to review the election process. The 250 audits conducted across the state showed that, even in the midst of a raging pandemic combined with historic voter turnout, the process was fair, accurate, and secure.

The Michigan Senate Republicans’ own 54-page investigation of the 2020 election, released earlier this year, declared that there was no evidence of fraud, and the election was secure and the count was accurate. Yet, the effort to push bills that will damage our democracy continues. The state bills that may have the most far-reaching impact seek to impose strict new requirements regarding photo ID that disproportionately impact disabled people, the elderly, rural residents, people living on low incomes, Black people, and other people of color.

Given the likelihood that Gov. Gretchen Whitmer would veto the bills, there is widespread speculation that Republicans will attempt to pass them directly into law through a citizens’ initiative — a process by which collecting a requisite number of petition signatures allows the Legislature to directly vote on the measure, bypassing voters, and preventing a veto. It would be, in effect, an end run around the state’s residents, who have consistently shown strong support for expanding accessibility to voting, not suppressing it.

“Democracy thrives when every eligible voter is allowed to have their voice heard at the polls without having to overcome unnecessary obstacles,” says Kovach. “Together, we must all work to defeat these bills to protect the vote and our democracy.”

“We didn’t let them succeed before when they tried to stop the Detroit and Wayne County votes,” says Ms. Orduño. “And we won’t let them succeed now.”

## SAFEGUARDING ELECTIONS: A HISTORY OF SUCCESS

Along with our partners, we have long been at the forefront of the fight to ensure every eligible voter is able to cast a ballot, and that the election process is fair. With your support, we’ve taken incredible strides over the past four years to help make that happen. Here’s how we did it:

**Launching** 2018’s successful campaign to amend the state constitution, making early voting, Election Day registration, and expanded vote-by-mail options available. Overwhelmingly approved by Michigan’s voters, the amendment also included an audit provision to ensure the accuracy of vote counts. One of the many benefits resulting from this effort was made clear in 2020’s presidential election, when 57 percent of the state’s voters cast absentee ballots, allowing them to participate in the democratic process while staying safe as a pandemic raged.

**Enabling** 28,000 people in 2020 to take advantage of the new option to register to vote on Election Day, and ensuring 250 nonpartisan audits were conducted across the state, affirming the integrity of the election — all because of 2018’s constitutional amendment.

**Partnering** with more than 140 organizations beginning in 2019 to provide voting rights information to communities often targeted by voter suppression — people of color, formerly incarcerated citizens, poor people, and the young and elderly. That effort included distributing 126,000 “Know Your Voting Rights” booklets in English, Spanish, Arabic, and Bengali.

**Helping** guarantee 2020’s election ran smoothly by dispatching 46 clerk engagement teams to clarify election laws and recruiting more than 300 volunteers, who answered 7,000 hotline calls about voting.