

# Tuscola County Democratic Party Newsletter

May 2022

Volume 1, Issue 2

## Our Goals

- Ensure honest and transparent government.
- Restore and protect our environment.
- Support strong economic growth and opportunity.
- Strengthen voter access and turnout.
- Promote affordable education and health care for all.

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## Notice of the May meeting

The May meeting of the Tuscola County Democratic Party will be held on **Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022**, at the Brentwood, 178 Park Drive, Caro, MI. Social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. Paul Whitney, our candidate for Representative of the 97th District in the Michigan House of Representatives, will be speaking. The meeting will be indoors, and masks will be required. We hope you will join us.

## Rural Power Lab

The Rural Power Lab is a program run by a company called Movement Labs based in Oakland, California. They want to help rural Democrats become more effective and have selected the Tuscola Dems as one of the local political parties they wish to support. They offer technical support, training, and a quarterly grant of \$500. Several members of our Party will be travelling to Gaylord on May 20<sup>th</sup> to attend a day-long training session sponsored by this group.

## Senator McMorrow's Speech

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, a Republican state senator, Lana Theis, sent out fund-raising e-mail accusing a Democratic state senator, Mallory McMorrow, of wanting to “groom and sexualize” children. The next day, McMorrow gave a fierce and eloquent speech on the floor of the Michigan senate that was viewed over 9 million times in less than 24 hours on Twitter and retweeted by Hillary Clinton and others. President Biden called and thanked her for saying “a lot of what needed to be said.” She raised a quarter of a million dollars in less than 24 hours — an astronomical sum for a state lawmaker.

[Click here to watch Senator McMorrow's speech](#)

Often it is said that Republicans don't stand for anything. Not true. They stand for (a) tax cuts for billionaires; (b) fighting tooth-and-nail to prevent every American from having health insurance; (c) attacking gay and trans folks; (d) turning away refugees at our borders; and (e) preventing black and brown people from voting. The problem for Republicans is that their agenda is deeply unpopular with voters, so they avoid talking about it and instead want to talk about made-up stuff—election fraud, fake news, defund the police, pedophilia. Let's line up behind Senator McMorrow and call them out whenever they pull this trick.

## Petitions

There are so many petitions being circulated right now that it's hard to keep track of them. Here's a rundown:

**Promote the Vote 2022** would amend the state constitution to:

- Allow nine days of early voting
- Publicly subsidize absentee ballots and a tracking system for the ballot location
- Continue to allow voters to sign an affidavit attesting to their identity rather than a state ID
- Allow public sources and charities to fund local elections
- Allow voters to register for absentee ballots for all future elections
- Require ballot drop boxes for every 15,000 voters in a municipality
- Establish that post-election audits can only be conducted by state and local officials

This petition was drawn up by a coalition comprised of Promote the Vote Michigan, the ACLU of Michigan, League of Women Voters of Michigan, All Voting is Local, and Voters Not Politicians. Supporters say the measure offers flexibility for voters to cast their ballots, makes elections more accessible, and ensures election security while protecting voter privacy. Opponents claim the measure would open the door to abuse.

**MI Right to Vote** consists of two proposals to amend the state constitution. One would end the state Legislature's ability to enact law proposed through ballot measures. The other would:

- Require two weekends of in-person absentee voting
- Require at least one drop-off box for absentee voting for every 15,000 registered voters.
- Allow voters to receive absentee-ballot applications without requesting them
- Require the postage of absentee applications and ballots to be prepaid
- Allow voters to verify identity with their photo IDs or signatures
- Allow officials to prepare for counting absentee ballots within the 7-day period before election day
- Bar lawmakers from imposing "an undue burden on the right to vote"
- Ban laws that restrict contributions to fund elections, record voters, or discriminate "against election challengers"

- Prohibit requirements of voter ID for absentee voting or social security number to register to vote
- Require the legislature to fund elections

The group that wrote this petition is headed by Jan BenDor, women’s rights activist in Washtenaw County and state coordinator for nonprofit Michigan Election Reform Alliance. Other members include Michigan attorney Fred Green and Robert Sedler, a volunteer lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union and law professor at Wayne State University. The group says its aim is to battle laws that make it harder for people to vote. Opponents say that current law allows the Legislature to enact the will of the people who elect them.

**Voters for Transparency and Term Limits** would amend the state constitution to reduce the maximum length of time a lawmaker can serve in the Legislature from 14 years to 12 years but would allow them to serve the full tenure in one chamber. Currently, lawmakers can serve up to six years in the Michigan House and eight years in the Senate. The amendment would also require state lawmakers, the governor, the secretary of state and the state attorney general to disclose certain financial information.

This petition was written by a bipartisan coalition of Michigan business and labor leaders. Supporters say it would improve transparency among elected officials in statewide positions and would give legislators more time in one position to focus on serving their constituents but reduce the overall cap. One of its opponents said the practical effect would be to prolong the terms of House and Senate members.

**Secure MI Vote** would:

- Require voter ID for in-person voting and absentee ballot applications and eliminate an affidavit exemption currently allowed for in-person voting without ID.
- Require partial Social Security numbers for voter registration
- Require voters who don’t present ID in person to present it within six days after the election for the vote to be counted
- Bar unsolicited absentee ballot applications
- Ban outside funding for elections and restrict mail-in ballots
- Provide voters with hardships with free IDs funded by a \$3 million state fund.

This petition was written by a Lansing-based group that shares an office address with the Michigan Guardians of Democracy, a newly formed dark-money group linked to Heather Lombardini, a GOP consultant. This group has given \$1.4 million to the campaign. The Michigan Republican Party has also spent more than \$157,000 on the effort. Supporters of the petition, mostly Republicans, say the measure would add safeguards to the election process and ensure there is no fraud. Opponents, mostly Democrats, say the initiative offers solutions to a problem that doesn’t exist and instead is intended to suppress the vote and undermine trust in elections. Circulators are currently collecting signatures for this petition. If they collect enough, the Republican-led Legislature likely would adopt the measure and Governor Whitmer could not veto it.

**Unlock Michigan II** would limit the length of emergency orders from state or local health officials to 28 days, unless extended by the state Legislature or local governments. The measure is a response to Governor Whitmer's use of emergency orders during the early months of the pandemic to close businesses and schools.

This petition was written by a group that successfully campaigned to limit emergency powers of Michigan governors last year. Through April 20<sup>th</sup>, Michigan Guardians of Democracy, a dark money nonprofit, had given \$790,000 to this group. A spokesperson, Fred Wszolek, says this petition would "make sure no governor gets to govern by decree." Opponents warn that it could weaken the state's response during emergencies and make it harder to keep the public safe. Circulators are currently collecting signatures. If they collect enough, the Republican-led Legislature likely would adopt the measure and Governor Whitmer could not veto it.

**Audit MI** would force a "forensic audit" of the 2020 election and change how Michigan conducts audits after elections. It would set up an "audit board" of 10 Republicans and 10 Democrats selected by the Legislature, stripping auditing power from the Secretary of State and local election officials. The board would be allowed to raise both public and private funds and would not be required to disclose private donors. It would also establish a grand jury that could investigate findings.

The group that wrote this petition was incorporated in December by Jon Paul Rutan, who is founder of the Hillsdale Justice Project and was once affiliated with the extremist group Oath Keepers. Other organizers include state House candidates Jon Rocha of Kalamazoo County. Rocha says this measure would promote transparency and security in the election system. The Michigan Democratic Party, Promote the Vote Michigan, and others say the measure would sow doubt upon the legitimacy of elections. Others say it would give too much power to an unelected group.

**Let MI Kids Learn** is comprised of two petitions. One would establish the Student Opportunity Scholarship program to pay for K-12 public or private school tuition and fees, home-schooling materials and online learning programs for those with financial needs; the other would allow taxpayers to claim a tax credit for contributions made to the scholarship program.

Former U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is a backer of the effort. The DeVos family pumped a total \$350,000 into the ballot measure committee account on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The group also received \$800,000 from Get Families Back to Work, a group sharing the same office address as the Republican Governors Association in Washington, D.C., \$615,000 from State Government Leadership Foundation, a D.C.-based conservative nonprofit, \$25,000 from Lansing nonprofit Great Lakes Education Project's advocacy arm, and \$100,000 from Michigan Guardians of Democracy. Supporters say the program would open access to quality education for Michigan children. Foes of the proposal say it could undermine public education and divert public funds into private

schools. Circulators are currently collecting signatures for this petition. If they collect enough, the Republican-led Legislature likely would adopt the measure and Governor Whitmer could not veto it.

**Raise the Wage MI** would increase Michigan's \$9.87 minimum wage to \$15 per hour over five years, starting at \$11 in 2023.

The petition was written by Michigan One Fair Wage—the state chapter of a national worker advocacy group, One Fair Wage. The group has raked in \$1.35 million from One Fair Wage Action, a committee based in Massachusetts. Supporters of minimum wage increases have said the move would lift up workers and small businesses. Groups like the Small Business Association of Michigan have opposed minimum wage increases, arguing they could kill jobs and that business owners should set wages.

**Reproductive Freedom for All** would amend the state Constitution to repeal a decades-old law that makes abortion a felony. The law was nullified by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 but would go into effect if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns that decision.

The coalition behind the measure consists of the ACLU of Michigan, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, and Michigan Voices. As of April 4, the national ACLU had donated \$837,000 and the Michigan chapter had kicked in \$596,000. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan spent more than \$105,000. The ACLU says the proposal would protect women's choice to end pregnancy without "political interference." Anti-abortion organizations such as the Michigan Catholic Conference said the measure was a "sad commentary on the outsized and harmful role the abortion industry plays in our politics and our society."

**Michiganders for Fair Lending** would cap interest rates for payday loans at 36 percent and allow the state attorney general to prosecute lenders who exceed that rate.

The committee that wrote this petition is run by organizers of the Michigan Coalition for Responsible Lending. The petition received support from groups including Habitat for Humanity of Michigan, Michigan Association of United Ways, Macomb County Veterans Services, and Michigan League for Public Policy. As of March 18, the national ACLU had given the committee \$1.7 million. The Sixteen Thirty Fund, a D.C.-based liberal dark money group, had given the committee \$980,450. Habitat for Humanity of Michigan President Sandra Pearson said payday loans could put borrowers in worse financial shape than before. Opponents of the petition say payday loans are a lifeline to the needy and the law could force legitimate lenders out of business.

**Michigan United** would repeal truth in sentencing laws that require those convicted of crimes to serve their entire minimum sentences. The measure would establish credits that reduce sentences for those who earn degrees or work in prison, among other provisions.

The group that wrote this petition hails itself as a coalition of “labor, business, social service and civil rights members.” Its board of directors include members of New American Leaders (a nonprofit recruiting candidates of color to run for office), United Food and Commercial Workers International (a union representing 1.3 million workers in North America) and Michigan Nurses Association, among others. Criminal justice advocates say the current law poses a barrier to early release for incarcerated folks who demonstrate good behavior. Eaton County Prosecutor Douglas Lloyd said the current law ensures crime victims of their safety from harm.

**Michigan Initiative for Community Healing** would decriminalize the use and production of natural plants or mushrooms. It would also lower the penalties for possession of controlled substances from a felony to a misdemeanor.

This petition was written by Decriminalize Nature, a national psychedelics advocacy group, and Students for Sensible Drug Policy. Julie Barron, co-director of Decriminalize Nature Michigan said there’s a relationship between “humans and entheogenic plants [and] fungi” and that is a “human right.” Opponents fear the measure would lead to an uptick in drug-related crime.

**DeCertify Michigan** would decertify the 2020 presidential election, recall electors, and require the Michigan Legislature to "legally establish the rightful president of the United States."

Organizer Robert Gelt believes the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald Trump and has claimed that more evidence will soon be revealed to prove his theory. Opponents say it’s far too late to “decertify” the election or recall electors, whose votes have already been certified by Congress. The proposed legislation “would not be enforceable. It would not be possible. It would have zero effect,” said David Becker, executive director of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation and Research.

## **American Rescue Plan Act**

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by the 117th United States Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 11, 2021, to speed up the country's recovery from the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing recession. It should be noted that every Democrat (except one, Jared Golden of Maine) voted for the bill and every Republican (including our own Lisa McClain) voted against it.

[Click here to see the provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act](#)

One provision of this bill is an allocation of \$195 billion to counties, cities, towns, and villages to help them recover from the negative public health and economic impacts of the pandemic. Tuscola County received \$10,147,979. Jurisdictions within Tuscola County received various amounts of money, depending upon the number of people living in that jurisdiction (about \$105 per person), as follows:

- Akron Township received \$121,939
- Almer Township received \$206,092
- Arbela Township received \$305,737
- Columbia Township received \$75,571
- Dayton Township received \$183,589
- Denmark Township received \$159,410
- Elkland Township received \$107,599
- Ellington Township received \$131,778
- Elmwood Township received \$80,909
- Fairgrove Township received \$84,677
- Fremont Township received \$232,469
- Gilford Township received \$72,117
- Indianfields Township received \$263,660
- Juniata Township received \$154,805
- Kingston Township received \$116,810
- Koylton Township received \$149,990
- Millington Township received \$321,228
- Novesta Township received \$145,803
- Tuscola Township received \$202,534
- Vassar Township received \$406,637
- Watertown Township received \$215,722
- Wells Township received \$176,681
- Wisner Township received \$67,721
- Caro City received \$417,418
- Vassar City received \$266,067
- Akron Village received \$39,251
- Cass City Village received \$238,226
- Fairgrove Village received \$54,951
- Gagetown Village received \$37,995
- Kingston Village received \$42,809
- Mayville Village received \$92,632
- Millington Village received \$104,355
- Reese Village received \$142,768
- Unionville Village received \$49,299

Elected officials of each jurisdiction decide how to spend this money and they have until December 31, 2024, to spend it. Thus far, Tuscola County commissioners have spent about \$1.5 million of their money for premium pay to essential workers. Officials in some jurisdictions have made detailed plans for spending the money; others have not. If you want to find out how officials in your jurisdiction are spending this money, you should attend their public meetings.

## Candidates for Secretary of State and Attorney General

In Michigan, political parties nominate candidates for secretary of state and attorney general at their conventions instead of holding primaries. At the Michigan Democratic Party Convention on April 9<sup>th</sup>, we nominated Jocelyn Benson for a second term as secretary of state and Dana Nessel for a second term as attorney general.

On Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Republicans held their convention at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids. They nominated Kristina Karamo, an educator from Oak Park, for secretary of state and Matt DePerno, a lawyer from Kalamazoo, for attorney general. Neither Karamo nor DePerno has ever before held elected office. Both of them received national notoriety for their unfounded claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election. Both received endorsements from Donald Trump. They will face our candidates in the general election on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

As it turns out, the nomination of Trump-endorsed, election-denying candidates for Michigan's chief election administrator and top law enforcer has turned off some Republican party insiders. Tony Daunt, a powerful figure in Michigan politics with close ties to the DeVos family, resigned from the G.O.P.'s state committee in a blistering letter to Judy Rapanos, chairwoman of the 4th Congressional District Republican Committee.

[Click here to read Tony Daunt's letter.](#)

Other big-dollar contributors have also walked away.

## The January 6<sup>th</sup> Capitol Riot Committee

The select House committee investigating the January 6<sup>th</sup> Capitol riot will be holding at least eight public hearings starting June 9<sup>th</sup>. Chairman of the committee, Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) said, "We'll tell the whole story about what happened using a combination of exhibits as well as the hundreds of witnesses we deposed or just talked to." One of the committee members, Jamie Raskin (D-Md.), was interviewed recently by Ari Velshi on MSNBC. Here's how he described what happened:

[Click here to watch Jamie Raskin's interview](#)