

# MiARA Newsletter

June 2021

## **GOP Voter Suppression Bills in States Threaten Fundamental Right to Vote**

Seeking to fix a problem that has never existed, Republican state legislators across the country are rushing to pass the most restrictive voting laws since the days of Jim Crow.

GOP extremists are capitalizing on the “Big Lie” promulgated by former President Donald Trump that the November election was stolen from him by election officials in blue states and corrupt minority-controlled cities.

Truth be damned, the GOP is moving ahead with its “New Jim Crow” agenda. Unable to attract large numbers of Black and Hispanic voters with their policies, Republicans are, instead, targeting legislation to reduce the number of voters among those populations. They are seeking to pass laws that limit mail voting, impose stricter ID requirements, make voter registration more difficult and to expand voter roll purges.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, a non-partisan think tank based at New York University, more than 843 restrictive voting bills have been introduced by GOP legislators in 47

states, including Michigan. In the past year, at least 24 state laws were enacted to restrict access to voting, including especially reactionary laws in Georgia, Iowa, Utah, Arizona, and Florida.

Across the country, state-level GOP operatives are pushing these radical changes, despite former U.S. Attorney General Robert Barr saying that there was no evidence of widespread voting fraud in the 2020 election, and despite the fact that numerous lawsuits initiated by the Trump campaign alleging illegal activity have been rejected by courts across the country, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

GOP legislators in Texas were set to pass their version of voter suppression legislation, but it failed when Democrats staged a last-minute walkout to deny a quorum, to stop the legislation from moving forward, at least for the time being.

Georgia’s new voter suppression law is so repressive that Major League Baseball moved its 2021 All Star Game from Atlanta. The Georgia-based companies Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines called the law unacceptable and are pushing for its reversal. And, the U.S. Justice Department has announced that it will legally challenge the law for unfairly targeting Blacks and other minorities.

Michigan State AFL-CIO President Ron Bieber points to 39 similar bills that have been introduced in the Michigan State Senate this year, three of which have already passed, with votes strictly along party lines.

Why bother to pass legislation that Governor Whitmer is certain to veto? Bieber says, “It is all part of the radical agenda of today’s GOP.”

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## **GOP Voter Suppression Bills** *Continued*

Bieber predicts that after the acts are vetoed, Republicans will set-up a front group to petition for a statewide ballot initiative. “They’ll put a provision in the ballot proposal that allows state legislators to pass a voter suppression initiative into law by a simple majority vote of the House and Senate, which the Governor cannot veto. This is one more avenue that the GOP exploits to ignore the will of the people,” said Bieber.

The *UAW Michigan Legislative Update* reported most of these bills would make it harder for many Michiganders to vote, both in person and absentee. For example, the bills 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 city and county clerks from purchasing prepaid postage for absentee ballot return envelopes; 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.

Following the vote, an article in *The Detroit Free Press* reported that Democratic lawmakers argued that the bills were a way for their GOP colleagues to appease voters who believe in the lies and misinformation about the outcome and administration of the 2020 election.

The move to curb voting rights may ultimately backfire on the GOP. The National Education Association EdJustice website reminds us that polls show no matter our color, origin, or gender, most of us want America to be a land where all citizens are treated equal. “For Democracy to work for us, it must include everyone—all voters should have equal freedom to vote.”

## **President Signs Law to Make Juneteenth a Federal Holiday**

On June 17th, President Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, creating a new federal holiday and establishing June 19th an official day set aside for our nation to commemorate the end of slavery.

Although Juneteenth is the nation’s newest federal holiday, the day has been celebrated by African Americans since the late 1800s. The name Juneteenth comes from combining June and 19.

On June 19, 1865, nearly two months after Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, a Union general, arrived in Galveston, Texas, to tell African American slaves that the Civil War had ended and that they were free. The general’s announcement finally put into effect the Emancipation Proclamation that President Lincoln had issued more than two and a half years earlier.

President Biden said that signing this bill is one of the greatest honors that he will have as president.



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## **Michigan Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) Helps Seniors**

The Michigan Office of the Aging (OSA) is the lead agency in state government that provides services to retirees and older adults. While many state departments have programs aimed at assisting Michigan's seniors, OSA's enabling legislation, the Federal Older Americans Act of 1965 and the Older Michigan Act (PA 190) of 1981, gives OSA a clear mandate for providing services to and advocating on behalf of older adults in Michigan.

OSA receives funds for services from the Older American's Act and the Administration on Aging for programs in those laws. In addition, OSA also administers federal senior volunteer programs, such as, the Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion programs, and Respite Care Service.

OSA is responsible for the creation, coordination, and administration of service plans, as well as monitoring the performance of Michigan's Area Agencies on Aging and other public and private agencies in the state having to do with aging.

The Commission on Services to the Aging consists of 15 members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Michigan Senate.

The commission's responsibilities include advocacy for older adults, review and approval of grants administered by OSA within a service area, designation and planning of service areas, and participation and approval of the annual state plan as required by the Older American Act of 1965.

At the local level, Area Agencies on Aging are authorized by both the federal and state governments. They are designated by the

Commission on Services to the Aging to serve the needs of senior citizens within specified planning and service areas.

There are 16 local Area Agencies in Michigan that serve as focal points for community services and programs for senior citizens. These agencies are particularly helpful to seniors in need of information about what services are available in their local communities.

Visit the OSA website to learn more about the resources they provide to seniors and their families and find information about your local area agency. [www.michigan.gov/miseniors](http://www.michigan.gov/miseniors)

## **Alliance for Retired Americans Urges Congress to Act to Lower Drug Prices**

*The following statement on the Senate Finance Committee's Principles for Drug Pricing Reform was made by Richard Fiesta, executive director of the national Alliance for Retired Americans on June 22, 2021:*

Americans continue to pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, and seniors are bearing the brunt of this crisis.

Older Americans are fed up and are demanding that congress put their needs ahead of pharmaceutical corporations now, not later.

Drug prices are going up month after month and there is no end in sight.

Alliance members welcome the principles for drug pricing reform released by the Senate Finance Committee. They are a step in the right

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## **Alliance for Retired Americans Urges Congress to Act to Lower Drug Prices *Continued***

direction and once enacted into law will provide real relief for the American people.

Allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices, ensuring that consumers pay less for their drugs at the pharmacy counter, and holding pharmaceutical corporations accountable for setting and raising drug prices much higher than the rate of inflation are critical.

We cannot squander this opportunity. We urge the Senate and the House to move drug price legislation as soon as possible and deliver for the American people. We cannot wait anymore.

## **GOP-Led Committee in Michigan Senate Finds No Fraud in 2020 Election**

A report released by the GOP-led Senate Oversight Committee on June 17th has concluded that there was no widespread or systemic fraud in the 2020 election, and that Democrat Joe Biden defeated then-President Donald Trump by more than 150,000 votes, or 2.8 percentage points.

The report debunked allegations of improprieties, including rumors that dead people voted, that absentee ballots were counted multiple times, and that tens of thousands of ballots were dumped at a Detroit counting center after polls closed.

The report urged the state attorney general to consider looking into pressing charges against people who have made baseless allegations about the results in Antrim County to raise money or publicity “for their own ends.”

Senator Ed McBroom chaired the committee and said that additional audits of the election results are not justified. The committee of three Republicans and only one Democrat conducted an exhaustive, months long investigation, and heard more than 23 hours of testimony.

The report comes even as former President Trump and his allies continue to push long-debunked conspiracy theories and unfounded rumors of voter fraud. The Senate committee urged that Michigan citizens use a critical eye and ear toward those who have pushed demonstrably false theories for their own personal gain.



"The Big Lie doesn't work anymore. It has to be the Super - Duper Lie."

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