

EPISCOPALIANS IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN
COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE



June 2021

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are writing to urge you to oppose the 39-bill legislative package currently before the Michigan State Legislature which would restrict ballot access. Michigan has long been in the forefront of those states which have expanded ballot access to those entitled to vote, and we want to see this tradition continue.

We are urging this action as people of faith who are committed to social justice and equality, which are cornerstones for all of the world's major religious traditions. This commitment is part of our shared efforts to help ensure the common good in our communities so that all can thrive and flourish as God our Creator intended. These efforts rely on the full participation of our citizens in the political process, including safe and convenient access to voting by all who are eligible.

At the time of our first elections as a country, the ballot was restricted to citizens who were adult, white, male property owners. Our history as a country is one of ballot expansion as we included one group after another previously barred from voting. In the past fifty years, ballot access has repeatedly been made easier for qualified citizens, with the idea being that voting should be as easy as possible for those who are qualified to vote. Michigan Ballot Proposal 3, passed by a two-thirds majority of the voters in 2018, is an example of the progress we have made.

Voting for this 39-bill legislation would reverse the gains we have made in Michigan to make voting as easy as possible, recognizing that the right to vote is guaranteed by the U.S. and Michigan constitutions and is not a privilege that government is free to restrict. For qualified voters, we believe there should be no barriers to voting, and we believe this 39-bill package will make it more difficult for qualified voters to exercise their constitutional right.

Rather than improving and strengthening our electoral processes, we believe this 39-bill package will lead to alienation and discouragement, particularly on the part of those who have historically been excluded from voting. We believe the issue of voter fraud in recent American elections has been greatly exaggerated and certainly doesn't warrant restricting ballot access for our citizens. We applaud the historically high turnout rates of 2020 in Michigan and elsewhere, rather than viewing them as evidence of malfunction in our electoral system.

We write this letter for reasons rooted in the Gospel and framed by our Anglican traditions of shared worship in *The Book of Common Prayer*. As followers of Jesus, we believe God seeks abundant life for all people, a common good that access to voting by all eligible people helps to ensure. We hope we can count on your support in opposing these new election bills.

Sincerely,

The Rt. Rev. Gladstone B. Adams III, Assisting Bishop of Eastern & Western Michigan

The Rev. Jennifer Adams, Holland

The Rev. Canon Valerie Ambrose, Grand Rapids
The Rev. Heather Barta, Holly
The Rev. Deacon Francis Berghuis, Saugatuck
The Rev. Molly Bosscher, Grand Rapids
The Rev. Pamela J. Breakey, Ret., Dowagiac
The Rev. Leonard J. Brinkmoeller, Ret., Paw Paw
The Rev. Deacon Katherine Brower, Grand Rapids
The Rev. Cynthia Caruso, Benton Harbor
The Rev. Brian Chace, Ret., West Branch
The Rev. Elizabeth Chace, Ret., West Branch
The Rev. Brian Coleman, Battle Creek
The Rev. Dr. Jared C. Cramer, SCP, Grand Haven
The Rev. Charles E. Curtis, Ret., Bay City
The Rev. Hugh Dickinson, Ret., Grand Rapids
The Rev. J. Thomas Downs, Gladwin
The Rev. Deacon Jim Enelow, Benton Harbor
The Rev. Deacon Janet Gockerman, Grand Rapids
The Rev. Thomas Guback, Ret., Northport
The Rev. Charles Homeyer, Ret., Grand Rapids
The Rev. Canon Alan C. James, Grand Rapids
The Rev. Mark A. Jenkins, Ret., Gregory
The Rev. Dr. Jay E. Johnson, Saugatuck
The Rev. Karen Kelly, Ret., Three Oaks
The Rev. Ed King, Ret., East China
The Rev. Deacon Liz Kinsey, Sturgis
The Rev. Everett Klein, Whitehall
The Rev. Darlene Kuhn, Harbert
The Rev. Thomas M. Manney, Lapeer
The Rev. Dr. David Mason, Saugatuck
The Rev. Deacon John R. Meengs, Ret., Saugatuck
The Rev. Jim Perra, Traverse City
The Rev. David Pike, Ret., Lansing

The Rev. Diane Pike, St. Joseph

The Rev. Pamela Renna, Saginaw

The Rev. Deborah A. Semon-Scott, Ret., Jonesville

The Rev. Gail Shafer, Grand Ledge

The Rev. Canon Jim Steen, Ret., Saugatuck

The Rev. Pam Sten, Ret., Western Michigan

The Rev. Sr. Diane Stier, Mt. Pleasant

The Rev. Linnea Stifler, Hastings

The Rev. Eileen B. Stoffan, Muskegon

The Rev. Joel Turmo, Richland

The Rev. David Vickers, Ret., Greenville

The Rev. Deacon Pat Vinge, Kalamazoo

The Rev. Dr. Randall R. Warren, Kalamazoo

The Rev. Mike Wernick, Kentwood

The Rev. Mike Wood, Portage
