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**Secretary Benson, Rep. Koleszar host Citizens Roundtable for Michiganders who could lose voting rights under proposed laws**

*SAVE Act and HJR-B threaten constitutional voting rights for millions of citizens*

**PLYMOUTH, Mich.** – Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Rep. Matt Koleszar (D-Plymouth) hosted a Citizens Roundtable at the Plymouth District Library on March 10, where they heard from Michiganders – including women, military spouses, and adoptees – concerned about proposed federal and state legislation that could block millions of U.S. citizens from casting their ballot in the next election.

The SAVE Act (HR 22) and Michigan House Joint Resolution-B would require documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal and state elections. The proposed SAVE Act would require citizens to register *in person* with either their birth certificate, a U.S. passport, or naturalization certificate. Voters would lose their ability to register to vote by mail or online, overwhelming local election clerks and making elections much harder and more expensive to administer.

At a March 4 hearing, the House Elections Integrity Committee heard testimony from some of the citizens in attendance but adjourned without giving all who wished to speak in opposition to HJR-B their opportunity to make a statement. Secretary Benson and Rep. Koleszar invited those citizens to share the impact this proposal would have on themselves and their communities at the March 10 roundtable.

Today, [the Committee passed HJR-B along party lines during a four-minute hearing](#) and adjourned without allowing citizens in attendance to speak in opposition to the proposed legislation.

"It is really easy in this moment to just tune out and walk away," **Secretary Benson said.** "Arguably, that is the goal of a lot of the noise, confusion and silencing – to make you feel like your voice doesn't matter, that it's not important. We are here today to say that is not the case. Your voices drive every aspect of government. That's the way it should be in democracy. As we think about our place in this moment and what we're fighting for, it's important we ground ourselves in who we are and what we've been able to accomplish together as voters, not politicians – sound, fair election policies that were

been able to accomplish together as voters, not politicians – sound, fair election policies that were enacted by the will of the people.”

“As Michigan state legislators, we should be honoring the will of the people and protecting every U.S. citizen’s right to vote,” **Rep. Koleszar said.** “This legislation is a spit in the face to the will of the Michigan voter and why I find it appalling that Republican legislators in the House have chosen to reverse the progress that many of their own constituents fought for. The fact is noncitizen voting is incredibly rare here in Michigan. This resolution, like the proposed SAVE Act, is a fake solution to a fake problem. The reality is this is a poll tax. Michiganders shouldn’t have to pay \$35 to \$165 out of their grocery and gas budgets to have a say in who represents them.”

“As you begin to have different standards at the state and federal level, we may find ourselves in the situation where we have two separate voter databases – individuals who may be qualified to vote for certain races but not for others, as we’ve seen in other states,” **said Canton Township Clerk Michael Siegrist.** “That has a lot of extra costs. In Canton, that would double my ballot size. So, I’m printing more ballots, doing more logic and accuracy tests and over the course of a few years that could get up to a half million dollars. That’s money that should be going into playgrounds, into police cars, into fire trucks, not into duplicating services when it does not reduce the problem’s likelihood of occurring to zero.”

“When we consider the impact of HJR-B, it’s impossible not to draw parallels between the events of March 7, 1965, in Selma, Alabama, where peaceful voting rights marchers were met with brutal violence, **said Angela Davenport, executive director of the Voting Access for All Coalition.** “Bloody Sunday marked a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement, exposing the world to the attempts to silence Black voices through intimidation, violence, and systemic barriers to the ballot box. HJR-B represent a modern-day assault on the right to vote, particularly for marginalized communities including formerly incarcerated and homeless individuals who already face significant barriers to simple participation. Like the literacy tests, poll taxes and outright threats used to suppress Black votes in the Jim Crow south, policies like HJR-B threaten to disenfranchise vulnerable populations by making it harder to access the ballot box.”

“I took it upon myself asking students on campus if they even know where their birth certificate was **said Haley Hompstead, Wayne State University student and member of the MDOS Collegiate Student Advisory Task Force.** “It is just a basic piece of paper you should have but students are not thinking about documentation like that. It is hard enough to get them to vote. I was able to talk to 1,106 students and of those students only two people knew where their birth certificate was.”

“While we would love the opportunity to vote in person, it is just not possible for our family. It is cost prohibitive to expect to fly home 2-3 times per year to vote,” **said Meghan Wieten-Scott, military spouse and Michigan voter.** “When my husband was deployed to Iraq and serving a year unaccompanied in Korea, voting by mail was his only option. By adding additional restrictions and requirements on absentee voting and voter registration in Michigan, you would suppress our right to vote as service members and military families.”

Michigan is a national leader in secure and accessible elections. The 2024 General Election was the third consecutive Michigan election with record-breaking voter turnout. Nearly 80% of all active registered voters cast a ballot last November. Michigan had the third-highest turnout rate in the nation among eligible voters – more than 10 points above the national average.

For more information on election security and how voter rolls are maintained in Michigan, visit [Michigan.gov/ElectionSecurity](https://Michigan.gov/ElectionSecurity).

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Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Rep. Matt Koleszar (D-Plymouth) hosted a Citizens Roundtable to hear from Michiganders who are concerned about proposed legislation that threatens their vote.





Canton Township Clerk Michael Siegrist was one of the Michiganders that spoke on their concerns over proposed legislation that could block millions of U.S. citizens from voting in future elections.

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