



Legislation Text

File #: 21-1867, **Version:** 1

Resolution Opposing the Secure MI Vote Petition and Any Other Efforts Aimed at Restricting Voter Access and Voter Rights

The Secure MI Vote initiative essentially aims to use a portion of the Michigan Constitution to enact initiated legislation, without voter approval at an election. This is allowed under Article II, Section 9 of the Michigan Constitution. Under these provisions, registered voters sign a petition requesting a ballot proposal, but the proposal can simply be approved by the Legislature, in lieu of a vote of the people. Legislation passed in this manner is not subject to veto by the Governor. This would allow less than 400,000 voters to approve an initiative that may not be supported by a majority of Michigan voters.

The Secure MI Vote initiative consists of many of the most restrictive portions of a 39-bill election reform package introduced earlier this year in the Legislature. The Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks Board of Directors voted to oppose many of these bills because of the undue burden placed on both voters and election officials in carrying out their duties. A survey of the MAMC membership showed that an overwhelming majority of clerks oppose this petition.

MAMC is currently working on a campaign to educate the public regarding the petition and the fact that signing it simply to “let the voters decide” or to “get it on the ballot” may actually result in helping to initiate laws with a very small minority of voters weighing in.

Approval of this resolution by City Council is requested to further inform Ann Arbor voters about the impacts of signing the petition and the restrictions on voter rights as a result of it becoming law.

Prepared by: Jacqueline Beaudry, City Clerk

Reviewed by: John Fournier, Assistant City Administrator

Sponsored by: Council Policy Agenda Committee

Whereas, The citizens of Michigan deserve to have their voices heard at the ballot box;

Whereas, State constitutional amendments to strengthen voting rights and ballot access were submitted to, and overwhelming approved by, Michigan voters as Proposal 18-3 at the November 6, 2018 general election;

Whereas, Current state legislative efforts in Michigan put ballot access at risk for vulnerable populations and walk back many of the popular reforms that have resulted in historic turnout in Michigan elections;

Whereas, The Secure MI Vote ballot initiative seeks to use a portion of the Michigan Constitution to enact proposed legislation without a vote of the electorate;

Whereas, Many Michigan voters may not realize the impact of signing the petition could potentially allow a small minority of voters to help the Legislature pass “veto-proof” legislation, restricting voter rights;

Whereas, The Secure MI Vote initiative includes some of the most restrictive portions of a 39-bill election reform package introduced earlier this year in the Michigan Legislature, placing undue burdens and restrictions on voters and election officials, including restrictions on absentee voting, stricter ID laws and limits on volunteer support of elections; and

Whereas, Ann Arbor City Council supports equitable and easier access to the ballot box through federal and state standards around early voting, absentee voting, and voter registration;

RESOLVED, That the Ann Arbor City Council opposes the Secure MI Vote initiative, and any similar efforts to limit ballot access or restrict voting rights;

RESOLVED, That the Ann Arbor City Council encourages residents to decline to sign the Secure MI Vote petition, understanding that a constitutional loophole in our referendum process could result in legislative enactment, rather than a ballot proposal that goes to the voters; and

RESOLVED, That the Ann Arbor City Council directs the City Administrator to forward a copy of this Resolution to the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Michigan Senate, the Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, the Minority Leader of the Michigan House of Representatives, and all elected officials representing Ann Arbor in the Michigan House and Senate.

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Eyer, Radina, Briggs, Griswold, Song, Disch, Ramlawi, Nelson and Mayor Taylor