

# Clinton County Democratic Party Newsletter



January 2026

**"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward."**

- Martin Luther King, Jr., from his April, 1960 address at Spelman College



## **What Are You Doing to Keep Democracy Moving Forward?**

*By Kathie Elliott.* Recent presidential elections have been dubbed “the most consequential elections of our lifetime.” Tuesday, November 3, is both the most consequential election of our lifetime, AND the most consequential mid-term election of our lifetime. Though, in truth, it appears that each and every day requires vigilance, protest, and action. Our fractured and rapidly eroding democratic institutions may not make it through the 250th birthday of this nation, let alone noon on January 20, 2029.

For those of us who love this country, democracy, the rule of law, and our neighbors, the events of the past few weeks have escalated the blatant challenges to our democracy in both frequency and severity. No one who wants this nation to uphold its constitutional principles and sustain the painful growth and improvements we've experienced in the last 250 years can afford to stay silent or comfortable. In contrast, everyone who wants our democracy to topple, transferring power into the hands of the elite, OR to other nations, is fearlessly and overtly taking every chance they can to make you feel afraid or overwhelmed, just like they are taking every chance to brainwash the ill-informed to serve as their voice, hands, and feet. Half of our population is acting in ways that ensure their own demise.

We are walking on a razor's edge, and the hope for victory, the belief that victory is possible, is no assurance of victory. The belief in good over evil and light conquering dark are only myths unless, with every ounce of physical and emotional strength we have in us, we work together to intentionally and definitively fight to honor the intentions set forth 250 years ago. This is the time to recognize your own fear and discomfort over what is being asked of you, and, frankly, give yourselves a good shake and stern lecture. Run, walk, crawl; yell, speak, or write, but for the love of this democracy that has asked nothing of you before now, find the courage to do every single thing you can regardless of the discomfort you feel. Taking yourself out of the fight means the already delicate balance of power in this war is down a soldier. We are neighbor against neighbor, family against family, standing facing one another with our hands on the rope of democracy, trying to pull the other side to us, and we're at even strength. Do not take a knee, do not let go, do not let up. And, do not underestimate the criticality of the times we are in. As Democrats in Clinton County, we must perform above any and all expectations held for this small rural county in Michigan. So, what are you doing to keep this democracy moving forward? We welcome your strength and participation with open arms and an unshakeable, united purpose.



## CCDP January Meeting Recap & Reminders

*By Kathie Elliott.* Did you miss our January meeting? It was jam-packed with great content, so we wanted to be sure to give everyone an update. We kicked off with guest speakers Liam Richichi, Chair of MI 7th Congressional District Democrats, and Kody Vitale,

Michigan Democratic Party's Regional Political Specialist. Liam and Kody provided updates on plans for 2026 and how Clinton County Dems can engage at higher levels within the state Democratic party. Much discussion centered on the critical April 19 State Nominating Convention, including member voting eligibility, transportation, agenda, and positions that are up for nomination. Some candidates in important races on the ticket this November will be decided by a vote of MDP members in attendance at the April 19 convention and **not** in the August primary. We will continue to discuss the convention at upcoming meetings and share updates via social media and email between meetings so everyone remains up-to-date on membership deadlines and other important details.

Due to the ongoing, aggressive, anti-democratic tactics of this administration,

we are already overwhelmed in this first half of January with their concerning actions which then drive an abundance of events that pop up, often on short notice. In addition, we are planning the typical events that occur in an election year. We ask members to keep CCDP informed of protests, events, and training that they are aware of that other members may be interested in since the sheer number of such events is hard to keep up with. We also strongly encourage members to regularly check our member-only materials like the upcoming events list and member resources documents, which we keep current as information is made available to us.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, February 5, in DeWitt, with expected guests Representative Penelope Tsernoglou and Representative Emily Dievendorf. Please plan to join us as this is a great way to hear from your state representatives, meet other Clinton County Democrats, and to hear about the good work we are doing. The complete agenda and further details will be sent to our email list the week before the meeting. If you have questions, or want to verify/update your email address, [please email us](#). See you on February 5!



## "We're in This Together"

*By Melany Mack.* These four words are used to sign off on Substack posts by Joyce Vance, a former U.S. Attorney in the Obama administration. It is good to be reminded of this. The new year has barely begun, and

already we've been hit by a barrage of horrid headlines, from the illegal action by Trump's minions in Venezuela to the killing of a civilian in Minnesota by ICE. It seems like we are experiencing one gut punch after another. It's dizzying. It's frustrating. It's profoundly discouraging. But, as Vance says in her recent book *Giving Up is Unforgivable*, we cannot give up and walk away. She says that the moment we are living in challenges us to understand how our system of government works, what rights we have, and how we can use the power we have to ensure that tyranny cannot take permanent root in this country.

The not-too-distant past provides two examples. Think about the nonviolent resistance of Gandhi and his followers in the revolution against the British Raj in India. Or consider the Civil Rights movement in our own country. In both countries, great harm was being done by ordinary people over time as if it were normal. It was harm inflicted because those doing the harm were not forced to think about what they were doing. In India it was thousands upon thousands of people thoughtlessly doing their jobs in service to the British Raj. In the American South, it was all those who unthinkingly accepted and imposed Jim Crow laws and social norms. Yet, as Elizabeth Minnich points out in *The*

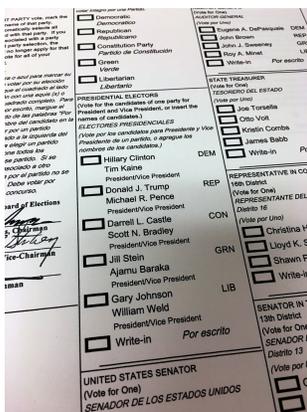
*Evil of Banality: On the Life and Death Importance of Thinking*, “where great harm is being done by ordinary people over time as if it were normal, it may be combated by ordinary people refusing to stop being ordinary—if there are enough, if they are ready, if they...are able to understand what they are doing as part of a system that they are serving.” Minnich’s words are directed at us, ordinary folks afraid that our democracy is failing, who want to do whatever we can do to reverse that course.

On New Year’s Day, Robert Reich published a list of **10 Crucial Things You Can Do in 2026**. CCDP regularly shares information about ways you can be involved in our community. Local organizations like **Peace Education Center** and **Indivisible Michigan 7th District** are great resources for information and opportunities for action. We might not be able to do everything, but each of us can do something. And together we can make a difference.



## Under the Dome: Insights from Tim Hughes

CCDP is grateful for the continued contributions of local Democratic insider Tim Hughes. His latest **Under the Dome** contribution covers what we need to know about Michigan's minimum wage increase, efforts to rule the Republican-led and widely criticized state budget cuts unconstitutional, and what's at stake for the Michigan Senate due to a special election taking place just to our north. You can find Tim's latest Under the Dome piece on [our website](#). Please be sure to share with your colleagues, friends and neighbors!



## Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: What You Need to Know about Two Dangerous Ballot Proposals

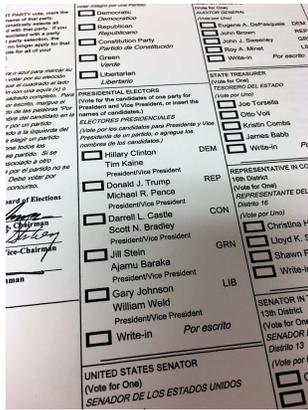
*By Melany Mack.* Two of the ballot proposals currently circulating in Michigan, **Protect Voters Rights and Americans for Citizen Voting**, are truly wolves in sheep clothing. Both proposals would amend our state constitution, and both need 446,198 signatures to be collected within a 180-day window. Although the petitions sound innocuous, if enacted, voters’ rights in our state would be significantly set back as state and federal laws already prohibit noncitizens from voting. Here's an accurate summary of each:

**Protect Voters' Rights (approved by Board of Canvassers on 4/18/25; backed by Committee to Protect Voters Rights):** This initiative goes beyond the requirements of current federal law which require that new voter registrants must attest they are citizens, but they don't have to present documentary proof. If enacted, new registrants would be required to provide proof of citizenship by producing a birth certificate, passport, or other documentation. *Election officials and voting rights groups across Michigan have criticized the proposal as potentially disenfranchising voters.* The proposal does not mention the specific documents a voter could use to prove their citizenship. Concerns have been raised that women who changed their names after marriage might face difficulties proving their citizenship. Other voters who may lack documentation for a variety of reasons could also face challenges. Proof of citizenship requirements have been compared to a poll tax because the expense and effort required in procuring proper documentation pose unfair barriers to some voters.

**Americans for Citizen Voting (approved by BOC 7/10/25; originally there were two versions, but one was withdrawn so only this one is circulating; backed by Americans for Citizen Voting, a product of the Virginia-based libertarian Liberty Initiative Fund):** This petition is very similar to Protect Voters Rights, but it goes further. If enacted, it would require proof of citizenship for all voters through a statewide program, and the affidavit alternative for voters without photo ID would be eliminated. Proof of citizenship would be established by showing birth certificate, passport, or other documents to the election administrator within six days of the election. The initiative would require that the Secretary of State must verify that only US citizens are registered to vote, and it mandates that the Michigan Department of State regularly review and purge voter rolls of individuals whose citizenship status cannot be verified. Photo ID, driver's license, or partial Social Security number would be required to vote absentee. Opponents of this initiative point to barriers to voting for those who don't have ID readily available or who might not be able to afford it. The measure would provide free ID cards to those facing hardships, but this does not eliminate the extra time and effort that would be required to establish hardship and to secure such a card. Violators of this proposal's requirements would face fines of up to \$1,000 and/or up to five years imprisonment.

It's easy to be misled into signing petitions like these since the language describing what the ballot proposal would do is limited to 100 words. Significantly, circulators have no obligation to provide accurate or detailed information about the petition, and, in fact, some have been known to deliberately mislead potential signers in the past. It's good to remember that many of those circulating petitions are doing so, not because they believe in what the petition aims to change, but because they are paid for every signature they collect. Be sure you know what you are signing before you add your name

to one of these petitions!



## Constitutional Convention on 2026 Ballot

*By Melany Mack.* Did you know that every 16 years Michigan voters are asked to cast ballots on whether to revise the state's constitution in a convention of elected delegates? The question will be Proposal 1 on the ballot on November 3, 2026. Our current constitution was ratified in 1963, and voters rejected, by wide margins, calls for convention rewrites in 1978, 1994, and 2010. Read [Bridge Michigan's excellent and informative article](#) about this issue and its implications



## Podcast Recommendation: Skills to Defy an Empire

*By Shelby Neathammer.* What does it mean to be in relation with one another, truly? Community feels like such a buzzword now, and yet most of us know it is important. So, how exactly do we engage with this broad concept in concrete ways? In the year-old, sadly still relevant podcast episode, "[Building Relational Skills to Defy Empire](#)" from *Rich Queer Aunties with Christabel and Kachi*, the hosts challenge us not only to build community but also to build the soft, relational skills we need to exist within it.

Capitalism forces most of us to think transactionally about our time, our labor, and, unfortunately, our relationships. Many people struggle to unlearn this concept and to learn the embodiment of genuine reciprocity. Reciprocity requires, among other things, skills in conflict repair and willingness to be uncomfortable--expertise that people too often do not feel confident about. The lack of these skills is not an individual failing; it is the system working exactly as intended. If we fear one another and therefore lack trust, it is easier to put people in a state of turning away from each other rather than towards. As discussed on the podcast, we all have a personal responsibility to take stock of how we engage relationally and to shore up these skills as needed.

The podcast hosts demonstrate that community can be not only an antidote to the systems that are stripping democracy, but also a form of resistance. As is

said on the show, “the more we can rely on each other, the less we rely on them.” So, as you approach communal relationships, how does perfection or fear of failure prevent you from connecting more deeply? And what does it mean to care deeply while sitting with the discomfort it can sometimes bring? Answers to these questions and more are available in this podcast episode, available wherever you stream.



## Remembering Dr. King through Action

*By Ann McCulloch.* There is no better way to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., than by using our voice and our presence in our communities. On Sunday, January 18 at 3:00 p.m., join the MSU College of Music for its [Jazz: Spirituals, Prayer and Protest Concert](#) at Fairchild Theatre. The annual event blends music and message to honor Dr. King’s legacy. The event is free, but tickets are required.

On January 19 at 11:00 a.m., consider attending the [2026 MLK Luncheon](#), a signature event sponsored by the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Commission of Mid Michigan, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the legacy and teachings of Dr. King by supporting community agencies and empowering youth to achieve educational goals.

Can't make either of those? The MSU Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration Planning Committee is hosting a running "Stuff the Library" event through February 28 to help school libraries obtain more books about social justice and characters from different backgrounds. [Click here](#) for more information about how you can donate materials or funds.

It has never been more important to follow the example set by Dr. King. May we remember, especially in this dangerous turbulence, his words in *Strength to Love* that "the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."



## Important! Key Membership Renewal Deadlines

Please note the upcoming membership renewal deadlines in order to be able to vote in the County

Convention and State Nominating Convention:

**February 26 – Deadline for CCDP/MDP Membership in Order to Be Eligible to Vote at March 28 County Convention.**

**March 20–Deadline for CCDP/MDP Membership in Order to Be Eligible to Vote at April 19 State Convention, Constituency Caucus meetings, or Congressional District Caucus.**

Want to know if you're a member? [Email us](#) and we can confirm. You can join or renew your membership with CCDP/MDP by [clicking here](#). *Note that free memberships available as well and every membership makes a difference.* A [printable application](#) is also available. We need all hands on deck this year, so please join or renew today!



## Upcoming Events: Your Chance to Get Involved

**January 18 - Virtual CCDP Banquet Planning Meeting, 2:00 p.m.** [Email us](#) if you would like to serve on the planning committee.

**January 18 - Virtual Secretary of State Candidate Forum, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.,** [register online](#).

**January 20 - Virtual MDP Convention Prep 101, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.** More information, including how to RSVP, can be found [here](#).

**January 21 - Virtual League of Women Voters of Michigan "No Red Tape" Panel Discussion, 7:00 p.m.,** on the impact of November ballot proposals. [RSVP here](#).

**January 22 - Virtual CCDP Communications Committee Meeting, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.** [Email us](#) if you are interested in serving on this committee.

**January 26 – Community Conversation with State Senator Sam Singh, 6:00 -7:00 p.m.,** DeWitt Public Library Annex, 13101 Schavey Road. For more information, [click here](#).

**January 27 - Virtual CCDP Resolutions Subcommittee Meeting, 7:00 p.m.** [Email us](#) if you are interested in serving on this subcommittee.

**February 5 - CCDP Membership Meeting:** DeWitt City Hall, 414 East Main Street, DeWitt. Social time begins at 6:30 p.m. with the meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m.

[Join CCDP/MDP or Renew Your CCDP/MDP Membership](#)



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