



CLINTON COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

NEWSLETTER

A Message from the Chairman

The summer has slipped away and, although Labor Day is behind us, it's always good to remember that each year the first Monday in September is designated to celebrate the social and economic progress achieved by workers. We know that unions have been essential in achieving higher wages and better working conditions, but did you know that labor unions were also essential in the expansion of civil rights? That topic is covered in "Organized Labor and Civil Rights: Not Mutually Exclusive," an informative article by Logan Byrne, candidate for the 93rd state House seat.

You've probably heard that "democracy is not a spectator sport." That old saying has always been true but never more so than now. In Under the Dome you'll find information about a recently launched petition drive that will make it more difficult to vote. Check out Citizens' Corner to learn about proposed legislation to limit the ability of local municipalities to control applications for mining permits in their jurisdictions. Find tools that will help you advocate for important issues such as these in "Working for Change: Tools for Advocates." These are just a few of the informative articles you'll find in this issue.



Meetings have begun to apportion the county into commission districts based on the 2020 Census. As chair of Clinton County Democratic Party, I serve on the County Apportionment Commission. Other members include Diane Zuker, County Clerk, Tina Ward, County Treasurer, Tony Spagnuolo, Prosecuting Attorney, and Jenell Leonard, Republican Party Chair. Newly drawn commission districts will be required since the population in the southern tier of the county has increased. The Apportionment Commission's next meeting is October 5 at 7pm at the County Court House. Please attend if you can. The work is important, and your presence will show there is interest in a fair apportionment process.

There is a lot going on, and we need everyone—and that means YOU—to be engaged in making our democracy work. I will leave you with the immortal words of Pete Seeger: "Participation - that's what's gonna save the human race."

*Yours in solidarity,
Eric Schlenkermann*

Under the Dome

Legislative Update for Clinton County Democrats

By Tim Hughes



September 27, 2021

Hero Pay for Essential Workers Before Legislature

As we celebrate Labor Day 2021, it is appropriate that a proposal has been put forth in the Michigan Legislature that would honor and respect essential workers for the work they do on the frontlines of the fight against Covid 19.

Resolutions have been introduced in the House and Senate urging lawmakers to use a portion of Michigan's \$6.5 billion in funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to award Hero Pay to these frontline workers who not only put their health at risk, but the health of their families as well.



In guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury, states and cities are allowed to use federal aid to offer essential workers higher pay, noting that they “have and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors.”

SR 73, introduced by Senator Marshall Bullock (D-Detroit) and HR 132, sponsored by Representative Cynthia Neeley (D-Flint), urges the legislature to use “federal funding to provide ‘hero pay’ to frontline and essential workers.”

“These are people from grocery stores, hospitals, schools, mass transit, and other industries, who went to work every day knowing they risked bringing home a deadly virus to their own families,” said Senator Bullock. “They had little choice but to continue to work, have sacrificed the most to

keep our economy running and they simply deserve more pay for their efforts.”

“We owe a debt of gratitude to our essential workers that we can never truly repay,” Rep. Neeley said. “The least we can do is provide them with financial compensation that measures up to the tremendous service they’ve given to our communities and their work in helping us through the pandemic.”

Governor Gretchen Whitmer joined in support of the effort, saying “The hundreds of thousands of folks who worked through the pandemic to keep the rest of us going, embody what being a Michigander is all about: you care for your neighbors, you work hard, you get it done no matter the odds.”

Michigan AFL-CIO President Ron Bieber urged Michigan citizens to join him in urging legislators to allocate money for Hero Pay in the state budget by [writing to your legislator today](#).

“The brave men and women who have risked their health and safety on the front lines while facing down a deadly virus have been called heroes, but too often we’ve failed to treat them like heroes,” said Bieber. “Fifteen months into this crisis, it’s past time our actions as a state lined up with our rhetoric. It’s time to reward frontline workers for the many sacrifices they’ve made for their families and for all of us. Please tell lawmakers in Lansing to give our sisters and brothers the Hero Pay they have earned.”

Republicans Launch Petition Drive to Make it Harder to Vote

State Republicans are promoting ballot proposal language submitted to the State Board of Canvassers that makes it harder for Michigan citizens to cast a vote on Election Day.

The Board has until October 1st to approve or reject the petition language, proposed by a Republican backed organization called Secure MI Vote. If approved by the Board, Republicans are expected to begin circulating the initiative petition.

Democratic leaders are encouraging voters to not sign the petitions and oppose the proposal.

If Republicans are successful in getting 340,047 valid signatures, the petition would go directly to the state legislature.

If approved by the House and Senate, it would become law without the Governor’s signature. If not approved by the legislature, the proposal would go before the voters at the next general election.

Backers of the proposal claim that it would require voter ID to vote, but current law already requires a voter to present photo ID to election workers at the polls. If a voter doesn’t have photo ID, they can sign a form attesting to their identity and cast a provisional ballot. That ballot is valid unless subsequent investigation by the local clerk finds that the voter is not the person they claim to be. Typically, the clerk compares signatures from the provisional ballot with voter registration files. Under the Republican proposal, the ballot wouldn’t be counted unless the voter made a trip to the local clerk’s office within 6 days of the election to present photo ID.

Other aspects of the voter suppression plan would prohibit state and local election officials from sending absentee voter applications (not ballots) to registered voters unless they specifically ask for them.

It also requires absentee voters to give election clerks their driver license number, state identification card number or the last four digits of their Social Security number in order to vote absentee.

The new GOP initiative is about "creating barriers to voting so fewer people have access to the polls," said Lavora Barnes, Chair of the Michigan Democratic Party.

"Michigan Republicans will try every trick in the book to confuse and intimidate voters," Barnes said. "They want fewer people to vote because they just discovered what we have always known: When people vote, Democrats win."



Citizens' Corner

By Theresa Kidd

Both the Senate and House are back in session this month so watch for Republican shenanigans. They are hard at work messing with Democrats and our individual freedoms as you will see below. Please notice the ACTION recommendation after each topic. Hopefully you will see fit to participate in some of the suggested actions. We all need to stay informed and active in our government right now as it seems to be teetering on the edge of its own existence. Remember, being an American Citizen comes with responsibilities. Then, after you've fulfilled your civic duty, go relax with a glass of your favorite beverage and feel good about your participation. We're with you!

OCTOBER 2 RALLY – MI BODY MI CHOICE

A rally is being organized for October 2 at 12:00 Noon at the Michigan State Capitol. Organizers are responding to the recent anti-women legislation in Texas that bans abortions after six weeks gestation and its support in the U.S. Supreme Court. Several other states are considering similar legislation(including, possibly, [Michigan!](#)). Click [this link](#) for details.

ACTION: Share & Attend Rally

MINING BILLS IN HOUSE AND SENATE

Senate Bills 0429, 0430, and 0431 were introduced and passed in the State Senate this year. The bills currently sit in the House Committee on Local Government and Municipal Finance. If enacted, this legislation would take away what little power local municipalities currently have to regulate or to deny mining permits and gives the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) the full right to grant use permits and mine locations. These bills should concern residents of Clinton County.

The impact of mining pits to surrounding land, nearby neighborhoods, property values, and quality of life are all concerns that residents should be able to voice when a mining pit is located near them. These bills allow for those concerns to be ignored. At least now, if opponents show “very serious consequences” of the pit, the local municipality can deny the permit. Not so with these bills because local governments will no longer have the power to put any regulations/restrictions on sand and gravel pit mining.



Clinton County resident, Johanna Balzer, wrote Representative Graham Filler, asking him to oppose the bills. Here are the concerns she shared with Representative Filler:

Usually when applying for a permit, mine owners say the pit will only run for four or five years. Rather, they usually run for decades. The one near me has operated for over 50 years.

With zoning restrictions lifted a few years ago, a mine can be permitted almost anywhere there is aggregate. In my DeWitt Township neighborhood, near Gunnisonville Corners, another mine has been proposed next to a subdivision. This would affect nearly 300 residents, many of whom have lived there for decades. Supporters of such bills should consider that a mine may be coming to their neighborhood.

Mining operations are noisy and dusty. Local municipalities can now set hours and days of operation.

If these bills pass, Monday – Saturday pits can run from before sunrise to after sunset with truck reversal beeps, clanking tailgates, banging front loaders dumping material into trailers and headlights glaring into people’s bedrooms.

I have friends who live near a pit that begins operations by 6:00 a.m. For over 25 years they have awakened to the racket, including Saturdays, during mining seasons.

There are too many local circumstances to list, but for example, the trucks leaving the pit in my neighborhood would spread mud trailings onto our blacktop road.

I was able to bring this up at my local DeWitt Township Board meeting when the pit operators were asking for an extension of their permit. They made good on their promise at the meeting to take measures to clean the truck tires before entering the road. Would EGLE rectify such local annoyances if they were responsible for monitoring the mining pits?

ACTION: Share & Contact Legislators & [Track these bills here.](#)
For the Senate summary of the bills, [go here.](#)

What’s New with the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission

By Tina Andrews

As of September 17, 2021, the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) will have completed its first year of work. [Click here](#) to see a timeline of the work the MICRC is doing. Currently, the commission is working on drafting maps for congressional, state house, and state senate seats. The commission is not in charge of redrawing district lines for county commissioners; this responsibility remains at the local level. Redrawing district lines occurs every ten years when the census is complete. Because Michigan lost population overall, the state is losing one congressional seat. How the state house and senate seats are apportioned will be determined by the change in population density throughout the state.



If you would like to give input into how maps are drawn, there is still time! You can go to the MICRC website and click on [“submit public comment.”](#) From there you can submit your comments, and maps, four ways: by congressional, state senate, or state house seat, or by community of interest. You will also find tutorials on how to draw maps using several online programs. If you prefer, you can give your comments in person or attend meetings virtually. Follow this [link](#) to see the meeting schedule, or subscribe to receive meeting notices directly to your inbox.

Did I hear you ask what is a community of interest? Here is what MICRC has to say about that: Respecting communities of interest is a crucial part of the Michigan redistricting process; the Michigan Constitution states that “Communities of interest may include, but shall not be limited to, populations that share cultural or historical characteristics or economic interests.” They do not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates. When you identify your community for the Commission, they can be better informed about how to draw fair lines that give all Michiganders a voice. One idea for a community of interest is keeping the tri-county area (Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham counties) together in a congressional district. [Click here](#) to see a map that can be submitted to MICRC.

Time is running short to submit your comments so don’t delay in making your voice heard!

Organized Labor and Civil Rights: Not Mutually Exclusive

By Logan Byrne

As a young attorney, advocate for the underserved, and candidate for state representative, I am dedicated to the protection and expansion of civil liberties in Michigan. Essential to the expansion of these rights is the support of organized labor. Civil rights activists and labor unions have passionately fought for progress designed to respect and safeguard individuals. It is my belief that strong labor unions are essential to the continued progress of civil rights.

Concerted attacks on the labor movement are largely against women and minorities as well as less-educated men in the workplace. Economic fairness is a necessity in a fair and equitable society. Importantly, labor unions are well-positioned to hold employers accountable and ensure that all individuals have the opportunity for economic growth – regardless of their race, gender or other protected characteristic.

Labor unions have proven themselves effective tools in civil rights progress. For example, in the early 1900s, labor unions helped propel eastern and southern European immigrants into the broader economy, which culminated in a strong American middle class. Now, labor unions and civil rights activists have unfinished business: economic equity for women and minority workers.

Women in the workplace face a variety of barriers, such as discrimination based on sex and gender, stereotypes, undervaluation of work, and pay inequity. Moreover, women are frequently pushed out of the workplace for becoming pregnant or breastfeeding. Likewise, minority populations face discrimination and a similar assortment of workplace inequities. Minority women face both sets of barriers simultaneously.

What does this have to do with labor unions? The modern labor movement has a strong commitment to organizing women and minority populations. Simply put, a strong labor movement is the quickest path to economic opportunity for underserved communities. Union members are more likely to have health care benefits, paid time off, and sick leave. Unions also bring a less tangible but equally important benefit to employees: fair treatment and dignity. Importantly, unions can help end workplace discrimination by negotiating for contracts that set uniform pay levels and procedures for promotions and job assignments. Well-formed contracts are instrumental in promoting equity in the workplace.

At the AFL-CIO's annual convention in 1961, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. eloquently stated that the needs of minority populations "are identical with labor's needs: decent wages, fair working conditions, livable housing, old-age security, health and welfare measures, conditions in which families can grow, have education for their children, and respect in the community." Civil rights are important to the majority of Americans, as they are to me. As such, Michigan needs strong labor laws designed to facilitate a healthy relationship between unions and employers and the strong labor movement essential to ensuring economic justice for women and minority populations.



**Logan Byrne is running
for State Representative**

[Logan's Website](#)

[Logan's Facebook Page](#)

What's fair about this?

By Melany Mack

What's fair about the Secure MI Vote petition initiative that was recently launched by Republicans? Nothing! The petition incorporates the language of a 39-bill package introduced by Republicans in March to make voting more difficult in our state. It is the first step in a plan to bypass Governor Gretchen Whitmer who has promised to veto [any legislation making it harder to vote](#).

If they successfully gather 340,047 valid signatures, the state Legislature can pass the proposed law—without it ever reaching the ballot-- with a simple majority vote in each chamber.

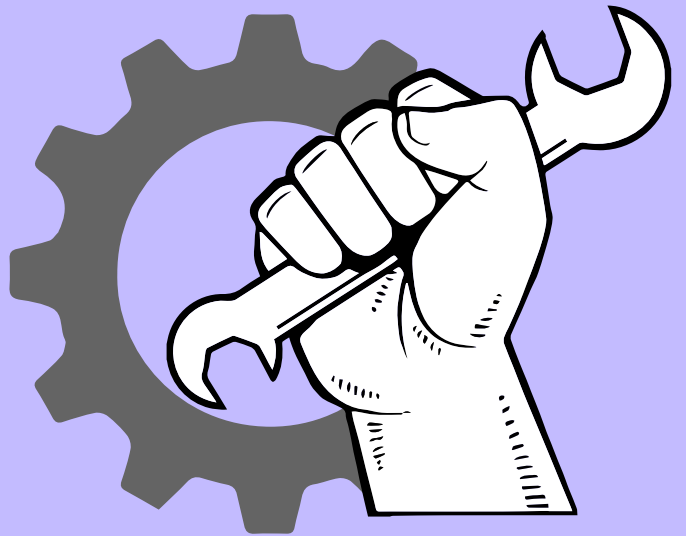
Republicans currently hold majorities in both the Senate and the House, and such a measure cannot be vetoed by the governor. What's fair about 340,047 voters overturning the will of 2,777,998 voters who passed Proposal 3 in 2018 by a two-to-one margin, making voting easier and more accessible?

And what's fair about [circulators lying](#) about the contents of the petitions they are circulating? Michigan is one of just a few states that [do not prohibit lying](#) or any other unethical behavior that could be used to solicit signatures from Michigan voters.

There's nothing fair about any of this! But you can help by declining to sign the Secure MI Vote petition if you are asked to and by urging your family, friends, and neighbors to decline to sign as well.

Learn more from the Detroit Free Press ([Michigan Republicans plan to launch petition drive to pursue voting overhaul](#)) and from Vox ([The next voting rights battleground is Michigan](#)).

THANK A UNION



For many, Labor Day marks the unofficial end of summer. Picnics give way to tailgate parties. Shorter days, changing leaves, and fresh, sweet corn mark the season. But, Labor Day has a serious purpose. It celebrates the contributions that labor unions have made to our modern lives. Whether you are a union member or not, we all benefit from their collective action. Many of the key events in the labor movement happened right here in Clinton County.

Worker Rights

- Civil-rights
- Collective Bargaining
- Wrongful Termination Laws
- Age Discrimination Laws
- Sexual Harassment Laws
- Americans with Disabilities Act

Fair Compensation

- Pay Raises
- Social Security
- Workers' Compensation
- Equal Pay Act
- Minimum Wage
- Overtime Pay

Quality of Life

- 8-Hour Work Days
- Weekends
- Paid Vacations
- Breaks
- Holiday Pay
- Military Leave

Health & Safety

- OSHA
- Health Care
- Dental & Vision
- Family Medical Leave
- Paid Sick Leave
- Child Labor Laws

"The middle class built America and unions built the middle class," Joe Biden

The PRO Act of 2021

Protecting the Right to Organize

By Melany Mack

The PRO Act has been described as the most comprehensive labor law bill since Taft Hartley. It passed the House (H.R.242) on March 11, 2021 on a bipartisan vote of 225-206. If approved by the Senate (S.420), it would strengthen the ability of private sector workers to form unions and bargain collectively for fair wages and better working conditions. The Senate bill currently has 46 co-sponsors, including both Senators Stabenow and Peters. The AFL-CIO provides an excellent [summary](#) of what the PRO Act will accomplish. It has been reported that Majority Leader Schumer will bring S.420 to the floor for a vote when there are 50 co-sponsors. The three Democratic senators who have not signed on to the bill are Kyrsten Sinema and Mark Kelly of Arizona and Mark Warner of Virginia.



Passage of the PRO Act is important to the greater good of all, not just to union members. In addition to the usual advantages of strong unions (bargaining for fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions and protections against unjustified job loss and discriminatory or unfair employer behavior), there are [other benefits](#) that are often overlooked. Strong unions help to limit corporate capture of public institutions in which companies lobby legislatures, policymakers, and government agencies to weaken workers' rights. Another benefit of strong labor unions is increased civic participation of union members. Voter turnout has declined in recent years along with union membership. The decline in unions has also harmed our democracy, according to "[Power and politics in the US workplace](#)", a recent report by the Economic Policy Institute.

In 2020, after several decades of decline, the rate of union membership in the U.S. stood at only 10.8%--[substantially lower than other modern industrialized countries](#). The PRO Act, if passed, will help reduce the substantial impediments many workers in the U.S. face when they try to exercise their right to organize and bargain collectively. It will override "right-to-work" laws in many states,—including Michigan-- one of its most significant provisions. The PRO Act was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on February 24, 2021. There has been no further Senate action. Check Clinton County Democrats' [Facebook page](#) and [website](#) for future updates about this important legislation.