

September 9, 2021

Jonathan Brater
Director of Elections
Richard H. Austin Building
430 W. Allegan 1st Floor
Lansing, Michigan 48918

Re: *Objections to Secure MI Vote Petition Summary*

Dear Director Brater:

On behalf of the Voters Not Politicians Ballot Committee (Voters Not Politicians or VNP), I write to object to the Petition Summary submitted by “Secure MI Vote” and to propose alternate language for your consideration.

Voters Not Politicians is a nonpartisan organization that works to strengthen democracy by engaging people across Michigan in effective citizen action. VNP sponsored the voter-initiated ballot proposal to amend the Michigan Constitution to create Michigan’s Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, which was approved overwhelmingly by the voters in 2018. VNP has a continuing interest in protecting the People’s right to propose beneficial changes by voter initiative. We write today to protect against the misuse of the process by Secure MI Vote.

As you know, MCL 168.482b(1)(b) requires a petition summary to be a “true and impartial statement of the purpose of the proposed amendment...in language that does not create prejudice for or against the proposed amendment...”

The Petition Summary proposed by Secure MI Vote, however, reads like a campaign mailer and fails to satisfy these requirements. **Nearly every representation the summary makes about what the current law is, and what the petition would do, is untrue and/or not impartial.**

- First, the clause “to protect the right to vote and increase confidence in the conduct of elections by requiring photo identification before casting a ballot” suggests that a photo ID is not needed currently -- that is **not true**. Michigan Election Law already requires photo ID to cast a ballot. MCL 168.523(1). The amendments that the sponsor proposes would make it more difficult for a person who arrives to vote without the required photo identification, but the

underlying photo identification requirement already exists. Additionally, the assertion that the proposed amendment, which would clearly make it more difficult for people to vote, would “protect the right to vote” is disingenuous and **not impartial**. Likewise, whether such changes to the process would “increase confidence in elections” is at best a matter of opinion that is strongly disputed, and is **not impartial** at all.

- The clause to “increase participation by providing free photo identification to anyone needing it to vote” is also **absurd**. The purpose of the amendments is clearly to decrease voter participation by making it more difficult for those who may not have identification or forget to bring it on Election Day. In addition, a person can obtain photo identification for free right now. Finally, the reason why someone might need to obtain this new form of identification, which is created solely to make it more onerous for people to vote, is never even explained in the Petition Summary.
- The last clause “to protect election integrity by prohibiting special interest funding of elections” also has no business being in the Petition Summary. The proposed amendments would eliminate all private funding, including for voter registration and election security. Moreover, the term “special interest” is not defined, is a matter of opinion, and is a **misleadingly narrow** description of what the amendments would actually prohibit.
- Finally, the Petition Summary **fails to explain what the proposed amendments would actually do**, including to fundamentally change the process required for persons who do not have photo identification, by not allowing them to vote a regular ballot, not allowing their ballot to be counted on election day and requiring them to go to a clerk’s office within 6 days after the election with certain specified forms of identification in order to have their vote ever be counted. Moreover, absentee ballot applications cannot be just sent to people, which obviously makes voting easier and more accessible, nor can they even be provided online absent a specific request. Local clerks would also be given access to highly personal sensitive information for all voters in their area, including social security and driver’s license numbers, without any protection or safeguards. A person cannot even register to vote without providing the last four digits of their social security number.

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For all of the foregoing reasons, we ask that you prepare a completely new summary of the Secure MI Vote petition that is in fact “true and impartial” as required by law. For your consideration, we attach a proposed petition summary that we believe more accurately and objectively describes the proposed amendments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N.Wang', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nancy Wang
Executive Director

Encl.: Proposed Petition Summary

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Proposed Petition Summary

An initiation of legislation to amend the Michigan Election Law to: (i) require voters without photo ID to vote provisional ballots not counted on election day; (ii) require such voters to bring acceptable ID to the clerk's office within 6 days to have their vote counted; (iii) require personally identifiable information on absentee ballot and registration applications; (iv) prohibit election officials from sending or providing online absentee ballot applications without receiving a specific request; (v) provide social security and driver's license information to all local clerks without safeguards; and (vi) prohibit the use of non-taxpayer funding sources, including for voter registration and election security.

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