

Republican Power Grab

Since the Nov election the gerrymander protected Republican dominated Michigan Legislature has sought to subvert the statewide election results, which Democrats won by 7%, by attempting to push a flurry of bills through the lame duck session of the legislature. The effort to beat the clock is an attempt to diminish the power of the incoming Democratic Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, and the State Board of Education. This effort is an unprecedented attack on the norms of the electoral process and the democratic values we hold dear. It is one that is being duplicated in other states as well. Check out North Carolina and Wisconsin.

Some of the proposed power shifts and gifts to donors are listed below.

The Republicans have proposed bills that would allow the legislature to intervene in some legal proceedings affecting the state that have always been the responsibility of the governor and attorney general.

They seek to shift oversight of campaign finance from the secretary of state to a commission that would include representatives of political parties.

They have submitted a bill that would make it harder for citizen groups to place initiatives like the gerrymandering and marijuana proposals passed in Nov, in front of the voters to be voted on.

They have suggested that the power of the secretary of state to police nonprofits be limited by not allowing the public disclosure of campaign donors effectively shielding the donations of "dark money" campaign contributors and creating less transparency.

In addition the republicans in the legislature have continued their attack on unions that began with their right to work legislation, by attempting to require public employee unions to submit for recertification every two years and disallowing paid release time to union officials pursuing union business.

They would also like to restrict the expansion of voting rights the citizens of the state supported overwhelmingly in the midterm election by shaping the redistricting process.

They have proposed that schools be given letter grades A-F by a commission that would bypass the State Board of Education

They would like to remove wetland protection from 70,000 wetland areas and open those areas to development.

In an unbelievably cynical move they have gutted the increase in the minimum wage and the paid sick leave provision of a bill they previously passed in order to keep the proposed increases off the Nov ballot because they believed the public would vote for them.

You can find a more complete list of the lame duck power grab in Bridge Magazine online.

Why this sudden interest in subverting democracy? Why is the public being shut out of the process? Why were these proposals not introduced before the election so the voters could consider them before going to the polls?

One could reach the conclusion that this was a preplanned attempt to protect big money campaign contributors since many of the ideas proposed were created in "Think Tanks" that are supported by the same people who provide large campaign contributions to the legislators. The legislators are acting like

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boxcars on a moving train being pulled by a locomotive driven by the big money donor class. The citizens of Michigan are treated like bystanders watching the train roll by, their voting rights being run over in a rush to preserve the donor classes political power. This kind of cynical politics cannot stand. The people of Michigan will be watching and remembering. See you in court and at the ballot box.