



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

Election Expectations Press Conference Prepared Remarks
Monday, Nov. 2, 2020, 2 p.m.

Thank you all for joining me. Today I want to speak on three topics:

- What to expect at our polls tomorrow and our efforts to ensure every voter's health and safety will be protected
- What to expect after our polls close tomorrow and the timing of our election results
- What we need from every voter and all of you as we prepare to counter misinformation and disinformation in the days ahead.

First, our polling places will be safe for all voters tomorrow. The silver lining this year is that even in the midst of a pandemic, Michigan voters have numerous options for how to cast their ballot.

Just about 3 million voters have already voted early by casting absentee ballots. We anticipate roughly 2 million voters will vote in person tomorrow, leading us to estimate that over 5 million people will vote overall, putting us on the path towards record-breaking voter turnout.

To manage a high voter turnout election during a pandemic, especially at a moment like we are currently in, it is critical that we:

- Reduce or eliminate the potential for crowding and long lines in polling places
- Ensure everyone's health and safety is protected

This has been our strategy since the pandemic came to Michigan this spring, and we have already held three elections this year, two during the pandemic, where we have successfully protected the health of our election workers and voters while also ensuring that the right to vote is accessible to all. To reduce or eliminate the potential for crowding tomorrow, we engaged in a two-pronged strategy over the past six months.

First, we worked to educate voters about every option they had to vote this year. Judging by the fact that about two thirds of our voters will have already voted before the polls open tomorrow, that effort was a success.

Second, we needed to ensure each of our over 5,000 precincts throughout the state would be open and fully staffed. We noticed that long lines in other states were often connected to polling place consolidation as a result of a reduction in poll workers due to the pandemic.

So beginning this spring, my administration launched our state's first ever recruiting effort for poll workers – the Democracy MVP initiative. That effort recruited more than 30,000 election

workers, many of whom will be working in polling locations and absentee counting boards tomorrow. Because of this work, we can confidently say every clerk who has come to us with poll worker needs has been provided with personnel to cover every precinct.

We also found in our August Primary that a handful of polling locations were not immediately open at 7 a.m. on Election Day because of unexpected physical challenges or poll worker vacancies. So in advance of tomorrow, members of my team have visited every polling location in some of our largest jurisdictions to confirm their physical readiness, and we have a reserve pool of over 2,000 trained volunteers on standby to fill in any unexpected vacancies.

We also want to make sure everyone's health and safety is protected tomorrow. That's why our office provided every clerk and election worker with PPE – masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, etc. – and social distancing guidelines for precincts to ensure every polling location can comply with CDC guidelines. We encourage voters to also wear masks to respect everyone's health as well.

I also remain steadfastly determined, along with our Attorney General and state and local law enforcement, to protect every voter's right to cast their ballot free from intimidation and harassment. As the Michigan Court of Appeals stated in their ruling last week, it is well established under state and federal law that anyone who intimidates a voter in Michigan by brandishing a firearm is committing a felony, and this is enforceable by Michigan State Police and local law enforcement. The Attorney General and I are working with state and local law enforcement agencies to ensure the law is followed statewide, and we will have people in the field throughout the day tomorrow to swiftly respond to any instance of threats or intimidation.

The idea that any voter should feel fearful as they prepare to cast their vote for the leader of the free world is antithetical to everything our democracy stands for. And that's why we are prioritizing ensuring that our polling places remain an island of calm, where voters are protected and their rights are secured. We ask voters to report any incident of voter intimidation to an election worker, and we have instructed clerks to report any intimidation to law enforcement. The bottom line is that voter intimidation is illegal, and it will be charged and prosecuted in Michigan.

The second topic I want to cover is what to expect after our polls close tomorrow and the timing of our election results. As we have said repeatedly and consistently throughout this year, we will count every valid vote cast in this election. And we will not have a complete tabulation of those votes on Election Night.

Our state legislature made that impossible when they allocated only 10 hours for local clerks in larger jurisdictions to process absentee ballots before Election Day. Many other states – North Carolina, Ohio, Kentucky – allow far more time prior to Election Day. Florida clerks have had 40 days. For more than a year Michigan clerks and I called on our state Legislature to take action, but they did not, and so our voters and the nation will have to wait as thousands of election workers work diligently and methodically to securely tabulate every ballot.

In our August primary, it took 40 hours for a full tabulation of every one of the 1.6 million absentee ballots voted. Many of our jurisdictions were finished well before that, but that was how long it took for everyone to be done. We are on track to see double the number of absentee ballots – just over 3 million - submitted before 8pm tomorrow. Based on basic math, we should expect it would take no more than 80 hours to count those ballots, which would take us through Friday. Just as in August, some jurisdictions may report their full unofficial results

sooner – and that’s great, we welcome that – and from the moment the polls close until the moment that full unofficial statewide tabulation is complete we will continue to update the public – and the nation – as to where we are in the process.

It’s also to be noted there are 3 counties in Michigan that are on Central Time, meaning that the final polls in the state will not close until 9 p.m. EST.

As the count proceeds, I know that our clerks and their absentee counting boards will work as efficiently as they can. We have in many places doubled or tripled the number of high-speed ballot tabulators and other equipment and have significantly increased the number of staff we have working to count the ballots. But clerks have rightly instructed election workers to be diligent and meticulous to ensure every ballot is counted accurately.

In Michigan, our election workers count absentee ballots in pairs – one Republican and one Democrat – to ensure that there is no political bias and every ballot is counted fairly. This takes time, it always has, but it is what it takes to ensure that at the end of the process voters and the public can be assured that the unofficial results we announce will be an accurate reflection of the will of the people.

Finally, I want to discuss what we need from every voter and all of you as we prepare to counter misinformation and disinformation in the days ahead. I fully expect our voters will be targeted with false information about their rights and the integrity of the voting process, and that our state will be the target of misinformation shared on social media and elsewhere. Unverified claims will be posted on social media, circulated by news outlets, and campaigns and candidates will make statements that will be proven untrue.

Every step of the way members of my administration and I will correct this misinformation just as we have all year. We will not allow scare tactics and lies to deter citizens from exercising their right to vote, nor will we allow foreign or domestic actors to discredit our elections and attack our democracy.

But we cannot do this alone. We need voters, members of the media, and elected officials and other leaders to stand vigilant along with us, and to commit to reporting only verifiable, accurate information in the days ahead.

We ask voters to seek out information from trusted, nonpartisan sources. Verify – either with our office or your local election official – anything that seems wrong. Share facts and data instead of rumors and opinions. Report false information to misinformation@michigan.gov So that we can respond and if necessary, debunk it

And above all else, demonstrate your patriotism by standing up in support of the integrity of our elections. In Michigan, all valid ballots will be counted, and counted securely and accurately, and our election results will reflect the will of the people. Do not believe anyone who tells you otherwise.