



STATE OF MICHIGAN
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
LANSING

**Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson
Testimony to U.S. Committee on House Administration
Hearing on "American Confidence in Elections:
Looking Ahead to the 2024 General Election"
September 11, 2024**

Chairperson Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hosting today's hearing.

As Michigan's chief election officer, my responsibility is to ensure our elections are accessible, safe, secure, and the results are accurate. It is not a partisan role and despite being an elected position, it is not a political role. But it is a role that increasingly forces many of us – whether we consider ourselves Republicans, Democrats, or independents – to endure threats, harassment, false and malicious attacks on our character and integrity.

In today's hearing, we will talk about all the work we are doing to ensure it is easy to vote and hard to cheat in our respective states. Indeed, election security is top of mind for every professional election administrator in this country.

But I want to begin my remarks emphasizing we cannot have a secure democracy if we do not protect the security of the people who administer our elections. And right now, we are enduring unrelenting harassment and threats. People have come to my home or threatened me, my staff, and many of the hundreds of clerks and local election officials in our state. It creates an omnipresent feeling of anxiety and hypervigilance that permeates our daily lives, and our families' lives.

These threats are a direct result of the spread of false information about the security and accuracy of our elections. I need you to be on notice that unsubstantiated allegations and rhetoric without evidence makes our elections less secure because they erode the public's confidence in our elections and harm those charged with protecting our election systems.

The second thing I want to emphasize is that, now more than ever, the federal government's role as a trusted partner in securing our elections is crucial. Recent years have brought unprecedented threats to our election system, including some from highly sophisticated, foreign government-aligned entities. It is essential that we marshal bipartisan support and cooperative actions in response.

Part of that response must be a commitment to providing a predictable, sustainable, and reliable stream of funding for elections. We know what we need to do to ensure our elections are secure but often must scrape together funding from multiple sources to meet our needs. Federal resources are essential for supporting personnel, purchasing or upgrading voting machines or maintaining statewide voter registration databases.

Now I'll talk about what we are doing in Michigan to ensure our elections continue to be secure, accessible, and fair.

First, we are working with our clerks to support a secure and transparent election infrastructure. This includes providing funding, trainings, personnel and other resources as these professional local officials meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Secondly, we are building robust partnerships with a broad and diverse coalition of faith leaders, business leaders, veterans organizations, colleges and universities, senior centers, and community leaders in every part of Michigan to ensure every eligible citizen is registered and able to cast a ballot in every election. This includes working with the Detroit Lions, the Detroit Pistons, and NASCAR, to meet people where they are and bring voter registration opportunities and nonpartisan election information to citizens throughout our state.

Finally, we are taking steps to ensure the accuracy and security of our voter registration database and provide for the secure, efficient tabulation of paper ballots and post-election audits.

According to federal data, Michigan is one of the most active states in identifying and cancelling the registrations of ineligible voters. In 2020 and in 2022 the Election Assistance Commission reported that Michigan, the tenth largest state in the nation, ranked fifth nationwide in removing ineligible voters from our registration database. As of March, we have canceled more than 800,000 voter registrations in the last five years.

All Michigan voters cast paper ballots, another key element of election security. Post-election, risk-limiting audits verify the accuracy of election results across an entire election. Post election audits of the 2020 general election were the most extensive in Michigan’s history. Each of the 250 local and statewide audits confirmed and reaffirmed the security and accuracy of that election.

Despite the politically charged environment, in Michigan we are working together to make data-driven decisions to preserve the integrity of our voting systems. I and my colleagues in Michigan will continue to lead on this and we hope that you and your colleagues will do the same.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.