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One Nation and Election Integrity Fund File Lawsuits Against Michigan Governor and Secretary of State

National Coalition Seeks to Stop Executive Abuse of Emergency Police Powers and Protect Civil Liberty and Free and Fair Elections

LANSING, Mich. (Aug. 24, 2020) – One Nation and Election Integrity Fund filed lawsuits today in federal court against Gov. Gretchen Whitmer for silencing political speech; and in state court against Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson for circumventing state law protecting the right of Michiganders to have their vote properly counted. The lawsuit seeks to allow retail politicking leading into the general election and block Secretary Benson from sidestepping state law and suspending ballot integrity protections. The groups point to Governor Whitmer's threat of jail time for those seeking to host political rallies and election irregularities in Wayne County during the August 4 primary as justification for the suits.

Political Speech is the Right of Every Michigander, Not Just Those with Whom the Governor Agrees

"The rights of the citizenry to assemble and speak in pursuit of jointly held political goals as enshrined in the First Amendment are essential to our democracy," said Phill Kline, director of the Amistad Project of The Thomas More Society. "Particularly in a year in which our nation will select a president, safeguarding these rights is of fundamental importance."

Thomas More Society attorneys are representing One Nation and The Election Integrity Fund.

"Governor Whitmer and Secretary Benson have encouraged Michiganders to vote by absentee ballot, rendering retail politicking in the months leading up to the election of even greater significance," said Kline. Unlike other years in which most ballots would be cast on election day, hundreds of thousands or millions of votes will be cast in the weeks leading up to November 3. As the Michigan electorate complies with the Governor's insistence that they cast absentee ballots leading up to election day, her executive orders prevent those same voters from gathering to speak about the candidates and issues on which they are voting."

"One Nation supports reasonable and rationale dialogue on race that acknowledges our nation's failures while respecting its goodness," said One Nation President and former Michigan civil rights Commissioner, Dr. Linda Lee Tarver. "However, we were told we cannot rally and

continue to be confronted with ever-changing, confusing and ambiguous orders from the Governor.”

“America doesn’t have kings and queens, nor should all government power be vested in the hands of one person to the detriment of our civil liberties,” said Tom Brejcha, President and Chief Counsel of The Thomas More Society. “These powers must be limited in some fashion, or we have created a form of government foreign to this nation’s history and practice.”

Secretary of State Benson’s Absentee Ballot System Fails State Law

“Secretary Benson reduced in-person voting and made absentee balloting the foundation of our elections yet she has not done anything to assist local clerks in comparing voter signatures, the only method of verifying that actual voter filled out the absentee ballot,” said Glenn Sitek, vice president of Election Integrity Fund. “Something needs to be done to ensure every citizens’ vote is counted and election laws are followed. We intend to do just that.”

Absentee ballots require additional efforts to protect the integrity of the ballot because those ballots are cast outside of structured election sites where election officials can ensure voters aren’t intimidated, misled or coerced when casting their ballots. Those officials also ensure only properly registered voters cast the ballot and that each person only casts one ballot. This is impossible to do when the ballot is cast absentee. To protect those ballots, however, Michigan law requires a comparison of signatures to ensure the voter to whom the ballot is sent cast the vote. The lawsuit states Secretary Benson’s unilateral action undermines that process.

Using the Secretary’s new online system, thousands of ballots will be mailed to addresses, but without the required signature comparison to ensure that the addressee voter requested the ballot, and legitimately requested it to be sent to that address.

Additionally, the lack of an application signature also undermines the process of authenticating ballots once they are returned via mail. The Secretary’s own “Election Officials’ Manual” requires the officials processing these ballots to compare the signature on the ballot to the signature on the application to “determine the legality of the ballot”. This comparison cannot be accomplished if the application lacks an accompanying signature.

“Governor Whitmer and Secretary Benson’s attempt to drastically change election processes at the eleventh hour would allow anyone with Internet access to vote by mail, with no way to verify who requested the ballot or who actually cast the vote, as long as they claim to be a self-quarantining voter,” said Catherine Engelbrecht, Founder and President, True the Vote, a partner in The Amistad Project.

“This unlawful move by the State of Michigan towards all mail ballots would effectively increase election fraud, voter confusion, and contested elections, depriving all Michigan voters their right to a free and fair election,” Engelbrecht said.

Although Secretary Benson has encouraged reducing in person voting and made absentee balloting central to Michigan elections, she has not offered any training for signature comparison, failed to establish a best practices for signature comparison, has not established a

method to verify that signature comparison occurs, and has side-stepped state law by her actions. Moreover, she has misled Michigan voters by falsely claiming signature comparison software is available to local election clerks.

To view both lawsuits and learn more about the Free Persons Initiative, visit www.got-freedom.org.

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About Election Integrity Fund of Michigan

The Election Integrity Fund is comprised of Michigan residents and promotes voter turnout, compliance with Michigan state election laws and protecting free and fair elections.

About One Nation

One Nation is comprised of Michigan residents inspired by urban black pastors who formed the organization to promote appropriate and responsible race dialogue focusing on commonality, rather than amplifying differences. One Nation cherishes the United States greatness while acknowledging its failures.

About The Thomas More Society

The Amistad Project of The Thomas More Society is formed to preserve civil liberties in a time of great national challenge and is initiating litigation in several states to protect those liberties from executive overreach in the use of state police powers.

About True the Vote

True the Vote is the country's largest voters' rights organization. The organization is well known for its ability to lead unified national plans to protect election integrity. Since its founding in 2009, True the Vote has been on the front lines of election fraud prevention by building action-oriented election integrity movements in key states, counties, and precincts.

About the Free Persons Initiative

Free Persons Initiative is an organization coalition of United States citizens supporting the Amistad Journey Project of the Thomas More Society and encouraging Americans to share their stories regarding civil liberties and government overreach.