

Resolution: Accountability of University Vendors Funding Voter Suppression

WHEREAS, Michigan State University (MSU) holds a strong commitment to promoting social justice and ending systemic racism both in our community and at the University;

WHEREAS, in late 2019, MSU President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., as part of an overall strategic initiative created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee (DEISC) with the charge of creating a culture that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion for the MSU community with a focus on social identities, including age, color, disability status, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic level and veteran status;

WHEREAS, Michigan State University has for twenty-five years encouraged student voting through participation in MSUVote;

WHEREAS, all students are strongly encouraged to register to vote and make a plan to vote – our democracy depends on an engaged public to exercise fundamental right of citizenship by voting;

WHEREAS, the voter suppression bills, passed by the Michigan State Legislature in 2021 and subsequently vetoed by Governor Whitmer, have now evolved into a signature drive called Secure MI Vote that could soon empower the legislature to pass the same measures without the ability of the Governor to veto;

WHEREAS, the Secure MI Vote initiative, submitted more than 500,000 signatures on Friday, July 29, 2022 to empower the state legislature pass voter suppression over the governor's veto;

WHEREAS, these laws make it disproportionately harder for students, as well as Black, brown and working-class people to vote by design;

WHEREAS, many Michigan-based corporations have made strong public statements in support of Black Lives Matter, signed the Declaration of War on Racism, and signed a joint statement opposing voter suppression bills previously vetoed by the Governor;

WHEREAS, it is understood that companies make political contributions for their own business reasons, including entities that are recipients of contracts with Michigan State University. However, at times these contributions go to elected officials who supported voter suppression bills in 2021 and are poised to pass the Secure MI Vote initiative after the petition is certified. Therefore, these corporations are supporting voter suppression efforts, even if unintentionally;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the MSU board calls on the entire campus community to support MSUVote by formally joining the coalition to ensure representation and demonstrate commitment to the mission of the organization;

FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED, the MSU board will ask all politically active vendors to take concrete steps to defeat the efforts to undermine our democracy, including reaching out to lawmakers with which they have relationships with to communicate the importance of opposing voter suppression legislation, and ultimately to align their political support (including financial contributions) of candidates and office holders with their professed values, providing that those values support free and fair access to the democratic process.