

Benson announces ban of open carry of a firearm at voting locations

Attorney General and Michigan State Police to ensure enforcement

Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson today issued direction to local election clerks statewide clarifying that the open carry of firearms on Election Day in polling places, clerk's offices, and absent voter counting boards is prohibited on Election Day, November 3, 2020.

Attorney General Dana Nessel and Michigan State Police Director Col. Joe Gasper have joined with Secretary Benson in preparations to ensure Michigan voters are safe and secure when voting by informing local law enforcement agencies and ensuring that the ban on openly carried firearms is enforced statewide.

"Fair, free and secure elections are the foundation of our democracy," said Benson. "I am committed to ensuring all eligible Michigan citizens can freely exercise their fundamental right to vote without fear of threats, intimidation or harassment. Prohibiting the open-carry of firearms in areas where citizens cast their ballots is necessary to ensure every voter is protected."

Secretary Benson issued the directive this morning to all clerks stating that, "The presence of firearms at the polling place, clerk's office(s), or absent voter counting board may cause disruption, fear, or intimidation for voters, election workers, and others present. Absent clear standards, there is potential for confusion and uneven application of legal requirements for Michigan's 1,600 election officials, 30,000 election inspectors, 8 million registered voters, and thousands of challengers and poll watchers on Election Day."

In furtherance of her role as Michigan's Chief Elections Officer, with supervisory control over local election officials in the performance of their duties, the Secretary directed, "[t]he open carry of a firearm is prohibited in a polling place, in any hallway used by voters to enter or exit, or within 100 feet of any entrance to a building in which a polling place is located."

Offering her full support of the Secretary's directive, Attorney General Nessel said, "Michigan voters have the right to vote in person on Election Day free from threat and intimidation. An armed presence at the polls is inconsistent with our notion of a free democracy. I stand with the Secretary in her commitment to ensure that every eligible voter who wants to vote in person can do so safely and without fear or intimidation."

"Michiganders should know that law enforcement across multiple levels is working together to ensure that anyone who wishes to exercise their right to vote in-person on election day can do so safely and without the threat of intimidation," stated Col. Joe Gasper, director of the Michigan State Police.

The Secretary of State, Attorney General, and Michigan State Police are working together to ensure uniform enforcement of these requirements. In addition, the Attorney General and Michigan State Police will issue accompanying guidance to law enforcement on safety and security issues that could potentially impact the November 3rd, election.

[A full copy of the Secretary's guidance can be found here.](#)

Voters who witness or experience intimidation or other unlawful conduct at the polls immediately report this to an election worker or official and document the experience as clearly as possible. If in immediate danger, voters should call 911 prior to informing an election worker or official.