

Michigan's Livingston County First in State to Ban Use of Private Funds in Elections
Thomas More Society Applauds Board of Commissioners for Move to Optimize Election Integrity

(June 16, 2022 – Howell, Michigan) A unanimous vote by Michigan's Livingston County Board of Commissioners has now banned the acceptance of unregulated monies for funding elections, in a move deliberately intended to optimize election integrity. On June 13, 2022, the resolution banning private funding of elections was enacted, making Livingston County the first local government to do so. This action pushes Michigan closer toward a national movement to eliminate "dark money," or political spending meant to influence the decision of a voter, where the donor is not disclosed, and the source of the money is unknown. Thomas More Society Special Counsel Erick Kaardal provided the commissioners with a concise analysis of the considered resolution and an opportunity to have questions answered.

"In last 18 months, 20 states have enacted laws banning private money to administer public elections," explained Kaardal, naming Texas, Florida, Ohio, Arizona, as among those with these laws now on the books. He also noted that an additional six states have passed legislation that was gubernatorially vetoed.

Kaardal shared how Wisconsin's Walworth County is the first local government in that state to ban the acceptance of private monies or grants to use in the administration of elections and added that other Wisconsin counties are considering following suit.

Kaardal encouraged the commissioners, declaring the resolution to be "good public policy." He also noted that under the stated terms, grant funding could still be applied for, but would allow for tight scrutiny and deliberate review of conditions to enable that no legally unauthorized activities are financed.

"This is a win for the voters of Livingston County," stated Kaardal, "And will hopefully lead the way for other local governments to optimize election integrity in their regions. When there is an absence of any insistence on election integrity from the top, it is incumbent upon counties and municipalities to protect the right of voters entrusted to them."

Kaardal explained that the Wisconsin scenario was in response to voter outcry over the \$6,324,567 promised to the state's five largest cities for abiding by an illegal plan to focus on delivering votes from certain targeted demographic groups. The monies came from the Center for Tech and Civic Life, a non-profit Chicago-based organization, led and staffed by former Democratic activists and funded by billionaire Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, to influence the 2020 election.

"Because Michigan's executive branch has been unwilling to bar private money from entering the elections," emphasized Kaardal, "the burden has fallen upon cities and counties to protect themselves from outside interference by illegal money sources. The people understand that the right to vote is a cornerstone of a free society and that the biased intervention of those who influence the outcome with their dirty dollars is not to be tolerated. We thank the Livingston County Board of Commissioners for stepping up and take this important action."

Kaardal has been a prominent figure in the election integrity dialogue, working closely with voters and election authorities in Michigan and Wisconsin.

About Thomas More Society

Thomas More Society is a not-for-profit, national public interest law firm dedicated to restoring respect in law for life, family, religious liberty, and fair elections. Based in Chicago, Thomas More Society defends and fosters support for these causes by providing high quality pro bono legal services from local trial courts all the way up to the United States Supreme Court.

Thomas More Society believes that the outcome of elections determines the meaning of the American way of life. Through litigation and education, Thomas More Society's Election Integrity practice is focused on ensuring elections are conducted in accordance with state and federal laws and the constitution. For more information, please visit Thomas More Society's Election Integrity Initiative 2022 at thomasmoresociety.org/our-election-integrity-initiative.