

EARLY VOTING FLOOR SPEECH given by REP. RACHELLE SMIT

Thank you, Madame Speaker,

Permission to speak to the whole package.

Today, and every day in this Chamber, we are charged with the public's trust. The public's trust to ensure we are crafting laws that are constitutional, timely, and fair. These laws should protect the health, safety and welfare of the people we represent. They should be fair to all; and represent the will of the people.

The will of the people is what calls us to this chamber today to vote on the necessary legislative changes to implement Proposal 2 – commonly referred to as Early Voting in Michigan. This constitutional amendment largely expanded how we administer elections in Michigan. Our obligation, as a Legislature, is to establish the NECESSARY statutory changes to implement early voting **and** to meet the State's funding obligations under the amendment.

We should have a common goal when crafting legislation – Election law should NOT be partisan – It should be principled. Ensuring every eligible voter can vote, freely, secretly, independently, and securely. That EVERY voter has equal access to the ballot box. That one voter EQUALS one vote.

I have served in this Chamber for 4 years, the last 2 as the Chair of the House elections and ethics committee – ALMOST every bill passed through the committee and this chamber with broad bi-partisan support – following an open and transparent process.

Legislation of this importance should be crafted through an open and deliberative process – by legislators. Garnering input from **all** stakeholders. This process – these bills – have been crafted in the dark, without equal access for input. I have had local clerks, voters, organizations – reach out to me with concerns. Can we testify? Can we provide input? How will this be funded? How can I delegate my statutory duties to another person? What about this? What about that? Even the two minority members had to be given draft bills from an outside source. Two clerks – A county clerk and a local clerk – CERTAINLY they could have been a valuable resource and contributor. They were shut out.

I know only what I know. AND what I know, WHAT WE ALL KNOW is that overall public trust in government and our elections is at an all-time low and these bills will only compound that. I am

befuddled as to why – this legislature – would play into **that** by expanding the scope of the amendment; – why the committee and proposed bills would be kept from the public until less than 24 hours before a committee hearing. Why are we **rushing through some** of the most important legislation that will pass through this chamber in our time here.

Why are we expanding the scope of what was approved by the voters?

The amendment did not call for AV ballot curing to go beyond 8 PM on election night. The amendment did not grant broad authority to a partisan election official to direct a local clerk contrary to their statutory duties. It did not call for the absence of any post marks. This amendment did not call for the removal of drop box security measures, IT did not call for further expansion pre-processing of ballots by clerks – not a bipartisan precinct board. IT did not call for change in election equipment or Print on Demand ballots. IT did not call for the expansion of allowable precinct locations – fought for by local clerks and finally achieved last session. It did not call for the removal of SO MANY CHECKS and BALANCES in our law that Michigan was once known for. These bills create confusion for voters, chaos for our clerks, and compromise the security and sanctity of our elections.

As a former clerk for 17 years, I understand how elections are administered. I was witness to the implementation of significant changes – the Help America Vote Act, Photo Id, Provisional ballots, no reason AV, same-day registration, and an overhaul of our Qualified Voter File or QVF – all mainstays of today's elections.

These bills - and this process - are fundamentally flawed and grossly change our elections beyond the intent of Michigan voters. Eroding the role of our local clerks, creating confusion and unequal access for voters, removing checks and balances and further eroding at the public's trust. I encourage a NO vote until such time a real conversation can take place and the changes can be properly and openly crafted and vetted.