



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 21, 2020

STATEMENT FROM MARC ELIAS:

ANOTHER VICTORY FOR VOTING RIGHTS

***Michigan Secretary of State Revises Signature Match Process
As a Result of Federal Lawsuit***

Add Michigan to the list of states that we have forced to change their absentee ballot process to prevent lawful ballots from being rejected!

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In October, we sued Michigan on behalf of **Priorities USA** to block their unconstitutional signature matching process.

Under Michigan law, election officials rejected absentee applications and ballots if they determined that the signature provided with the applications or ballot does not match the voter’s signature on file with election authorities. The State had not developed any uniform standards or procedures for reviewing signatures, thereby allowing election officials throughout the state to use arbitrary and diverging criteria. In addition, election officials lacked sufficient training and skill to accurately compare signatures. Most importantly, the law did not require election officials to notify voters that their absentee applications or ballots have been rejected, nor provide voters with an opportunity to contest a wrongful rejection or cure an alleged mismatch.

As a result of our lawsuit, the Michigan Secretary of State recently revised her guidance to adopt the protections we sought. With our goal achieved, we are pleased to be able to voluntarily dismiss our lawsuit. Here is a summary of the relief we sought in our legal filings and the Secretary’s subsequent guidance:

Priorities’ Motion for Preliminary Injunction	Secretary’s Subsequent Guidance
Requested directive from Secretary instructing clerks to provide notice of signature mismatch determinations within 24 hours of such determination by phone, text, and email.	Instructs clerks to “immediately” inform voter of missing or mismatched signature using “any and all contact information available,” and to “call and e-mail the voter,” in addition to providing notice by mail. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For ballots or applications submitted by Wednesday before Election Day, voters should be notified by the end of next business day. Starting Thursday before the election, voters must be notified as soon as possible.

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Priorities' Motion for Preliminary Injunction	Secretary's Subsequent Guidance
<p>Requested directive from Secretary implementing a cure procedure for absentee ballots and ballot applications—allowing up to 14 days after receiving notice to cure applications, and 6 days after election day to cure absentee ballots.</p>	<p>Instructs clerks to implement the following cure procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Voters can cure mail applications by mail, email, fax, or in person until 5 pm on Friday before Election Day, and may cure in-person applications by 4 pm on the Monday before Election Day. ▪ Voters can cure absentee ballots by 8 pm on Election Day at the clerk's office (for ballots received before Saturday at 2 pm, voters may have a new absentee ballot issued). ▪ The Secretary has also committed to adopting additional post-election procedures for permitting a voter to cure an absentee ballot rejected for signature mismatch after Election Day.
<p>Requested directive implementing safeguards to ensure that ballots are not flagged for signature mismatch unless officials find, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the signatures do not match.</p>	<p>Instructs clerks to presume that the signature is valid, and a voter's signature is only considered questionable "if it differs in multiple, significant <u>and</u> obvious respects from the signature on file. Slight dissimilarities should be resolved in favor of the voter whenever possible."</p>
<p>Requested formal signature matching training.</p>	<p>Introduces a new training resource that instructs clerks how to perform signature verification and includes specific examples. The Secretary has indicated that the Bureau of Elections will incorporate this guidance into the manuals and training for election officials.</p>

We thank Secretary Benson for her leadership in response to our lawsuit.

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