

Legislative Update

DON'T LIKE THE DECISION? -- CHANGE THE RULES

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The Legislature is completing work on a proposal designed to stack the deck in court rooms in the State's favor whenever it, a state official or a department, commission or agency of the State is sued. We generally expect judges to be impartial. And to make sure there is a level of fairness in the process, judges in individual cases are generally picked by a blind draw. For the last forty years, money damage cases against the State have been submitted to an Ingham County Circuit Judge by blind draw. But the Governor and Republican Legislature has not been happy with all of those decisions. It's just not enough of a sure thing! So a bill has been rushed through the Legislature that requires that any action against the State, any state official (like the Governor) or any state department, agency or commission must be heard by one of four hand-picked judges of the Court of Appeals – chosen by the 7-2 Republican majority on the State Supreme Court.

Governor Snyder and the rest of the Republicans know that many of their decisions are unpopular and some are even of questionable legality. So they have spent the last three years stacking the deck. This is just the latest example of the abuse of power since the Governor and both Houses of the Legislature (as well as a majority of the State Supreme Court) have landed in the hands of one political party. Let's take a look at their efforts:

- Concentrate Wealth: There has never been a time in U.S. history in which so few have controlled so much of the wealth of the nation. This is not the result of free markets but rather market rigging around the country, especially here in Michigan. One of the first acts adopted when the Republican Party took control was to change Michigan's tax policy to favor the wealthy. Businesses received an 83% cut in state taxes – that amounts to a gift of \$1.8 BILLION. Oh sure, they promised to use this money to create jobs but that has not materialized. So, the State made up the money by taxing the pensions of seniors, cutting homestead property tax credits for the middle class and reducing tax credits for the working poor.
- Blame local government and public employees: After drastically cutting financial support from local government and schools, they criticized them for not being able to pay their bills and passed legislation that took away your right to elect school boards and local government. Their solution: force them into receivership allowing the Governor to appoint an emergency manager to run things his way.
- And draw district lines to preserve your power: Even though over ½ the people in the State voted for Democratic State Representative candidates, the Republicans maintained control of the House with 59 of the 110 votes. When the Oakland County Reapportionment Commission adopted an Oakland County commission plan that gave both parties a chance to win a majority, they quickly passed a law that moved the reapportionment decision from

the Reapportionment Commission to the Republican controlled Oakland County Board of Commissioners. The bill applied to Oakland County only.

- Ignore the voters: When the people of the State voted overwhelmingly to overturn the Emergency Manager Law, Republican lawmakers took less than a month to pass another one that was virtually identical to the one YOU REJECTED.
- Allow wealthy corporations to buy their legislative agendas: Instead of creating good jobs, businesses use those huge tax cuts to buy influence. The United States Supreme Court ruled, in Citizens United, that corporations have a First Amendment right to spend whatever amount of they want to elect candidates they favor (or who favor them). So it's off to the races with some of the most expensive campaigns in history.
- Block any opposition from participating in the process: Here is the big one. The Republicans do not like people or organizations who disagree with their agenda, so they are constantly finding ways to keep them out of the process. This has resulted in legislation which:
 - allows free riders to eat up union resources by refusing to pay even fair share fees for the contracts and contract enforcement they enjoy (calling it "right to work");
 - prevents school employees from paying union dues through payroll deduction to make sure unions spend money on collection rather than education;
 - prevent political donations from being collected through payroll deductions from workers (but not from being collected in corporate board rooms).