Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum Requests Elections Executive Orders from Governor Whitmer

MASON – Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum (D-Onondaga) wrote to Governor Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing) today requesting that the Governor issue two Executive Orders in the run-up to the November General Election. The first would be to allow local city and township clerks to pre-process absent voter ballots 24-48 hours prior to Election Day. The second would be to allow proxy voting for Military and Overseas Voters due to the anticipated delays with the US Postal Service.

“Public trust in our elections is under daily assault,” Byrum said. “From misleading stories to misleading statements from Pennsylvania Avenue, the American public is losing confidence in our country’s ability to administer the November General Election. Our local clerks are heroes and I have no doubt that they will be able to administer this election smoothly. The measures that I am asking the Governor to issue Executive Orders on would allow for the process to be more efficient.”

Byrum’s letter indicated that allowing local clerks to process ballots a day or two early will cut down on the time it will take on Election Day to process the large wave of mail-in ballots that local clerks are expecting. The pre-processing would not include tabulating, or counting, ballots, but rather preparing them to be counted on Election Day. She also noted that there are bills that have stalled in the State Legislature that would accomplish the same purpose.

“The Legislature has failed to act to make the necessary changes to allow our clerks the flexibility that they so desperately need,” Byrum said. “Absent any kind of action or leadership from them, we need Governor Whitmer to step in and assist, to allow our local elections administrators to pre-process ballots. If unofficial Election results do not come out on Election Night, I worry about the public losing faith in our democratic system.”

Clerk Byrum also requested that proxy voting be allowed for Military and Overseas Voters (MOVE) because mail service may not be available, due to the pandemic.

“There are dozens of countries where mail simply will not be delivered or distributed, due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Byrum. “These are members of our armed services, their families and others who are guaranteed the right to vote like any other US Citizen. We need to make accommodations for them to be able to vote safely and ensure that their voice is heard.”

Byrum’s letter was sent to Governor Whitmer’s office on September 8, 2020 and was also sent to Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson.

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