

Monroe County

DEMOCRATIC PARTY NEWSLETTER

August
2025



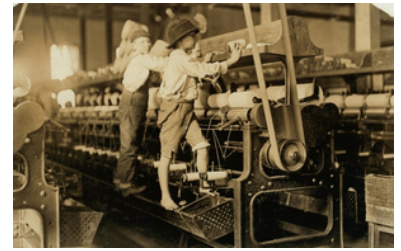
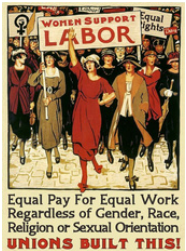
● Letter from Chair ● Member Contributions ● Local & State ● Calendar ● Community Spotlight ● Other Interesting Facts

Cheers to our
HARDWORKING Building the Future

*Solidarity
Forever*



We Will Not
Forget
Where We
Came From

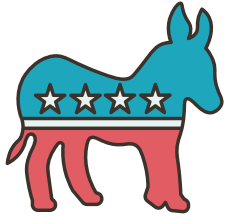


On June 27, House Republicans, including Representatives Will Bruck, Jamie Thompson and Jim DeSana failed to show up for critical K-12 budget negotiations in Lansing. Their absence left State Representative Democrats to negotiate alone while Monroe County's students and educators waited for answers. Republicans are waging a war on public education because they fear free-thinking, critically engaged Americans. While the rest of the world is investing in education, we are actively dismantling public schools and higher learning institutions here in the United States. This trajectory puts our country at a serious disadvantage.

— Rick Kull, Chair Monroe County Democratic Party



"From the moment residents of our community were notified a year ago that radioactive waste from the Manhattan Project would be shipped to Wayne Disposal to be stored, together we have been organizing and speaking out our community does not want hazardous waste materials near our homes and waterways. We need government and corporate accountability to the public now. My and Sen. Camilleri's legislation will need to be negotiated between Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Speaker Matt Hall in a bipartisan manner that puts people over corporate profits. This community is tight, and we have been fighting this battle from day one, but we still have the war to win. I know that if we continue to come together, we can do it. I will never stop fighting alongside community members to keep radioactive waste out of Michigan." Reggie Miller - MI House D31



EVENTS IN AUGUST

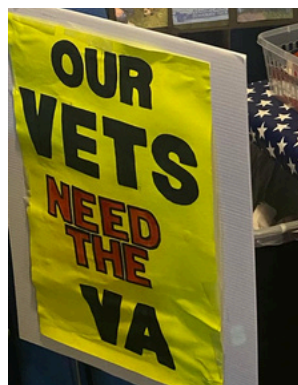
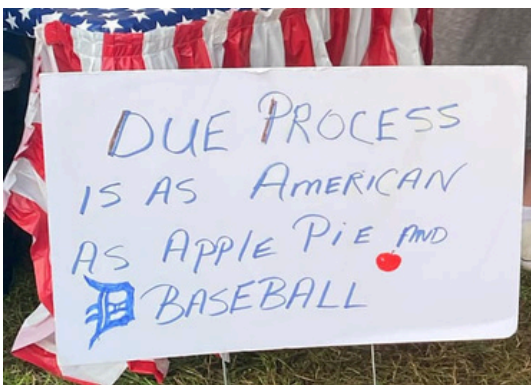
THE MONROE COUNTY FAIR 2025



Starting with the **Fair Parade** on July 27th, the MCDP proudly participated in the 78th Annual **Monroe County Fair**. This year's MCDP tent was full of political resources and information, as well as fun educational games, quizzes, and prizes. The history of the Dem. party was also displayed, starting with President Andrew Jackson in 1828 and ending with President Joe Biden- highlighting the accomplishments and progress made over the years in the US. Attendees also had the opportunity to sign letters to local and state reps. to voice concerns regarding recent attacks on democracy. Volunteers kept an open dialogue to address questions and encourage community in these times. With an average of 200,000 attendees, the **Monroe County Fair** is a wonderful opportunity for the MCDP to connect with the public, create lasting bonds, and help spread the word!



Volunteers Nick and Liam pull the winning entry for the American flag giveaway



MCDP sends a huge **thank you** to all Monroe County Fair volunteers! A special thanks to **Jeff Albergo** for his help with creating the party's historical banners and to **Jon Moore** for all his effort toward another successful year!

UNION VOICE Not Just a Man**Remembering Walter Reuther's Legacy by Dr. Denise Brooks**

I'll never forget the day Walter P. Reuther died. I came home from school and saw my father reading the Monroe Evening News. The headline stretched across the front page: "Walter Reuther Has Died." My father looked up and said, "The union will never be the same."

On May 9, 1970, Reuther, President of the United Automobile Workers—and his wife, May, were killed in a tragic plane crash en route to the UAW's Family Education Center at Black Lake. The Lear Jet went down in Pellston, Michigan, during a foggy, rainy night. Six lives were lost, including two pilots, a bodyguard (Mrs. Reuther's nephew), and an architect friend. The plane clipped treetops and exploded on impact. Reuther was 62. His wife was 59.

The UAW Family Education Center still stands as a testament to their vision. Reuther was outspoken, controversial, and deeply committed to the labor movement. He was a hero to working-class Americans, challenging the nation to pursue economic and social justice for all.

Admired by leaders like President Kennedy, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Reuther's influence extended far beyond the bargaining table. His achievements included pensions, cost-of-living pay increases, profit-sharing, and early retirement. But his mission was broader; he believed labor should help build a better world.

In 1946, at the age of 39, he became the UAW President. Six years later, he was elected President of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. One of his boldest goals: a guaranteed annual wage, shifting the burden of unemployment from workers to employers.

He once said, "There's a direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box." We've seen this play out in Michigan: what unions win at the table can be undone in the legislature.

After his death, I researched his life and wrote my master's thesis on his work. Years later, I met his daughter, Elizabeth Reuther. I told her I thought her father was the greatest man. She replied, "He was just a man."

Not to me.

Senator Bellino's Senate Bill 440: A Direct Hit to Michigan's Working Class

Senator Joe Bellino has introduced Senate Bill 440, a proposal that would repeal prevailing wage requirements for alternative energy projects across Michigan. While Bellino claims the bill will "make Michigan more attractive to businesses," labor advocates and community leaders see it for what it is: a calculated attack on worker protections and union strength. Prevailing wage laws ensure that workers, especially skilled tradespeople, are paid fair, regionally competitive wages on publicly funded projects. These standards have long-upheld job quality, safety, and economic dignity for Michigan's workforce. Bellino's bill would strip those protections from wind, solar, and other renewable energy projects, allowing contractors to pay workers significantly less for the same skilled labor. Lower wages mean families struggle to make ends meet. Reduced job quality leads to unsafe working conditions, less training, and higher turnover. And without prevailing wage, union leverage erodes, making it harder to keep wage floors, benefits, and protections across the industry. Bellino's bill invites out-of-state contractors to undercut local workers, weakening the trades that have powered Michigan's economy for generations. It's a gift to corporate developers and anti-union lobbyists, those who profit from cheap labor and deregulation at the expense of the very people who build our infrastructure. Community organizers warn that this legislation is part of a broader trend: dismantling labor rights under the guise of "economic growth." But growth that comes from exploitation isn't progress, it's regression. Senate Bill 440 doesn't uplift Michigan. It undermines it. Michigan's renewable future should be built by well-paid, well-trained local workers, not sacrificed to corporate interests. The fight for fair wages is a fight for dignity, safety, and the soul of Michigan's labor legacy.

MCCC Millage Renewal Headed to the Ballot

*The impact of voting **yes** on Monroe County
Community College's 5-year renewal plan*

Reported by: Christina Cusumano

On August 7th, 2025, MCCC's Board of Trustee's approved the language of their millage renewal, confirming the proposal's inclusion on the Nov. 4th ballot. Several speakers shared their own personal stories in support of this renewal including **Jackson Pahle**, campaign manager for MI. State Rep. Reggie Miller, **Stephanie Kasprzak.**, Executive Director of the Monroe County Opportunity Program, **David Vensel**, Chairmen of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners, and **Sharon McNeil**, founder of the community advocacy group 'Stronger Together Huddle'. These speakers, as well as many others, gave **first-person perspective** on the impact this renewal can make to the community at large. You can find their full remarks by **clicking the box below** or you can click on *Millage Details* for more information on MCCC's webpage.

**SUPPORT OF PHASE 3:
MAINTENANCE AND
IMPROVEMENT MILLAGE
RENEWAL – CLICK HERE**

MCCC
MILLAGE
DETAILS



Click on **Millage** for more information on
MCCC's Millage Renewal



MONROE COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Phase 3: Millage Renewal's Impact

- ✓ Top-Ranked Education Access: MCCC Currently Ranks in the **Top 9%** of Community Colleges in the United States. (Monroe Evening News)
- ✓ Greater Accessibility and Inclusion for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs
- ✓ Updated Facilities and Resources: Labs, Classrooms, Technology, Infrastructure, and Safety Measures
- ✓ Continued Support of Skilled Trade Opportunities, Technical Degrees, Certificates, and Non-Traditional Career Pathways in Monroe County
- ✓ Assured Local Partnerships: Urban Farms, Food Pantries, Unhoused and LGBTQIA+ Resources
- ✓ Support of Quality Healthcare in Monroe County: Continuing Education Credits and Work with IHM Sister House, ProMedica Monroe Regional Hospital, etc.
- ✓ Economic Stimulus and Growth with Local Businesses & Employers

Millage Renewal is **not**

✗ A New Tax: For a home with a value of \$100,000, the cost of the millage renewal will continue to be less than \$4 per month. (Monroe County Community College, Millage FAQ's Page)

Reject Political Favoritism

Shawna Farley

In October 2023, Senator Joe Bellino stood on the Michigan Senate floor and issued a warning that resonated with voters across party lines:

“Two of the biggest issues that people can't stand about us elected officials are when we do one thing and do another, and when they abuse their power to protect their friends.”

It was a rare moment of clarity and an acknowledgment that the public depends on consistency and integrity. But less than a year later, in June 2024, Bellino contradicted his own words by writing a letter to a federal judge on behalf of [Monroe County Commissioner Mark Brant](#).

“I’VE KNOWN MARK BRANT FOR 25 YEARS. HE’S AN HONEST FAMILY MAN. I WROTE THE LETTER BECAUSE HE’S MY FRIEND.”

Bellino condemned cronyism in theory, then practiced it by using the power of his office and his letterhead to advocate for leniency for a political ally and long-time friend who plead guilty to federal drug charges.

This reflects a broader problem: when elected officials prioritize personal loyalty over public accountability, the foundations of democracy erode. Cronyism, which involves favoring friends regardless of merit or ethics, undermines justice, weakens institutions, and supports cynicism among voters.

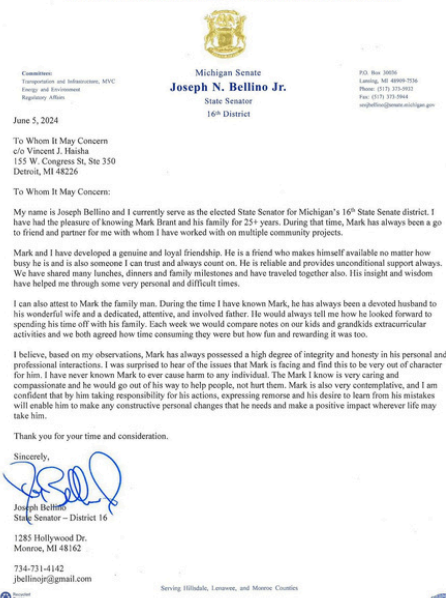
Monroe County residents, organizers, and local leaders can demand better. Integrity and consistency between public statements and private actions are the bare minimum for holding office. They can build coalitions that reject favoritism and elevate leaders who serve the public, not their own inner circles.

Politics in Monroe doesn’t have to be defined by contradictions and backroom deals. Achieving a model of transparency, courage, and community-first leadership starts with naming the problem and refusing to protect those who abuse their power to protect their friends.

I advocate for sticking up for your friends, just use your own pen and paper!

Senator Joe Bellino used official Michigan Senate stationery, including the state seal, to advocate for leniency in the sentencing of his friend, Mark Brant. The use of government materials for a personal matter relaxes the boundaries of public office for favoritism.

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#Release The
FILES WE ARE NOT DISTRACTED

Read the letter yourself...

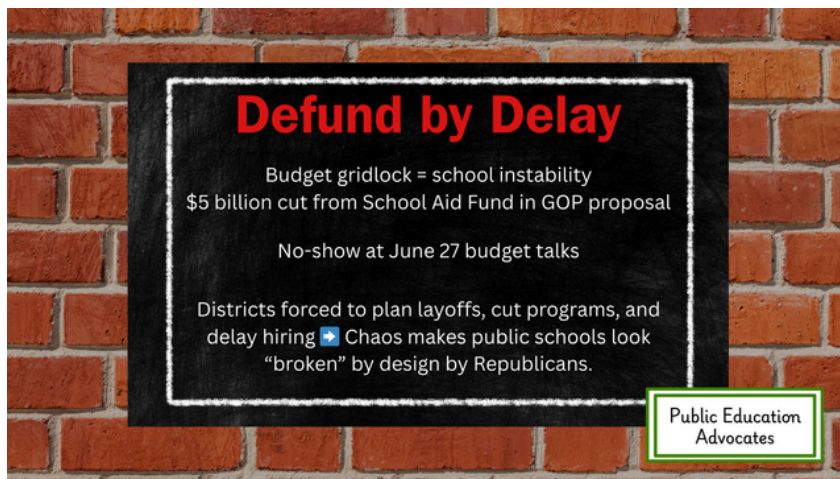
Monroe County Residents Call for Integrity Over Partisan Deflection

At a recent Board of Commissioners meeting, Monroe County Commissioner Dawn Asper made a misleading claim about a Frenchtown resident, stating that they were not simply a constituent but an officer of the Monroe County Democratic Party. The statement was corrected by MCDP Chair Rick Kull, who clarified: “MCDP officers are me as Chair Rick Kull, Vice Chair Gloria Rafko, 2nd Vice Chair Jerry McKart, Secretary Jennifer Devenish, and Treasurer Karin Koek.”

Shawna Farley challenged Commissioner Asper's actions and intentions. Integrity in local governance is not partisan. Residents from across the political spectrum are calling for honest leadership, fact-based dialogue, and commitment to community over party. Monroe County's future depends on elected officials who listen, respond with clarity, and reject divisive tactics that erode public trust.



photo of Dawn Asper
source: Verkiezingen VS in detail, article
“Distrust or Disinformation”



GEN Z isn't just watching. They're organizing, voting, and running for office.

Where do you stand on climate justice, labor rights, and reproductive autonomy?

Will you fight for student debt relief and affordable housing or just talk about it?

Do you support youth-led movements, or do you silence them when they challenge power?

How are you protecting LGBTQ+ youth and BIPOC communities from hate and exclusion?

Will you back ranked choice voting and real democracy reforms or cling to the status quo?



These politicians are listening

THIS IS WHAT INJUSTICE LOOKS LIKE AND WE'RE DONE WATCHING



In August 2025, a nonbinary traveler whose legal name change was completed six years ago was pulled aside at a Denver airport, denied check-in, and subjected to invasive screening practices. Despite presenting a "Real ID" and matching documentation, they were treated as a threat. Their phone was confiscated. Their body were swabbed. They were asked to lift their shirt to "prove" they weren't hiding a weapon because their chest showed signs of a medical condition. This wasn't security; it was humiliating.

Meanwhile, public figures like JD Vance, who has changed his name multiple times for personal and political reasons, are never asked to prove their gender at a checkpoint. This article is a plea for compassion, for understanding, and for action. Can we demand systems that honor dignity, not erase it? We must speak out for those who are targeted, misgendered, and humiliated. Because if we stay silent, we become complicit.

Let this be the moment we choose love over fear. Let this be the moment we fight for every person's right to exist without being treated as a threat.



This Is the Moment to Show Up
You can do it

Courage Is Contagious - Start the Chain



Educate Yourself and Others

Don't wait for trans people to do the emotional labor. Learn about gender-affirming care, civil rights protections, and the real impact of anti-trans legislation. Share fact-based resources. Correct misinformation. Normalize trans joy and visibility.

Center Trans Voices

Don't speak over or for trans people. Instead, pass the mic, fund their work, and follow their lead. As Emme Zanotti of Equality Michigan put it: "We don't have all the answers, but we do have each other. And we need to make sure trans voices are heard at every level of decision-making."

Build Coalitions, Not Just Support

Allyship isn't just about standing beside; it's about organizing with. Trans leaders want cis allies to help build coalitions that fight for inclusive healthcare, education, and legal protections.

That means mobilizing voters, pressuring institutions, and amplifying trans-led initiatives.

Protect Public Spaces

Trans people are being pushed out of schools, clinics, and community spaces. Allies are asked to hold space, whether that's showing up at school board meetings, defending inclusive policies, or simply refusing to let transphobia go unchecked in everyday life.

**No More
Quiet Allies**



Be Loud. Be Brave. Be the Ally They Deserve



Hope on the Horizon: Alzheimer's Breakthroughs in 2025 This year, researchers uncovered a powerful link between lithium deficiency and the earliest stages of Alzheimer's. A new lithium-based compound reversed memory loss in mice, offering a fresh path toward treatment



NATIONAL
**SUICIDE
PREVENTION
MONTH**
SEPTEMBER

Monroe County Deserves Hope: Suicide Awareness & Support

In recent years, Monroe County has seen a troubling rise in suicide deaths, mirroring Michigan's statewide rate of 14.7 per 100,000 residents. Behind every number is a neighbor, a friend, a loved one.

If you or someone you know is struggling, help is always within reach:

📞 Call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24/7

🧠 Monroe Community Mental Health Authority offers local support, counseling, and crisis services:

monroecmha.org/resources-community

💛 Michigan Peer Warmline: 888-733-7753 Speak with someone who's been there too:
Open daily 10 am to 2 am

💬 Text the word TALK to 741741 for confidential support from trained crisis counselors

You are not alone. Awareness saves lives—and compassion builds the safety net our community deserves.

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) May Be Headed for a Vote Next Fall

You can show your support by signing a petition. Check [HERE](#).





Anchorage Residents:

"This Isn't Who We Are" - MSN

Many Alaskans felt like unwilling props in a global drama that prioritized spectacle over justice. The red carpet wasn't just fabric; it became a symbol of misplaced loyalty and moral compromise. - MSN

We are asking MCDP readers, what did you see as an American?

CHECK THIS STUFF OUT!



On July 23, the White House released its National AI Action Plan, emphasizing expanded surveillance capabilities and data access. While framed as progress, critics warn that these tools, especially when deployed in airports and public spaces, can deepen discrimination against marginalized communities.

Lawsuits Against the Trump Administration Stemming from Executive Actions or Orders

- Immigration & Borders: Over 50 suits total; e.g., CASA v. Trump (birthright citizenship); multiple state coalitions challenging deportations and sanctuary city fund withholding.
- Transgender/Gender Policies: Around 20+ suits; e.g., Maria Moe v. Trump (prison housing); PFLAG v. Trump (youth treatments); states like Washington and Massachusetts challenging care bans.
- DEI & Discrimination Programs: 15+ suits; e.g., National Urban League v. Trump; multiple challenges from diversity groups and cities alleging First/Fifth Amendment violations.
- DOGE: 20+ suits; e.g., U.S. Institute of Peace v. Jackson; coalitions of nonprofits and states challenging fund freezes.
- Environment & Energy: 10+ suits; e.g., Northern Alaska Environmental Center v. Trump; states challenging wind farm halts and IRA/IJA fund pauses.
- Other (Elections, Press, Funding, etc.): 30+ suits; e.g., Democratic National Committee v. Trump (voter registration); Associated Press v. Budowich (press bans); 24 multistate suits overall.

HAPPENING SOON

August 30th - Monroe Labor Day Festival
Loranger Square. 1-9 pm

September 1st - Labor Day

September 4th - Membership Meeting

Every Tues - Food Pantry UMC - 10-11 am
8165 Douglas Rd. Lambertville



SUNDAYS 6-10 PM

Reggie Miller

DONATE ❤️

Click to donate to Rep.
Reggie Miller's campaign



[Donate to MCDP](#)



[Donate to MDP](#)

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE ENTIRE NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTION TEAM!

Dr. Denise Brooks | Christina Cusumano | Surya Patel | James Dombrowski | Sean Farley | Shawna Farley