

GOP should drop challenge to mailing of absentee ballots

If we listened to her critics, primarily leaders in the Republican Party, Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh is behind a well-plotted conspiracy to give Democrats an advantage in any local or statewide election.

Her political crime?

Sending absentee ballot applications to registered voters in Macomb County who have passed their 60th birthday.

"I am fighting to give all seniors an equal opportunity to get an absentee voter application form, no matter where they live or their party affiliation," Sabaugh said.

"It seems like they (Republicans) are trying to make it harder to vote. I don't see how this (policy) hurts the Republican Party."

Like our experienced county clerk, we, too, are having a difficult time figuring out the motivation behind the state Republican Party, which is taking legal action in an attempt to halt the mailing.

In its legal challenge, the GOP argues that "if this court were to allow Macomb County to exercise its financial clout to

skew the election process, the residents of Michigan's poorer counties would be severely disadvantaged."

It's pretty hard for us to conceive how encouraging election participation is harmful to the voters in other counties or the Republican Party in general.

It's important to remember that Macomb County is not mailing absentee ballots — only applications for ballots.

Those interested in voting still have to return the application, receive a mailed ballot, fill out the ballot and mail it back.

In essence, Sabaugh isn't doing much more than reminding seniors that an election is near.

And the argument that what Macomb County is doing hurts those in "Michigan's poorer counties" is laughable.

We'd like to remind the Michigan Republican Party that Macomb County has a budget deficit of an estimated \$12 million and the cost of the mailing is \$60,000. That's hardly a large amount in comparison to the costs of running a countywide election.

If the GOP wants to save money it should drop its legal challenge to the Macomb Circuit Court ruling that allows the mass mailing of absentee ballots.

Most senior voters would appreciate it.

It's pretty hard for us to conceive how encouraging election participation is harmful to the voters in other counties or the Republican Party in general.

Sunday, March 2, 2008

Page 20A MacombDaily.com