

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Voting Rights Express bus headed to court

Data: seniors who receive AV applications vote

Photo Opportunity: 35+ senior citizens boarding a coach bus labeled, "Voting Rights Express," with Macomb County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh and Clinton Township Clerk Candidate George Fitzgerald headed to court, departing from Old Country Buffet, 35543 S. Gratiot, Clinton Township, northwest corner of Gratiot and 15 Mile Road, 8 am - 8:15 am.

Over 35 senior citizens concerned about voting rights will ride the Voting Rights Express bus with Macomb County Clerk / Register of Deeds [Carmella Sabaugh](#) and Clinton Township Clerk Candidate George Fitzgerald on Wednesday morning to the Court of Appeals to hear oral arguments in [Fleming v Sabaugh](#), a case expected to affect the number of absent voter ballots in Michigan's presidential election. At issue is whether the [Republican Party will succeed in blocking](#) the long-standing practice of clerks mass mailing [absent voter application forms](#) to senior citizens.

"I am fighting to give every senior citizen an equal opportunity to get an absent voter application form, no matter where they live or their party affiliation," said Sabaugh. "Any doubt about an election practice should be resolved in favor of action increasing voter turnout in a presidential election year."

Sabaugh says the data shows that when seniors are sent an absent voter application voter turnout increases. When seniors are not sent an AV application, voter turnout falls. See the chart comparing communities where seniors were not mass mailed AV applications in 2007 with communities where all seniors were mailed AV applications in 2008.

	ABSENT VOTER BALLOTS ISSUED		
	May 2007 AV apps not mass mailed	May 2008 AV apps were mass mailed	Percentage Increase
Warren	5,591	8,173	46.2%
Mt. Clemens	558	830	48.7%
Lenox Twp.	366	438	19.7%
Washington Twp.	1,072	1,875	74.9%
Fraser	784	1,143	45.8%
Ray	123	247	100.8%
Bruce	405	600	48.1%
Roseville	1,717	3,055	77.9%
New Baltimore	251	673	168.1%

[For years many clerks](#) mass mailed absent voter application forms (not ballots) to seniors. In 2006, the Michigan Republican Party recruited plaintiffs to sue Sabaugh claiming they would suffer "irreparable harm" if all Macomb County senior citizens were given application forms for absent voter ballots. Sabaugh scored a victory when the

[Macomb County Circuit Court](#) ruled a Board of Commissioners resolution authorizing the mailing gave her authority to do so. The GOP, [still trying to make it harder for seniors to vote](#), appealed the ruling. Arguments will be heard in [Fleming v Sabaugh](#) in Detroit on Wednesday, May 7, 2008 at 10 a.m.

In another case, [Taylor v. Currie](#), the Court of Appeals ruled a local clerk could not mass mail absent voter forms. Unlike Sabaugh, the clerk in that case did not first get a board resolution authorizing the mailing.

In 2008, a unanimous Macomb County Board of Commissioners endorsed Sabaugh's position. She also received support from [Congresswoman Candice Miller](#). Even [Max Fellsman](#), an original plaintiff in the case, had a change of heart and now supports Sabaugh's position.

Prior to this year, all Oakland County local clerks mass mailed AV applications to seniors. Ironically, the GOP is not suing any clerk in Oakland County and the Michigan GOP mailed tens of thousands of AV application forms to "targeted" voters during the last election.

2008 was the first year clerks did not mass mail AV applications. As a result, absent voter turnout fell. Clinton Township, the state's largest township, in the 2006 November General Election had 10,549 absent ballots or 28%. In the August Primary there were 7,583 AVs or 50%. But in the January 2008 Presidential Primary, when absent voter turnout should have been higher due to cold weather and snow birds, only 2,876 absent ballots or 21% were returned. The drop was because AV application forms were not mass mailed to seniors. Sabaugh fears there will be a similar drop in November if the GOP wins the lawsuit.

Michigan law prohibits voters from casting an absent ballot, unless they meet one of six qualifications. Voters age 60 and over qualify. Sabaugh has long been a proponent of no-reason absentee voting, so any citizen who wants to may cast an absentee ballot, which would reduce polling place lines.

Sabaugh also created the state's first online absent voter fraud prevention system, posted at <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/clerksoffice/ElectionDept.htm#TrackAbsenteeBallot>.

Macomb County Clerk / Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh will be joined by over 35 senior citizens and Clinton Township Clerk Candidate George Fitzgerald on the Voting Rights Express bus, departing from the Old County Buffet parking lot (address above) and will drive to the Michigan Court of Appeals, Detroit Courtroom 14th Floor, 3020 West Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 7, 2008.

Reporters wishing to enter the courtroom must submit the following form to the Court of Appeals: <http://courts.mi.gov/scao/courtforms/general/mc27.pdf>.

It is important to note that this case is about absent ballot application forms and not actual ballots. No clerk mails an actual ballot unless a written request for one is received.