

City of Detroit

Department of Elections

JANICE M. WINFREY, *City Clerk*
Chairperson, Election Commission

2978 W. Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48202-3069

(313)876-0190 Fax (313)876-0053

July 7, 2026

Dear Mr. Mellet:

I am in receipt of your letter of June 24, 2026, concerning the monitoring of polling places by Department of Justice staff in the November 2024 election and the intention to have monitors in Detroit for the upcoming election. I am writing to assure you that Detroit Department of Elections is conducting elections in full compliance with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and specifically with 52 USC sections 21081& 21082.

It is important to address election performance based on facts rather than falsehoods that lead to baseless conclusions. Your letter makes three false assertions that form a baseless conclusion that then becomes the pretext for additional monitoring of Detroit elections. The assertions are: 1. One precinct lacked provisional ballots; 2. There was confusion about when to issue provisional ballots; and 3. Voter Assist Terminals were not operational in multiple polling locations. The baseless conclusion is then made that these false claims 'may' have contributed to long lines and lengthy wait-times in some voting locations.

Provisional Ballots. To suggest one precinct "lacked provisional ballots" fails to understand that a provisional ballot is a regular ballot used by all voters. No precinct ran out of ballots making this assertion a falsehood. When it is necessary to issue a provisional ballot, the process is removed from the regular flow of issuing ballots so as not to cause wait times or lines for other electors checking in to vote.

Confusion When to Issue Provisional Ballots. To claim there was "confusion about when provisional ballots should be provided to voters" ignores the fact that Michigan Election Law has provided electors with provisional ballots well before the Help America Act (HAVA) was enacted. Our election inspectors are thoroughly trained to follow clear, step-by-step instructions for issuing a provisional ballot. In the November 2024 election there were 122 provisional ballots issued in 38 out of 402 precincts at the most. As noted above, this process does not impede the regular flow of issuing ballots to other electors.

Voter Assist Terminals (VAT). To assert that “Voter Assist Terminals were not operational in multiple polling locations” is contrary to our information and other surveys of the same election. The Department of Elections has 48 troubleshooters who respond to equipment issues, including those with the VATs. In addition, Warriors on Wheels staff an ADA call center specifically aimed at issues affecting voters with disabilities. While voting on a terminal may be time-consuming, this does not delay the regular flow of issuing ballots to electors not voting on a VAT.

These three false claims presented in your letter are “thin gruel” in support of a baseless conclusion that they ‘may’ have contributed to long lines. The three claims operate outside of the standard flow of processing electors as the check-in, are issued a ballot and then cast their ballots. It is not possible for these claims to create lines. These claims are not a valid pretext for increasing monitoring in Detroit.

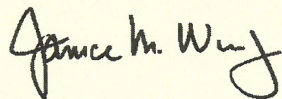
There were no long lines or lengthy waiting periods in Detroit polling places in November 2024 because early voting, introduced in 2024, and mail voting have substantially reduced the number of ballots cast at polling places to 32% of the total vote. Contrast this with the 2016 presidential election when 78% of the ballots were cast at polling places. On election day in 2024, 105,364 electors cast their ballots in polling places. There are 402 precincts where on average 260 electors cast their ballots in each precinct over the 13 hours the polls were open at a rate of 20 electors per hour. Simply put, there were no lines.

Also, according to our records, there were no representatives from the Department of Justice, and if so, they did not comply with regulations requiring them to identify themselves and sign in with supervisory staff at the polling place.

The Department of Elections has consistently welcomed Department of Justice monitors to view our elections. We have appreciated advance notice that has been given and expect monitors to professionally perform their duties. We have honored all legal requirements and will continue to do so. We look forward to discussing the particulars of the monitoring effort.

The information requested will further assuage your concerns about our compliance with HAVA, given the comprehensive training Detroit election inspectors receive, and the considerable resources Detroit commits to election administration. The information will be transmitted on or before the July 23rd date.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice M. Winfrey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Janice M. Winfrey
City Clerk