

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6515

July 8, 2024

The Honorable Jocelyn Benson
Michigan Secretary of State
430 W. Allegan Street
Richard H. Austin Building – 4th Floor
Lansing, Michigan, 48918

Dear Secretary Benson,

We write today as members of both the Michigan congressional delegation and the House Committee on Small Business (the Committee) with great concern over the apparent and blatant weaponization of taxpayer resources to aid and abet President Biden’s re-election campaign in the state of Michigan. It appears the Biden Administration and your office have diverted funding away from supporting small businesses and used it for election purposes. This is unacceptable.

In March of this year, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced both a Memorandum of Understanding and a Memorandum of Agreement (collectively referred to as the “MOU”) regarding voter registration with the Michigan Department of State (MDOS). The MOU detailed the level of coordination between the two entities with the claimed goal of boosting voter registration in the state. Specifically, the MOU details a plan to create a unique URL for the SBA’s website that will direct visitors to the state of Michigan’s voter registration page, obligates the SBA to provide voter registration training to all personnel conducting activities under the MOU, and states that the SBA may invite MDOS to various in-person events to allow MDOS to register attendees to vote.¹

Perhaps even more egregious, the investigation conducted by the Committee found that 39 out of the 52 small business outreach events currently scheduled in Michigan from January through November 2024 coincidentally take place in counties with the highest populations of demographics targeted by the Democratic National Committee (DNC). Additionally, 100 percent of the visits to Michigan from the SBA Administrator and Deputy Administrator have taken place in counties with the highest populations of DNC target demographics. While the SBA claims no actual voter registration efforts have occurred, it is curious that the SBA Administrator, appointed to help all small businesses thrive, has concentrated her efforts in areas key to the Biden campaign securing re-election.

¹ Memorandum of Agreement between the state of Michigan and the U.S. Small Bus. Admin. (Mar. 18, 2024) available at https://smallbusiness.house.gov/uploadedfiles/redacted_-_03_moa_nvra_designated_federal_agency_-_final_version.pdf.

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Furthermore, on April 17th, 2024, a special advisor to Administrator Guzman's Chief of Staff was caught on camera saying, "anytime we go, we try to visit with a member of Congress if they're a Democrat ... because then we can help them get re-elected as well ... the White House was like, yes, go. ... Don't invite the other senator because he's a Republican. And don't invite the two members of Congress because they're Republicans."² This individual also went on to claim that Administrator Guzman's official travel is purposefully targeted to "indirectly campaign for Joe Biden."³

On President Biden's first day in office, Jen Psaki, then the White House Press Secretary, stated, "his objective and his commitment is to bring transparency and truth back to government—to share the truth, even when it's hard to hear."⁴ Unfortunately for those Americans who seek truth and transparency from their government, the Biden Administration has stonewalled Congress, which forced the Committee to issue rare subpoenas to two aides of the SBA.

Secretary Benson, you have also stated numerous times that "transparency in government is one of my top priorities."⁵ We write to you today to give you the opportunity to hold true to your commitment to transparency for the American people. We therefore request the following documents and information as soon as possible but no later than July 22, 2024

1. All documents and communications between and among MDOS officials and SBA officials, including contractors, relating to voter registration in Michigan, including but not limited to Executive Order 14019 and the MOU.
2. The MOU states, "each party will bear its own expenses in connection with the preparation, negotiation, and execution of the MOU." Provide all documents related to expenses incurred related to the MOU including but not limited to invoices, time sheets, and the accounts from which these expenses were paid.
3. The MOU states that it replaces and supersedes all prior agreements between the two parties relating to the subject matter. Provide all prior agreements between the SBA and MDOS.
4. Any document relied upon when developing the terms of the MOU with the SBA.
5. The name of the MDOS official designated as the point person to execute and/or implement the MOU.

² James O'Keefe (@JamesOKeefeIII), X (formerly Twitter) (Apr. 17, 2024, 3:57 PM) <https://x.com/JamesOKeefeIII/status/1780687148527579215>.

³ *Id.* The special advisor has since said these assertions he made were false.

⁴ *Press Briefing by Secretary Jen Psaki, January 20, 2021*, THE WHITE HOUSE (Jan. 20, 2021)

⁵ News Release, Michigan Dept. of State, Secretary Benson Launches New Online Government Transparency Tool During Sunshine Week (Mar. 14, 2024); *See also* News Release, Michigan Dept. of State, Secretary Benson Launches New Online FOIA Tool That Improves Government Transparency and Efficiency (Dec. 12, 2023).

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6. Any policy and procedure documents drafted for the execution and/or implementation of the MOU.
7. Evidence sufficient to show training that has taken place or will take place on the execution and/or implementation of the MOU.
8. Provide a list of events which have taken place in the districts of Republican members of Congress and indicate whether Senators' Peters and Stabenow were invited.
 - a. If either of the two Senators were invited but a Republican member of Congress was not, please detail the reasoning behind the lack of invitation.

The SBA's job is to help our nation's small businesses. Sadly, it appears the Biden Administration has abused the trust of the American taxpayer, betrayed the mission of the SBA, and weaponized the powers and resources of the federal government to serve his own re-election interests. We hope that by fulfilling your pledge of transparency, you can begin to rectify the broken trust in government both of your agencies are responsible for. The Committee on Small Business has broad authority to investigate "problems of all types of small business" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Roger Williams
Chairman
House Committee on Small Business



Lisa McClain
Member of Congress



Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Tim Walberg
Member of Congress

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Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress



John Moolenaar
Member of Congress



John James
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Isabel Guzman, Administrator, Small Business Administration
The Honorable Therese R. Meers, General Counsel, Small Business Administration
The Honorable Hampton Dellinger, Special Counsel, U.S. Office of Special Counsel
The Honorable Hannibal "Mike" Ware, Inspector General, U.S. Small Business Administration
The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer, Governor, State of Michigan
Jonathan Brater, Director of Elections, Michigan Department of State
The Honorable Nydia Velázquez, Ranking Member, House Committee on Small Business