

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 16, 2020

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TRUMP SUMMONS SHIRKEY, CHATFIELD TO WHITE HOUSE

President Donald Trump was meeting with Michigan's Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) and Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake), and several other Michigan legislators at the White House for a meeting today.

The meeting comes amid concerns that Trump is making ongoing attempts to award the state's 16 electoral votes to him. The state's voters backed Joe Biden for president over Donald Trump by 154,187 votes.

Democrats and others across the nation fear the meeting is a long shot by Trump to get friendly state legislatures to appoint electors who would overturn the will of the voters. This would happen if Trump convinced the state's board of canvassers to not certify Biden's victory in Michigan. If that happened, the legislature could then be called on to select electors. This would be unprecedented and potentially illegal.

Neither Chatfield, Shirkey, or their spokespersons commented on the meeting before today. Along with Shirkey, Speaker Pro Tem Jason Wentworth and Sen. Tom Barrett were among a Michigan delegation at the Reagan National Airport this morning. The delegation was surrounded by media and activists at the airport but did not openly engage with anyone.

In recent statements, both Shirkey and Chatfield have said they would not attempt to overturn Biden's win in the state by the Legislature awarding the state's 16 votes to Trump. Chatfield has said the candidate who received the most votes will win the state's electoral votes.

Chatfield also tweeted about the visit today saying, "No matter the party, when you have an opportunity to meet with the President of the United States, of course you take it. I won't apologize for that. In fact, I'm honored to speak with POTUS and proud to meet with him. And I look forward to our conversation."

COVID-19 SURGES, STATE CLOSES IN PERSON DINING, HIGH SCHOOLS

With reports of new COVID-19 cases continue to rise – the state reported 19,835 new cases for last Saturday, Sunday and Monday – Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced new COVID-19 restrictions at a press briefing Sunday night. The restrictions took effect on Wednesday.

Whitmer spoke on Sunday, along with Health and Human Services Chief Medical Executive Dr. Joneigh Khaldun and MDHHS Director Robert Gordon.

The new three weeks of restrictions from Nov. 18 through Dec. 8, 2020 include:

- A ban on in-person learning at high schools and colleges
- Suspension of high school sports
- A ban on indoor dining at all restaurants and bars
- Required remote work if possible
- Theaters, stadiums, arcades, bowling centers, ice rinks, indoor water parks and group fitness classes are also prohibited.

The restrictions keep indoor gatherings limited to 10 people, but add that no more than two households can meet in the same place. Outdoor gatherings, including funerals, can only be 25 people.

Things that remain open include: elementary and middle schools (can still be in-person if their local school district allows it), retail businesses, salons, barber shops, public transit, child-care centers, parks, and health-care facilities. Professional sports are still allowed, and college sports will be restricted to no fans.

The restrictions fall under the MDHHS Public Health Order. The orders are similar to Whitmer's executive orders struck down by the Michigan Supreme Court in early October.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) said on Monday that the order is an attack "on the little guy," and that the state doesn't need mandates, "We need people to be informed, inspired and given something they can do: calls to action."

He does not support a movement by a handful of Republicans to begin impeachment hearings for Whitmer, saying "I understand why people feel that way. I vigorously and vehemently disagree with many of the actions our governor has taken over these last few months, but I think that our energy would be better spent on other things besides that."

TRUMP CONTACTS WAYNE COUNTY BOARD OF CANVASSERS

Wayne County Board of Canvassers attracted national attention this week, when the two Republicans on the board, Monica Palmer and William Hartmann, first voted to certify election results in Wayne County, followed by signing affidavits saying they were bullied into voting for certification.

The canvassers originally voted against certification on Tuesday, and voicing concerns that some Detroit precincts had absentee ballot books that did not match the number of ballots cast.

The county canvassers later voted again and certified the results 4-0.

Palmer and Hartmann signed the affidavits on Wednesday, saying they believe the vote should not be certified, and that they voted after "hours of sustained pressure" and after getting promises that their concerns about the election would be investigated.

"We deserve better — but more importantly, the American people deserve better — than to be forced to accept an outcome achieved through intimidation, deception and threats of violence," Palmer and Hartmann said in a statement on Wednesday.

Trump reached out to both canvassers on Tuesday evening, thanking them for their support. Palmer said that Trump contacted her after to check “to make sure to make sure I was safe after seeing/hearing about the threats and doxing.”

Trump and his campaign claimed widespread voter fraud in the Detroit area, but have not shown evidence past usual errors since corrected.

State officials said on Thursday that the county cannot revoke its certification of the election results.

A spokesperson for the Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson said that there is “no legal mechanism for them to rescind their vote. Their job is done, and the next step in the process is for the Board of State Canvassers to meet and certify.”

Benson said that there will be a post-election audit in Wayne County and any community with “significant clerical error.”

The State Board of Canvassers is expected to meet Monday.

Attorney General Dana Nessel has declined to comment on whether or not she might open an investigation into Trump’s actions.

MM&A Briefs

Whitmer Requests Extension for Guard

Gov. Whitmer requested an extension of the authority to use the Michigan National Guard for COVID-19 related activities via a letter to President Trump this week. The request asks for assistance through March 31, 2021.

She requested the extension due to the dramatic rise in cases over the past few weeks, and due to the fact that companies are getting closer to having a usable vaccine.

New House Committee Chairs Announced

The new chair of the House Appropriations Committee for the upcoming legislative term will be Rep. Thomas Albert (R-Lowell). Rep. Jim Lilly (R-Park Twp.) will be the new chair of the Rules and Competitiveness Committee, which replaces the current Ways and Means Committee.

Republican House Speaker-elect Rep. Jason Wentworth (R-Farwell), made the announcements this week. The complete committees will be announced in January.