

October, 2025 Newsletter

Shia Dems: Celebrating and fighting for democratic values

NO KINGS MASS DEMONSTRATION PLANNED FOR OCTOBER 18

America's pro-democracy movement is gearing up for what may be its biggest mass demonstration yet against the increasingly militaristic Trump administration. Popular resistance has snowballed, in an organic fashion, from a large **President's Day protest** in February, through **mass demonstrations** in April, to the first **No Kings** protest on Trump's birthday in June — which drew millions to counter the president's parade/military display in Washington.



After a series of smaller summer protests, the movement will be back in the streets and cities of America on October 18 for **No Kings 2**— a sequel organizers are expecting to outshine the original, amid revulsion to Trump's brutal campaign of mass deportation led by masked agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and an increasingly **lawless** president who claims "a lot" of Americans would "**like a dictator.**"

Find a location near you by clicking here: **No Kings**

A core principle behind all No Kings events is a commitment to nonviolent action. Participants are expected to seek to de-escalate any potential confrontation with those who disagree with our values and to act lawfully at these events. Weapons of any kind, including those legally permitted, should not be brought to events.



ATTORNEY GENERAL NESSEL SECURES ORDER REQUIRING MASSACHUSETTS MAN TO TAKE DOWN FRAUDULENT POLITICAL WEBSITES



mi.gov/agnews

BE ALERT FOR FRAUDULENT POLITICAL WEBSITES

Last week, the Ingham County Circuit Court ordered Donald Peltier, of South Hadley, MA, to take down or prevent access to fraudulent political websites after Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel filed a lawsuit against him in October, 2024. Peltier operated multiple websites claiming to be associated with the Democratic and Republican parties, to obtain donations from the public.

“Michiganders should be able to support causes they believe in without having their hard-earned dollars taken by scammers,” Nessel said. “My office will continue to pursue those who exploit political contributions through deception.” With the midterm election cycle coming up, Attorney General Nessel is reminding voters to remain vigilant and carefully evaluate websites before donating to them.



Learn more about **social media and digital safety**.

Both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have official websites. Michigan residents interested in donating to a political party, campaign, or Political Action Committee (PAC), should keep the following in mind:

- Be proactive: Seek out causes or campaigns that align with your values, rather than responding to unsolicited fundraisers.
- Don't rely on names alone: Scammers often create names that sound official.
- Conduct research: Federal PACs are required to register with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Review their records to determine whether they are well-established or potentially fraudulent.
- Be cautious of scam PACs targeting seniors: Elders are often targets for scammers.
- Be wary of phone calls and texts asking for donations: These tactics are commonly used by bad actors.

- Cross-reference information: Visit the PAC's website, but also verify their legitimacy through reputable, independent sources. A website's existence doesn't guarantee it is trustworthy.

Residents who believe they have been solicited by or have donated to a scam PAC should report the potential scam to the FBI, FEC, and the Department of Attorney General.

STATE IMPLEMENTS ACTIONS TO INCREASE VACCINE ACCESS

Following changes to federal vaccine policy in September 2025, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed an executive directive to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines remain widely accessible to residents. The directive was issued in response to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) placing new restrictions on the eligibility for the updated 2025–2026 COVID-19 vaccines.

To counter the federal restrictions, Governor Whitmer issued Executive Directive 2025-7 on September 17, directing state agencies to remove barriers to vaccine access. Additionally, on September 19, Michigan's Chief Medical Executive issued a "standing recommendation" allowing anyone aged six months and older to receive the vaccine, bypassing stricter federal guidelines. Through these state actions, Michigan health officials consider anyone aged six months and older eligible for the updated vaccine by classifying "not receiving a dose" as an underlying condition.

The directive also mandates that state departments ensure health insurance plans, including Medicaid, cover the vaccine to the extent possible. State departments were also ordered to provide clear information to healthcare providers and the public about the vaccine.

Learn more here: **Governor Whitmer Signs Executive Directive, Ensuring Michiganders Can Access Vaccines to Stay Healthy Ahead of Cold, COVID-19, and Flu Season**

PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH BY CURATING ONLINE CONTENT

When graphic videos go viral, like the recent fatal shooting of Charlie Kirk, it can feel impossible to protect yourself from seeing things you did not consent to see. But there are steps you can take:

- Turn off autoplay or limit sensitive content (**see graphic, below**). Note that these settings can vary depending on device, operating system and app version, and can change.
- Use keyword filters. Most platforms allow you to mute or block specific words, phrases or hashtags. This reduces the chance that graphic or violent content slips into your feed.
- Curate your feed. Unfollow accounts that regularly share disturbing images. Follow accounts that bring you knowledge, connection or joy instead.
- Set boundaries. Reserve phone-free time during meals or before bed. Research shows that intentional breaks reduce stress and improve well-being.

Steps for turning off autoplay or blocking sensitive content

Social media	Steps
Bluesky	Settings → Content and media → uncheck Autoplay videos and GIFs
Facebook app	Profile picture (Menu) → Settings → Media → Autoplay in Feed and Stories → Never
Facebook browser	Profile picture (Account) → Settings and privacy → Settings → Media → toggle off Autoplay animations
Instagram	Profile picture → Menu icon (three horizontal lines) → Content preferences → Sensitive content: Less; Suggest political content: Off; Specific words and phrases: add words
TikTok app	Profile button → Menu button (three horizontal lines) → Settings and privacy → Content preferences → Restricted mode: On; Filter keywords: add words
X (Twitter) website (not app)	More → Settings and privacy → Privacy and safety → Content you see → uncheck Display media that may contain sensitive content
YouTube app	You (Profile) → Gear icon (Settings) → Playback → Autoplay next video → toggle off
YouTube browser	Settings → Playback and performance → Browsing → toggle off Video previews

STATE BUDGET DEADLINE LOOMS

The immediate effects of a state government shutdown are unclear, but unless Michigan lawmakers compromise and pass a 2025-2026 budget by October 1, which is the start of the new fiscal year, possible impacts include thousands of state employees might not return to work; some government operations and services may slow or be halted altogether; Secretary of State branch offices and state parks may close; and road construction sites may be left unattended.

A protracted shutdown would damage the state even further by potentially harming the state's credit rating as well as local governments and schools that depend on state payments.

"We're continuing ongoing negotiations and we're hopeful that we'll have a deal in place by the deadline," said State Budget Office spokesperson Lauren Leeds. "While we have begun contingency planning for different scenarios, it's still too early in the process to determine what a shutdown would look like. Our focus remains on enacting a full budget that protects Michiganders and our economy."

Budget negotiations between Whitmer's office, the Republican-majority House and the Democratic-majority Senate have stalled this year amid funding and policy differences, **lower revenue projections** and **a desire for a long-term road funding plan**.

Whitmer ramped up public pressure on lawmakers last week, **calling on them** to end the impasse and swiftly agree on a compromise budget that she can enact.

PROPOSED STATE BUDGET SLASHES MDARD FUNDING, IMPACTING FARMS AND FAMILIES

The director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Dr. Tim Boring, has issued a press release in response to proposed cuts to the MDARD budget: "MDARD is here to protect Michigan residents, support farmers and producers who put food on the table and create economic opportunities within the industry. The House budget plan slashes more than a third of MDARD's budget, including nearly half of our general fund. This includes significant cuts to food safety work, emergency



response and preparedness, and customer service operations. At a time when our federal partners are pushing for state governments to pick up the load, the House budget plan defunds our basic functions that help Michigan farmers continue operations, keep Michiganders safe from illness, and more.

I'm also concerned about what these proposed cuts mean for inspections that are required for Michigan products to reach international markets. Moreover, proposed budget and staff reductions would hurt our ability to process business-related applications efficiently and help Michigan products get to market quickly. House budget cuts will make government work worse for small business owners and threaten the rural economy.

Food, agriculture and forestry products account for nearly \$126 billion in economic impact annually, making the industry Michigan's second largest behind the automotive industry. Our work touches all of Michigan's 83 counties. Michigan needs a budget that recognizes the vital piece MDARD – and our dedicated workforce – plays in our state's success."

MDARD's budget accounts for less than two tenths of a percent of the overall state budget. The House version of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposes cutting more than 34 percent of MDARD's budget, putting Michigan's food, farms and families at risk.

Counseling and suicide prevention efforts for Michigan farmers would also shrink by more than half next year if proposed state budgets are adopted. Farmers have one of the highest rates of suicide in Michigan and the nation. "For farmers, mental health is just as essential as crop health or market access," said Quentin Tyler, director of MSU Extension. "When Michigan producers face mental health challenges, the impact ripples through families, communities and our entire food system."

MSU provides support to farm workers through its **Legacy of the Land** program, which includes business management training, farm financial analysis, mental health first aid and teletherapy. Without state money, the program would lose 56% of its total funding, hobbling services that "saves lives," said Remington Rice, who leads the managing farm stress program for the Michigan State University Extension. The program has paid for 550 therapy visits and reached over 10,000 people across Michigan through educational presentations and workshops.

Resources for farmer stress and suicide prevention:

- Legacy of the Land farm support services: Contact the services [here](#).
- Farm Aid's Farmer Hotline: 1-800-FARM-AID(327-6243)
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Dial 988
- Michigan 211 Hotline: Dial 211
- Farm stress teletherapy: Contact the service [here](#)

***Rural Resilience* — a free, online self-paced course open to the public.** Recognizing the high levels of stress affecting America's farmers and ranchers, the Cooperative Extension System, Farm Credit, American Farm Bureau Federation, and National Farmers Union have worked together to bring this course online for the public. In *Rural Resilience* (available at canr.msu.edu/courses/rural-resilience-open-online-course), you learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and suicide, ways to effectively communicate with people under stress, and how to reduce stigma related to mental health concerns.

The content in this course was created by Extension professionals at Michigan State University, University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin, Montana State University and South Dakota State University. Development for the course was financially supported by the national partners. Combining agricultural knowledge and evidence-based behavioral health approaches, this course better equips farmers, their families, and the agricultural community with tools and resources to help in time of need.

DEMOCRATIC LAWMAKERS TARGETED IN BOMB THREATS

On September 11, Michigan Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist and State Senator Jeremy Moss were the targets of separate, but related, bomb threats at their homes. The threats occurred amid a national trend of political violence and specific threats against Democratic lawmakers and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Gilchrist reported a "credible bomb threat" at his Detroit residence. The threat was sent via email and phone call and claimed an explosive device had been placed at his building's door and would detonate when someone opened it, or within a few hours. Gilchrist was not home at the time, but his family resides in the building. Law enforcement, including the Detroit Police Department and the Michigan State Police, quickly responded and cleared the threat. Gilchrist thanked law enforcement for their swift action and for keeping his family safe. In a statement, Gilchrist condemned the act, linking it to the murder of conservative activist Charlie Kirk and an escalating pattern of political violence. He emphasized that such intimidation would not silence him.

On September 12, Jeremy Moss, president pro tempore of the Michigan Senate, reported that he had received a "detailed and specific message" threatening him with a bomb at his Southfield home. Local and state police, along with a bomb-sniffing dog, responded and found no immediate danger. The FBI Counter Terrorism Task Force is now leading the investigation. In his statement, Moss described the political environment as "untenable" and mentioned an influx of bigoted and aggressive messages directed at him. He affirmed that he would not be intimidated by threats of violence.

Other Democratic lawmakers across the country, including those in New Mexico and Rhode Island, also reported receiving similar threats around the same time. In Utah, State House Democrats received threatening voice messages in the hours after Charlie Kirk's death, accusing them of being responsible for the killing. Lawmakers were called "murderous terrorists," and some canceled scheduled public events out of caution. Also on September 11, 2025, a bomb threat was received at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters, prompting an investigation by Capitol Police. The threat was ultimately deemed not credible.

"BILL OF RIGHTS" SEEKS TO REFORM UTILITY COSTS, UNDUE INFLUENCE

In September, 2025, the **"Michigan Ratepayer Bill of Rights"** was introduced by Michigan Democratic lawmakers. The bills are intended to address high energy costs, power outages, and perceived undue influence from utility companies like DTE Energy and Consumers Energy. Key provisions proposed in the legislative package include:

- **Compensation for outages:** The bills would guarantee fair and increased compensation for customers, including renters, who experience long-lasting power outages. Compensation would start at \$5 per hour for the first hour of an outage and progressively increase.
- **Protection from utility shutoffs:** New legislation, known as the "Protect Kids & Seniors from the Cold Act," would ensure vulnerable households with children or seniors are enrolled in a mandatory shutoff protection program during the winter heating season (November 1–March 31).
- **Tying rates to performance:** The proposal would require utility rate increases to be tied to the company's performance and reliability.
- **Banning political contributions:** It seeks to ban political donations to state lawmakers from the utility companies they are responsible for overseeing.
- **Performance-based compensation:** The legislation would prevent customers from funding performance-based bonuses and other perks for utility executives.
- **Allow for community solar:** Provisions would ensure residents can generate their own affordable energy through solar panels on their homes or through community solar projects.

This bill complements the **Clean Energy & Jobs Act**, which will require Michigan's energy to come from 50% renewable sources by 2030 and 60% by 2035, expand access to energy efficiency programs like rooftop solar with dedicated spending to low-income communities, and authorize the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) to regulate big energy utility companies on a broader array of issues impacting residents.

NEWS OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

DEPT. OF ED CANCELS SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

The U.S. Department of Education is canceling millions of dollars in grants for special education teacher training, parent resource centers and more, saying that they don't align with Trump priorities. The agency's Office of Special Education Programs terminated grants for 25 programs funded under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The money, totaling more than \$14.8 million, was for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1 and was expected by state education departments, nonprofits, universities and other entities across 16 states.

The Education Department's Rehabilitation Services Administration also ended another nine grants for disability-focused initiatives worth over \$3.5 million.

"The department has undertaken a review of grants and determined that the grant specified above provides funding for programs that reflect the prior administration's priorities and policy preferences and conflict with those of the current administration," notices sent in late August and early September state. The canceled grants include funding for community parent resource centers, preparing special education teachers and related service providers, Braille and interpreter training and programs supporting those who are deafblind, among other initiatives.

Read more here: **Trump Administration Yanks Funds From Dozens Of Special Education Programs -Disability Scoop**

TRUMP OFFICIALS TO IMPLICATE TYLENOL IN AUTISM RISK

The Trump administration is on Monday, September 22, expected to tie pregnant women's use of the popular medicine Tylenol to a risk of autism, contrary to medical guidelines, **the Washington Post** has reported.

Trump officials are also expected to announce an effort to explore how the drug leucovorin could purportedly and potentially treat autism, according to the Post report published Sunday, which cited four sources with knowledge of the plans who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the announcement had not been made.

The Tylenol link counters established research from **April 2024, in which the Journal of the American Medical Association** found that using acetaminophen during pregnancy was not associated with an increased risk of autism, ADHD or intellectual disability in children. The study, funded by National Institutes of Health and conducted by Karolinska Institute in Sweden and Drexel University, is the largest of its kind, and was based on data analysis from almost 2.5 million Swedish children born between 1995 and 2019. Medical guidelines say it is safe for pregnant women to take Tylenol, the over-the-counter pain medication whose active ingredient is known as acetaminophen in the US and paracetamol elsewhere in the world.



Thanks to everyone who participated in or attended the Ovid Carriage Days Parade (above), or the annual ShiaDems picnic at McCurdy Park!





SHIA DEMS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct 8: People & Rural Michigan present **Economics, Healthcare & Agriculture**; Owosso Armory; 5:30 to 8:00 PM. Speakers include **Mallory McMorrow**, candidate for U.S. Senate, member of the Michigan Senate and Majority Whip; **Mark Totten**, candidate for Michigan Attorney General; and **Stephen Schlaack**, former SCDP Chair and Coordinator for Owosso Farmers Market and Moonlight Market. Light snacks provided; monthly membership meeting immediately follows.

Oct 16: Prospective Candidate Open House. Owosso Armory; 6:00 to 8:00PM. Shiawassee County needs Democrats on 2026 Ballots. Find out what positions need to be filled, the importance of raising awareness now and how the Democratic Party can help. Cider & donuts; short presentations from elected officials; information about campaign process and rules; and informal discussions. Questions to candidatechair@shiawasseedems.org

Nov 12: Honoring Veterans and Voting Rights and Chilli Dinner; Owosso Armory; 6:00 to 8:00 PM; Free taste of chili dinner to everyone that brings four shelf-stable items for donation to a local food pantry. **Speakers: Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson**, Candidate for Governor of Michigan; and **Bridget Brink**, candidate for District 7 Congressional Seat and previous Ambassador to Ukraine.

Dec 10: Membership Meeting and Holiday Mingle; McCurdy Park Community Center, Corunna, 6:30 to 8:00 PM; Speaker: **Matt Maasdam**; candidate for District 7 Congressional Seat and former Navy Seal. Membership meeting with holiday snacks immediately following.

Please email chair@shiawasseedems.org OR vicechair@shiawasseedems.org with specific questions about membership and events.

