

Reps. Moolenaar, Amos, Casperson, Walker, Caswell, Booher, Moore, Elsenheimer, Kahn, Kooiman, Sheltroun, Spade, Gleason, Espinoza, McDowell and Caul offered the following resolution:

House Resolution No. 305.

A resolution to express objection to the use of the state's main web sites to promote specific policy points of view through online petitions.

Whereas, The resources of the state of Michigan are meant to serve the citizens of the state in a fair and responsible manner. These resources include the state's web sites, which are access points for information and services for many residents, visitors, and businesses each day; and

Whereas, The state's main internet portals, including Michigan.gov and the first screens linked from it to pages for the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government, include a prominent link encouraging visitors to sign online petitions. In addition, the main pages for travel and recreation information and online services also include this link to the petitions; and

Whereas, While there is clearly a place for state officials to advocate for specific positions on public policy matters--indeed, it is the role of many in state government to do so--internet petition drives should not be part of general information and public service components of the state's web postings. There should be a clear differentiation between web sites providing services from those advocating public policy positions; and

Whereas, Online forums and petition campaigns present a single point of view, even on controversial issues. Including petition links on a page that does not have advocacy as its main function does not recognize the rights of those with other opinions. These one-sided efforts offer no options for citizens with other points of view;

Whereas, There are other problems with the online petitions. Names and address of those signing such petitions could be subject to inappropriate uses, including being sold to political organizations, commercial marketers, or other organizations. There is no warning presented to those signing their names;

Whereas, Placing petition links on general information and public service web sites leads people to believe the petitions reflect the state's official position on policy matters. While a person visiting the site of an individual state official expects to find points of view on policy issues, a person using the state web site to get basic information or use services should not be confronted with politically motivated petition campaigns. This is a potentially serious misuse of state resources; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we strongly object to the use of the state's main information and service web pages to promote petition gathering campaigns; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor, the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, and the Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, and the heads of each department of the executive branch of state government.