

REPUBLICAN “FREEDOM:” PEPPER SPRAY, LOCKED DOORS, AND LEGALISTIC GAMING

Yesterday, both MI’s House and Senate passed so-called “right to work” bills.

The measure will be unpopular enough in this state—particularly if Democrats and unions successfully communicate to all workers the law will mean a cut in pay even for non-union employees.

But one of the initial reactions has to do with how the measure was passed. Even before the vote was taken, the conservative Holland Sentinel (in Erik Prince’s hometown and where Dick DeVos, who pushed Republicans to pass this, has a mansion) scolded Republicans for rushing through bills now after they had taken much of the summer off.

Michigan lawmakers are in a headlong rush to cram a year’s worth of policy making into a few frantic weeks. The same legislators who took off much of the summer and fall for vacation and campaigning are now trying to resolve issues ranging from right-to-work to education reform to wolf hunting in their “lame duck” session. The haste is unnecessary and simply bad government — the best thing senators and representatives could do for Michigan citizens right now would be to go home.

A lame-duck legislative session — the meetings between the November general election and the expiration of the current legislators’ terms at the end of the year — is always a dangerous time. With the election passed and, in many cases, their departure from office

imminent, legislators often cast votes and push bills in a lame-duck session they would never do if they had to answer to voters for their choices.

After last night's votes, the Detroit Free Press (the more liberal of Detroit's two newspapers) called the lame duck shenanigans a rampage.

If the Michigan Legislature maintains its current pace, it won't feel right to call the weeks between the election and the end of the year the "lame-duck session" any longer. This year's lame-duck session has been more like a raging bull – or a runaway steamroller, flattening constituencies and citizens' rights in the process.

It called out a number of the tools Republicans are using (notably, appropriations that will make these laws referendum-proof) to make these rash decisions even more dangerous.

And all that's before you look at how the anti-labor bill was passed yesterday: The police shut protestors out of the Capitol (one was even overheard saying they were keeping just the union members out). To get rid of a few protestors, they sprayed pepper spray inside the building. Even after Democrats got an injunction to open the Capitol, the House declared itself immune from the injunction. And as they're doing with an Emergency Manager bill meant to override the referendum that eliminated Governor Snyder's changes to that anti-democratic policy, they attached appropriations to the anti-labor law to make sure it couldn't be overturned via referendum.

The biggest irony? To introduce this gross abuse of democracy, Snyder used the word "freedom" eleven times. This is what Republicans think freedom is: not only the "freedom" to work for \$1,500 less a year, the "freedom" to have more accidents on the job, the "freedom" to send our

kids to crummier schools. But also the kind of “freedom” delivered with mobs of cops holding out citizens, the “freedom” to be pepper sprayed, the “freedom” that can’t be overturned by democratic vote.

This is what Republicans have been talking about when they discuss “freedom” all along, I guess.