

I'm Senator Elissa Slotkin from the great state of Michigan, and we are here to introduce the Protect Our Polls Act.

What this bill does, essentially, is shut off avenues that President Trump can use to send our military in uniform or federal law enforcement to intervene in our elections.

I want to thank my colleagues who are behind me: Senator Padilla, who heads up much of our election work, as well as Senators Baldwin, Gallego, Kelly, Klobuchar, who aren't here, Rosen, and Warnock. We made the decision to include as original co-sponsors those of us from swing states, from states that have been targeted for our voter rolls, from states that are right now being sued by the Trump administration over our voter rolls, and where President Trump has shown an oppressive or obsessive focus on our elections in particular. It's an important signal that we're doing this together.

For some of us, we've already seen this movie. I think all of us were here on January 6, 2021. So, just to review the bidding—and why this bill has come together—in May of 2020, months and months before the 2020 election, Trump was already talking about his lack of confidence and fraud in the upcoming 2020 elections. He said for the first time in May of 2020 that if he didn't win in 2020, then the election was rigged.

Members of Congress, members of the House and Senate, wrote strongly worded letters. We said things on TV. But to be honest, I think we had a failure of imagination to really understand what this president would actually do in reality.

Obviously, he lost in 2020, and the next thing we all knew, we were here on January 6. Many of us were on the House floor, on the floor of the Senate. In my case, I was barricading myself in my office because of the attack on the Capitol.

So, I think, you know "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." What we have done today is an attempt to try and curtail the president's ability to send uniformed military personnel or federal law enforcement to our polling places.

In the last six months alone, the president has said that the 2020 election was rigged more than 100 times, including just this week. In the State of the Union, while we were all sitting on the House floor, he said again, "If my side doesn't win in November of '26, then the election was rigged."

Back in 2020, I will take note he drafted an executive order that called on the National Guard to seize ballots and voting machines in purple states, including the State of Michigan. He did not sign that executive order, but in January of this year, he regretted

that he hadn't signed that executive order. He told a journalist, "I wish I had sent in the uniformed military to collect ballots back in 2020."

He is demanding voter rolls from more than 30 states, including the State of Michigan, and just recently is trying to change the laws of the U.S. Postal Service and ban voting by mail in states that refuse to hand over their voter rolls. He is trying to nationalize elections, and he is telling us in his own words what he is trying to do.

On top of that, Trump's nominees for his cabinet positions have come up here and refused to rule out sending uniformed military or federal law enforcement being sent to the polls on Election Day.

I personally have asked five different cabinet officials whether they would rule this out—whether it is okay to deploy the military or federal law enforcement to our polls. From Secretary Hegseth to Secretary Mullin, none of them would unilaterally rule it out.

So instead of waiting to see what happens, we are trying to take action here.

We are introducing the Protect Our Polls Act, and it does three big things.

First, it requires that President Trump come to Congress for approval before he would ever deploy uniformed military to our polls. There is only one legal way to send military to the polls on our books and that is to quote, "repel armed enemies of the United States." We have never done this in our history—not during World War II, when we were engaged in combat operations not just months after 9/11, when we had been attacked on our own soil. We have never in our history sent uniformed military into polling places during an election. So, if Trump wants to that and use this narrow exception, he should come to Congress and seek approval to do that.

Number 2, it cuts off any funding for the uniformed military or federal law enforcement to seize ballots or voting machines. It is already illegal for uniformed military to touch and seize ballots and voting machines. It breaks the chain of custody and therefore threatens the enfranchisement of voters. It makes it easier for those votes to be thrown out. It is illegal right now and we want to make sure that it is reinforced in law and ensure that not a single taxpayer dollar can be used in any of that illegal activity.

Number 3, this bill protects our service members from illegal orders. If Trump goes ahead and tries to send military to collect votes, to collect voting machines, this bill is meant to protect them from that illegal order. That has obviously been a big thing for me, Senator Kelly, and others.

What this comes down to, is Congress trying to make it impossible for the president to steal an election.

The reason we're doing this today—and I'm happy to talk about it once I hand it over to my team and not trying to do this in any other body and not in a bipartisan way, is that I have actually tried three different times through the NDAA amendment process to bring up versions of this bill. We tried, and on a party line vote All three of those amendments failed just last week on the NDAA markup

So, we're here doing this as swing states, because we think the most important thing we need to do as senators is protect our polls and protect our democracy during this election year.