

Protester arrested ahead of "Hands Off" rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Ashley O'Hara
10 April 2025

Emerson Wolfe, a familiar figure in the local political activist community, was taken into custody just as the "Hands Off" rally against the Trump administration was set to begin in Grand Rapids, Michigan on Saturday, April 5.

The arrest sparked outrage over the motivations behind law enforcement's actions and its impact on the right to free speech. Wolfe believes the arrest was strategic, aimed at preventing the group from exercising their right to free speech.

Wolfe was served a warrant regarding an alleged failure to obey a lawful order from a police officer during a Women's Day March on March 8. During the arrest, Wolfe requested that bystanders record the interaction and can be heard expressing discomfort, stating, "You're hurting me," as seen in the video footage.

In a statement, Wolfe expressed frustration with the actions of law enforcement, saying, "They targeted me because I was leading the march safety team and keeping the community safe."

Wolfe's message to the community is one of resilience and determination. "DO NOT BACK DOWN," Wolfe urged. "Let this catalyze you, let it motivate you, and let it inspire you to take more action!"

Charlie Snedeker, who also recorded the arrest of Wolfe, posted on Facebook, "Today I volunteered to help with 'safety' at the 'Hands Off' event in downtown GR. As I made my way to last minute instructions, this is what happened to the 'safety' lead person. The group scrambled to reorganize and delegate as the crowd started to grow. Everything quickly came together. Sure does seem odd GR Police Dept. waited till today to execute their warrant."

As part of the protest by millions in more than 1,600

locations across the US, the Grand Rapids "Hands Off" rally proceeded despite the arrest. The event drew people from throughout the area who wanted to express their opposition to a wide range of issues, including the Trump administration's cuts to social programs, mass layoff of government employees, attacks on democratic rights, the genocide in Gaza and the threat of fascism and dictatorship in the US.

Over 4,000 people from all walks of life, many arriving with handmade signs, crowded Rosa Parks Circle in the city center. Attendees responded enthusiastically to the campaign by representatives of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party, which included a literature table and the distribution of a statement directed to the "Hands Off" rallies.

Many students, young people, workers and retirees stopped to discuss the issues and expressed their opposition to both the Democrats and Republicans. They were interested in learning more about the fight to mobilize the working class against capitalism, the source of Trump's attacks on basic rights, and for socialism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact