



# ***Under the Dome***

## *Legislative Update for Clinton County Democrats*

January 11, 2026

### **Michigan's Minimum Wage Increases**

New Years Day 2026 saw implementation of a new state law that increases the state's minimum wage from \$12.48 an hour to \$13.73. The wage will increase to \$15.00 on January 1, 2027 and be increased annually after that to reflect the rate of inflation as calculated by the Midwest Consumer Price Index

Other sections of the new law will do the following:

- Tipped workers will see an increase in their minimum wage on February 21<sup>st</sup> from \$4.74 an hour to 38% of the new minimum wage, or \$5.49 an hour. The tipped wage will increase gradually over the next years, topping out at 50% of the state's minimum wage on January 1, 2031.
- Workers aged 16-17 will have a minimum wage equal to 85% of the state wage, or \$11.67 an hour.
- Tie-barred to the wage increase is another bill requiring employers to provide 30-72 hours of paid sick leave to workers, depending on the size of the business.

The enactment of the wage increase will finally resolve an 8-year battle that saw voters approve a wage increase on the 2018 ballot. Republicans voted to gut that voter approved proposal and passed a much weaker increase after the election.

The Michigan Supreme Court ruled the Republican "adopt and amend" action to be unconstitutional and ordered the original proposal to take effect on February 21, 2025. Businesses opposing the increase and some tipped employees who worried about decreased tip income pressured the legislature to revisit the issue in early 2025.



State Senator Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores), the sponsor of the minimum wage increase bill, hailed enactment of the legislation as a way for Michigan working families keep up with inflation.

"A dollar simply does not go as far as it once used to, and as the cost of everything from gas to groceries increases, so too should workers' paychecks," said Hertel. "Not only are higher wages beneficial for workers, but they're good for businesses and our economy as a whole."

"That's why I fought for the acceleration of Michigan's minimum wage," said Hertel. "Because when folks have more money in their wallet, they're better able to support their families and participate fully in our economy."

More information on the minimum wage and sick leave changes can be found at [Update on Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act & the Minimum Wage Law](#)

## Nessel Rules Republican Budget Cut Unconstitutional

A Republican effort to use a little-known section of the state Budget Act to slash \$645 million from the 2025 budget has been ruled unconstitutional by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel.

State Senator Sarah Anthony, D-Lansing, requested the opinion after House Speaker Matt Hall used an obscure provision of the law that allowed a majority of the Republican controlled House Appropriations Committee to reject \$645 million in multi-year work-projects previously enacted into law.

The money in question will fund infrastructure, housing, food support and funds for new parents. In the past, those projects could be funded over several years after being signed into law, based on requests from the State Budget Office. Hall argued that the Budget Act allowed one legislative Appropriations Committee to reject the Budget Office request, allowing the work projects to lapse at the end of the year.

Nessel said the sections cited by Hall violated two sections of the state Constitution; the Separation of Powers and Bicameralism and Presentment requirements.



AG Dana Nessel

“By empowering a single legislative committee to negate the State Budget Director’s work-project designations, the statute reserves the very administrative control that the separation of powers forbids,” Nessel said. “This disapproval mechanism effectively creates a ‘legislative veto’ — or, more accurately, a ‘legislative committee veto.’ This comprises an unconstitutional reservation of administrative control that interferes with the executive branch’s core function of executing the laws.”

Michigan attorney general opinions have the force of law unless overturned by a Michigan court. Governor Whitmer immediately ordered that the work projects continue. Hall indicated that he would appeal Nessel’s ruling in the courts.

[The full opinion from Attorney General Nessel can be found here \(PDF\)](#)

## Senate Dem Control at Stake in Special Election

A special election could shake up the political landscape in the Michigan Senate.

The 35<sup>th</sup> District seat, which includes Midland, Saginaw and Bay City, became vacant when Kristin McDonald Rivet was elected to Congress. McDonald Rivet won the district in 2022 by a 53%–47% margin, likely making it a toss-up in a special election. The primary election to fill the vacant seat will be held on February 3<sup>rd</sup> with the general election set for May 5<sup>th</sup>.

The Senate currently has a 19-18 Democratic split. With the vacant seat, the 19 Democrats constitute a majority and 19 votes, one more than half of the body, is enough to pass a bill. If Democrats win the special election, they will continue majority control by a 20-18 margin with 20 votes needed to pass a bill.

If the Republican candidate wins, there will be a 19-19 split and things get interesting. Democrats will likely continue in leadership roles and chair committees, thanks to the tie-breaking vote that can be cast by Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist on organizing the Senate, when all members traditionally vote.

However, putting together 20 votes to pass a bill can get a little tricky. The Lt. Governor can only cast a tie-breaking vote to approve a bill when there is a 19-19 split. If one or more Republicans don’t vote, there won’t be a tie for Gilchrist to break. And Democratic power in the Senate will be weakened.