



Under the Dome

Legislative Update for Clinton County Democrats

July 12, 2024

Legislature Approves “Make it in Michigan” FY25 Budget

The Michigan Legislature has approved an \$82.5 billion budget for the 2025 fiscal year. SB 747 appropriates \$59.1 billion for general government expenditures and HB 5507 allocates \$23.4 billion for school aid. The budget passed on mainly party line votes, with Democrats in favor and Republicans in opposition. The bills are currently being enrolled for presentation to the Governor for her signature.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer said the budget supports students, boosts public safety, builds affordable housing, and will help anyone "make it" in Michigan.

“We are once again setting Michigan up for success by making record investments that will benefit everyone across the state without raising taxes by a penny,” said Governor Whitmer. “Together, we are getting things done that make a real difference in people’s lives and ensuring everyone can ‘make it’ in Michigan.”

Two Lansing area legislators played a major role in crafting the budget.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Sarah Anthony (D-Lansing) said the budget is more than numbers on a page. “We’ve transformed once-in-a-generation investments into our annual priorities, creating a moral document that truly provides ongoing support for the people of Michigan and builds them up,” said Anthony.



House Appropriations Committee Chair Angela Witwer (D-Delta Twp.) said the budget continues a commitment to put people over politics. “We are making fiscally responsible investments in communities across Michigan, ensuring our state is a place everyone can find a job, start a family, open a business and live safely,” said Witwer.

Highlights of the budget include:

- Pays off some Michigan Public School Employees’ Retirement System liabilities early, while protecting teacher retirement benefits, freeing up \$670 million that can be invested into classrooms to help children learn.
- \$50 million deposit into the Budget Stabilization Fund, which will bring the grand total in the rainy-day fund to nearly \$2.2 billion by the end of FY25.
- Several local projects, including \$10 million for the Potter Park Zoo and \$1 million for infrastructure improvements at the Lansing Lugnuts baseball stadium.
- \$100 million for affordable housing projects, including \$15 million for Ingham County support programs.

- Almost \$1 billion in economic development projects, including \$500 million in the Strategic Outreach Attraction Reserve fund to attract new manufacturers and industries to Michigan helping to diversify our economy and compete nationally for high-paying jobs.
- \$4.2 billion for road and bridge construction projects, including \$1.7 billion in federal highway aid from President Biden’s Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- \$500 million for public health programs, including \$161.5 million to set up new Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics sites across the state, providing service to 35,000 additional individuals.
- Expands the Michigan Achievement Scholarship with the Michigan Guarantee to ensure every Michigan high school graduate can receive an associate degree or skilled certificate tuition-free at a community college, saving more than 18,000 students up to \$4,820 on tuition each year.
- \$509.4 million for water infrastructure to fund lead service line replacement and water infrastructure, and climate change mitigation.

House Votes to Restore Snyder’s 6 Week Unemployment Benefits Cut

On a party line vote, House Democrats have passed a bill to raise the maximum number of weeks for unemployment benefits from 20 weeks to 26 weeks.

Former Governor Snyder and a Republican controlled legislature rammed through a reduction in benefit weeks from 26 to 20 in 2011. Governor Whitmer reinstated the 26 weeks through an executive order during the covid pandemic in 2020, but that order has expired.

HB 5827, sponsored by Representative Karen Whitsett (D-Detroit) would permanently reverse the Snyder cuts, restoring the 26-week maximum. Whitsett said the bill “is just common sense” and “would bring back benefits that needed to be available in the first place.”

Michigan is currently one of only 8 states in the nation that provide a maximum benefit duration of less than 26 weeks.



Robert Joerg, Director of Government Affairs for the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA), said the 26-week restoration is the first of several reforms needed in the unemployment system.

“LIUNA members, like many other Michiganders, know that Michigan’s UIA system is in desperate need of reform,” said Joerg. “House Democrats began this important reform work this week by passing legislation to restore the six weeks in benefits that former Governor Snyder’s administration wrongly took away from hard working Michiganders.”

In addition to restoring the 6 weeks of benefit eligibility, LIUNA called on the legislature to act on the following additional reforms:

- Enhance Benefit Amounts - Work towards increasing the weekly benefit amounts to better support Michigan’s workforce during times of unemployment.
- Improve Access - Streamline the UIA system to ensure that all eligible Michiganders can easily access the benefits they need.
- Increase Funding - Allocate increased operational funding to the UIA, ensuring it has the necessary resources to efficiently manage and disburse unemployment benefits.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Labor Committee, chaired by State Senator John Cherry (D-Flint).

Senate Democrats Move Michigan Voting Rights Act Forward

The Senate Elections and Ethics Committee has reported out legislation aimed at ensuring voting rights are protected in Michigan. Senate Bills 401-404, collectively known as the Michigan Voting Rights Act (MVRA) provide mechanisms for voters of color and protected classes to defend their right to vote and access fair political representation.

The (MVRA) expands on the original federal Voting Rights Act and adds new protections for Michigan voters to make good on the promise of the 15th Amendment – that no citizen be denied the right to vote based on race.

The bills would:

- Prohibit voter denial, dilution, and/or suppression.
- Require and expand the jurisdictions that must translate election-related information into languages other than English to ensure that language minority groups in our state have an equal opportunity to participate in the voting process.
- Enhance and clarify protections for voters with disabilities or who otherwise need assistance to vote

State action is needed because of a 2013 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder*. The court gutted a powerful provision in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, undermining a law widely regarded as the most effective piece of civil rights legislation in American history.

For nearly 50 years, the federal Voting Rights Act successfully prohibited states with a history of racial discrimination in elections from enacting laws or policies to restrict voting rights.

Since the Shelby County decision, nearly 100 new laws restricting voting access have been passed by states – including Mid-western states like Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa.



“Democracy is neither a finished product nor is it a given or natural right,” said Sen. Darrin Camilleri (D-Trenton), the lead sponsor of the MVRA package. “All of us have to work at it, improve it, and protect it. And at this moment, it’s under attack like never before.”

Other bill sponsors of the package include Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield), Sen. Erika Geiss (D-Taylor), and Sen. Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit).

The legislation is currently on the Senate floor, where action is expected when the Senate returns after the summer recess.

House Passes Bipartisan Bills to Crack Down on Bot Ticket Scalping

Two bi-partisan bills establishing the Event Online Ticket Sales Act would make it harder for bots to circumvent online ticket purchasing limits. HB 5661 and 5662, sponsored by Representatives Mike McFall (D-Hazel Park) and Graham Filer (R-Duplain Township) establish punitive measures and fines of up to \$5,000 per ticket fraudulently obtained.

“This policy marks a victory for fans and consumers who have long been frustrated by automated bots snatching up tickets in seconds,” said McFall. “The goal is to put a stop to these unfair practices, ensuring that tickets are accessible and affordable for everyone in Michigan,” said Filer.