



## CLINTON COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, 2023

### MICHIGAN LEGISLATURE TURNS BLUE



Emily Dievendorf  
MICHIGAN HOUSE



Sam Singh  
MICHIGAN SENATE



Penelope Tsernoglou  
MICHIGAN  
HOUSE

Gretchen Whitmer  
GOVERNOR



## Passing the Torch

*Hello Clinton County Democrats! Over the last eight years, it seems as if it's been a Herculean struggle to make any headway as a party in our county. No matter how good our candidates were, we were facing odds that practically made it impossible to eke out a win. It literally felt like we were beating our heads against a wall sometimes.*

*All that has changed! With redistricting, we have a more balanced political picture in Clinton County. After the first election with the new districts, we find ourselves represented by three powerhouse individuals, two State House Representatives and one State Senator. These elected officials will be actively involved with bench building in Clinton County, something that hasn't happened for a long time.*

*Along with the new maps and newly elected officials come new opportunities. We have a real chance to leverage all of*



*this for more substantial gains in this county politically. It was important for me to recognize the point where I went from holding this group together to possibly holding it back. I have continually*

*struggled with balancing my work schedule with political work. I was fortunate to meet Kathie Elliott and Matthew Boak, our new Chair and Vice Chair. These two individuals have backgrounds in Public Administration and Political Science, have the tools to take advantage of the new political landscape in Clinton County, and will lead us to the next level.*

*Already dialed in to happenings at our county seat, they started expanding our footprint before they had their first meeting! I am truly excited to see where they can take us. I will be sticking around in other roles to help make sure this transition happens in a smooth and seamless manner, and I hope all of you will chip in as much as you can as well. With everything that is happening in Clinton County, any efforts we contribute now will compound into even larger gains in the not-so-distant future.*

*In solidarity,*

*Eric Schlenkermann*

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## **Hello, and Happy 2023!**



**Kathie Elliott  
Chair**

We are excited to start the new year coming off a very successful November election. Democrats across the state saw historic gains, taking back control of both the State House and the State Senate and reelecting Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, and Attorney General Dana Nessel. The passage of all three ballot proposals—especially Proposal 3, regarding Reproductive Freedom—reinforced the importance of allowing people to control the decisions they make about their own bodies. And the list goes on! All in all, Michiganders showed up and made their voices heard.

Here in Clinton County specifically, we saw a great turnout for Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin's successful reelection campaign, this time for the new 7th Congressional District, as well as the election of Sam Singh as our State Senator for the 28th District and both Emily Dievendorf and Penelope Tsernoglou as State Representatives for the 77th and 75th House Districts,

respectively. On the county level, we saw the reelection of Dwight Washington as County Commissioner for the 7th District and the election of new commissioner John Andrews for the 6th District. As these individuals are sworn in and start their terms, we wish them luck throughout the year ahead. We also want to thank both Christine Gerace and Jeffrey Lockwood for running great State Senate and State House campaigns. No matter the outcome, all campaigns work to build interest in, and awareness of, the Democratic Party and our values; that hard work does not go unnoticed.



**Matthew Boak**  
Vice Chair

We are excited to start our new roles as Chair and Vice Chair to continue taking the Clinton County Democratic Party to new heights. We hope to grow our membership, see active committees led by passionate committee chairs, professionalize and modernize our operations, and put together a solid strategy for 2024. As we progress into 2023, we ask that you all continue to show up, offer what time and energy you can, spread the word about our organization, and keep in mind the importance of the work we do. We know that by working together we can forge an even more positive future for our county. There are good things in store for the Clinton County Democratic Party. We can't wait to see them unfold.

## ***Onward!***

Kathie Elliott, Chair - Matthew Boak, Vice Chair

For more information about Kathie and Matthew, you can read their biographies at <https://clintoncodems.org/officers>.

## **The ABCs of Democracy- Who we are**

“We will never compromise our principles. House Democrats will always put **A**merican values over autocracy. **B**enevolence over bigotry. The **C**onstitution over the cult. **D**emocracy over demagogues. **E**conomic opportunity over extremism. **F**reedom over fascism, **G**overning over gaslighting. **H**opefulness over hatred. **I**nclusion over isolation, **J**ustice over judicial overreach. **K**nowledge over kangaroo courts, **L**iberty over limitation. **M**aturity over Mar-a-Lago. **N**ormalcy over negativity. **O**pportunity over obstruction, **P**eople over politics. **Q**uality of life issues over QAnon. **R**eason over racism. **S**ubstance over slander. **T**riumph over tyranny. **U**nderstanding over ugliness. **V**oting rights over voter suppression. **W**orking families over the well connected. **X**enia\* (Greek for hospitality) over xenophobia. **Y**es, we can over you can't do it, and **Z**ealous representation over zero sum confrontation.”

***Democratic House Leader Hakeem Jeffries***



# Under the Dome

## Legislative Update for Clinton County Democrats

By Tim Hughes



January 13, 2023

### Democratic Legislative Leaders Outline Working Families Agenda

For the first time in four decades, Michigan Democrats control the Governor's office and both chambers of the Michigan Legislature. House Speaker Joe Tate (D-Detroit) and Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) held a press conference on the first day of session, outlining a legislative agenda that shifts dramatically from the tone of the previously Republican-controlled Legislature.

"House Democrats are committed to supporting Michigan families, guaranteeing the rights of all Michiganders are protected and respected, ensuring workers know they are valued, protecting and investing in our future, and promoting safe and strong communities," said Speaker Tate.

"Our first and only order of business is to tackle the real challenges that folks are facing by implementing an agenda that makes Michigan an even better place to call home," said Majority Leader Brinks.



House Speaker  
Joe Tate

Sen. Majority Leader  
Winnie Brinks

The Democratic leaders said they were putting Michigan's working families at the center of their new agenda. Their priority legislation includes:

**Repeal of Retirement Tax** – Rep. **Angela Witwer** (D-Delta Twp.) and Sen. **Kevin Hertel** (D-St. Clair Shores) are sponsoring legislation that would repeal a 2011 retirement tax imposed under former Governor Rick Snyder that costs 500,000 Michigan senior households an average of \$1,000 a year. (HB 4001 and SB1)

**Increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** – Currently, Michigan gives low-income citizens a tax credit equal to 6% of the federal EITC. The credit level had previously been 20% but was cut to 6% by Governor Snyder to help fund a \$1.8 billion business tax break. Legislation sponsored by Rep. **Nate Shannon** (D-Sterling Heights) and Sen. **Kristen McDonald Rivet** (D-

Bay City) would raise the credit back to 20% by 2025, a move that would help 700,000 working families to get \$600 in tax relief, according to the Michigan League for Public Policy. The senate version of the bill would raise the credit to 30% by 2025. (HB 4002 and SB 3)

**“Right to Work”** – Former Governor Snyder signed a so-called “right to work” law in December of 2012. Under that law, workers in a union shop could stop paying dues while enjoying the wages and benefits negotiated by the union and requiring union officials to represent them in grievances and arbitration. These “free riders” would be able to sue the union for failure to represent them if they didn’t follow through. Legislation sponsored by Rep. **Regina Weiss** (D-Oak Park) and Sen. **Darrin Camilleri** (D-Trenton) would repeal this anti-worker law. (HB 4004, HB 4005, and SB 5)



**Restore Prevailing Wage Act** – Michigan enacted the Prevailing Wage Act in 1965, requiring construction workers to be paid decent wages and benefits on state-sponsored construction projects. Republicans repealed the law in 2018, claiming it would save the state money. Studies have shown that a prevailing wage requirement does not increase costs because the use of skilled, trained labor is more efficient. Governor Whitmer reinstated prevailing wage in 2021 through administrative contract bidding requirements. Legislation sponsored by Rep. **Brenda Carter** (D-Pontiac) and Sen. **Veronica Klinefelt** (D-Eastpointe) would restore the state’s prevailing wage law. (HB 4007 and SB 6)

**Civil Rights for Sexual, Gender Identity** – The **1976 Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act** outlaws discrimination in employment, education, housing and public accommodations. Legislation sponsored by Rep. **Jason Hoskins** (D-Southfield) and Sen **Jeremy Moss** (D-Southfield) would expand the law to include anti-discrimination protections for sexual and gender identity. (HB 4003 and SB 4)

**Codify Abortion Rights** – When the U.S. Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade*, Michiganders were going to fall under a 1931 law that criminalized abortion services. Voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment last November guaranteeing reproductive freedom. Legislation sponsored by Rep. **Laurie Pohutsky** (D-Livonia) and Sen. **Erika Geiss** (D-Taylor) would repeal Michigan’s 90-year-old anti-abortion law. (HB 4006 and SB 2)

These bills were formally introduced in the House and Senate on January 12. More information on the legislation can be found on the Michigan Legislature [web page](#).

## Whitmer’s Inaugural: “Work Together and Get Things Done”



Governor Whitmer, in her inaugural address, told Michigan residents that “Our task is clear: focus on the fundamentals, work together, and get things done.”

“In November, Michiganders spoke with a clear voice. They want the ability to raise a family without breaking the bank, strong protections for constitutional rights, and leaders focused on the fundamental issues that matter most to their lives.”

she said. “They expect us to embody the values they live up to every day—grit and grace. They deserve practical problem solvers who get things done.”

Whitmer will outline her policy priorities in the State of the State message in Lansing on Jan. 25.

# Messages From Our Elected Officials

## State Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou

I am proud to be serving my first term as the representative for Michigan’s 75th House District, which sits at the intersection of Clinton, Ingham and Shiawassee counties.

As a member of the House of Representatives, my legislative priorities include expanding fair access to the ballot so the voices of all Michiganders may be heard; advocating for labor unions, workers, and working families; increasing access to health care; reforming the criminal justice system; defending Michigan’s water and air; protecting our children from gun violence; and supporting public education, among many other issues.



Throughout my career, I’ve worked hard to expand voting access and I cannot wait to make an even bigger impact as a state representative, especially as *Chair* of the House Elections Committee. I am committed to working to ensure that every Michigander’s voice is heard at the ballot box. And I plan on working closely with county, municipal and township clerks as well as election workers to make sure they have the resources they need to run fair, efficient elections.

If you have questions or comments you can email me at [penelopetsernoglou@house.mi.gov](mailto:penelopetsernoglou@house.mi.gov).



## State Rep. Emily Dievendorf

I swore my oath over a map of the 77th District on Opening Session Day as a symbol of my unwavering commitment to our constituents and the diverse needs of our region. I remain focused in my quest to do politics differently. I'm here to amplify your voice at the Capitol and not to replace it. I am dedicated to helping foster more stable housing, communities, and families. I'm passionate about the power of strong community and the protections it affords.

District 77 is unique as it hosts both developing city centers and lush rural agriculture. I am steadfast in representing the need for economic and land renewal throughout the region as we strive to ensure the structural and environmental preservation of our district for generations. Growth happens together.

Coffee hours and newsletters are essential to keep us connected. My office is still seeking out accessible locations that might be willing to host meetups with constituents. Feel free to contact my office with suggestions. You can reach out via [email](#), we would love to hear from you. This is YOUR House!



## State Senator Sam Singh

I'm thrilled for the opportunity to represent the residents of Clinton County for the next four years in the State Senate. With a Democratic majority in the Senate for the first time in 40 years, along with Democratic control in both the House and the Governor's office, we have a historic opportunity to pass policy that will positively impact the lives of all Michiganders.

I had the additional honor of being elected by my colleagues as the Senate Majority Floor Leader. My office will take the lead on orchestrating what happens on the Senate floor, positioning my team to take the lead on moving many of the important policy priorities that have been blocked by Republican-controlled legislatures in the past.

While our office is still settling in and we are hiring our full staff, soon we will begin scheduling regular coffee hours throughout the district to ensure we remain accessible to you. You'll be able to see more details on those events and sign up for our newsletter on our [website](#).

In the meantime, if you have questions or need assistance, you can email my office at [senssingh@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senssingh@senate.michigan.gov) or call 517-373-3447.



## A brief message from Elissa Slotkin:

Representing mid-Michigan in Congress has been the greatest honor of my life, and it's a privilege to continue the work we started to improve the lives of hardworking families of the new 7th district. In this new term, I'm eager to work across the aisle to continue to address the challenges everyday Michiganders face by lowering the cost of prescription drugs and health care, bringing our manufacturing jobs back to the United States, countering the threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party, protecting Michigan's lakes and environment, and honoring our commitment to our veterans. Over the last two years we've made great strides in all of these areas, often with bipartisan support, but it's clear there is more work to be done. I'm ready and willing to work with anyone – no matter their party – to address these issues as we head into the new year. It's time to get to work.



Elissa Slotkin made significant progress on many of these issues in the 117th Congress: she was a key co-author of the [Honoring Our PACT Act](#) to expand health care for veterans impacted by toxic burn pits and [worked aggressively](#) to pass the CHIPS and Science Act to incentivize an American semiconductor industry, both of which had bipartisan support. Slotkin also voted to pass the Inflation Reduction Act, which has [capped insulin prices for seniors](#) at \$35 per dose and limited out of pocket prescription drug spending for Medicare enrollees. In the new Congress, Slotkin will also continue her bipartisan work to protect Michigan's environment and lakes, strengthening U.S. supply chains for both military and critical goods such as medical supplies, and making government more transparent and accountable.

You can contact Representative Slotkin's Lansing office at 517-993-0510 or e-mail her at [this link](#).

## 6th District Commissioner John Andrews



It's an exciting time to be a new county commissioner! As the second Democrat on the Board of Commissioners, I'll be working with fellow Democratic Commissioner Dwight Washington and our Republican colleagues to shape policy in Clinton County.

My strong commitment to environmental stewardship will inform my work on the commission to help assure proper development of the MSU mega site (also called the *Michigan Manufacturing Innovation campus*). The mega site spans more than 1,600 acres in Eagle Township and may contain an electric vehicle battery manufacturer and/or micro chip factory. I will encourage my fellow commissioners and county residents to expand the use of alternative energy solutions throughout the county. The climate crisis is a global problem, but some of the solutions lie in the decisions and practices of local



governments. The county also is engaged in expanding access to fiber-to-the-home broadband internet infrastructure in the county, something of keen interest to me, given my background in information technology. You can read more about this later on in this newsletter.

I will strive to keep my constituents updated about these and other important issues that come before the Commission.

## County Commissioner Dwight Washington



In 2016, I ran for a seat as a commissioner because I thought I could make a difference for our community. As a commissioner for the past six years, I'm proud of the influence I have had in Clinton County and the Tri-County region on issues that are central to my core values: environmental conservation, community well-being, and economic sustainability. I am very enthusiastic about the privilege of serving a third term. Thank you for your support in returning me to office!

The "2022 Blue Wave" in Michigan, especially in the Tri-County Region and in Clinton County, makes the prospects for environmental, social, and economic growth seem exponentially more promising. Further, the cadre of Democrats now in the majority in the State House and Senate share common goals for a sustainable future. Our opportunity to harness our political will, procure financial resources, and engage people could not be more promising and potentially impactful.

This year in my role as a Commissioner, I will serve on the boards of several social service committees that affect health and well-being throughout our region, including the Tri-County Office on Aging, Capital Area Community Services, and the Early Childhood Council. My committee assignments will allow me to be involved with agenda-setting and decision-making, helping to systematically align these services to better address the social hardships and challenges affecting some members in our community. I will also chair the Tri-County Community Mental Health Association (CMHA) this year. Thanks to Senator Debbie Stabenow, who led efforts to increase investment in mental health services, CMHA will have a very busy agenda and big responsibilities this year, including a new Tri-County Behavioral Crisis Unit.

My new appointment to the Tri-County Regional Planning Board will help us move "upstream" by promoting infrastructure that improves access to what the CDC calls the "social determinants of health" – the wider set of forces and systems that shape the conditions of daily life.

I look forward to working with my Board colleagues and our new County Administrator, John Fuentes, to move the county closer to being a sustainable community where we are all proud to live and call home.

# Update on Clinton County's Broadband Initiative

**Matthew Boak**

Did you know that Clinton County is in the process of addressing broadband infrastructure access? Within the past year, the Clinton County Board of Commissioners has dedicated \$3 million of American Rescue Plan funds to explore the issue of broadband access to unserved and underserved county residents and pursue proposals from internet service providers to address this problem. The goal is to eventually provide fiber-to-the-home infrastructure in selected areas. This process has included surveying citizens, outreach to localities, and creation of a Broadband Task Force to guide expansion of this infrastructure.



**The update provided at the December 16 Board of Commissioners meeting noted the following:**

- The tentative award date for proposals for internet service providers has been extended to Friday, January 6, 2023 to allow the evaluation team to evaluate proposals.
- The evaluation team includes the County IT Director, Finance Director, Deputy Administrator and Administrator. The team has been working with Plante Moran to review technical and financial aspects of the proposal.
- The Federal Communications Commission released an updated National Broadband Map on 11/18/2022, with the intent to provide more accurate location-based broadband availability data. The website can be viewed at <https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/home>.
- The 60-day grant window is planned to open in January.

A more recent meeting did occur on January 4, but minutes were not available at the time this article was written. To learn more about this initiative, use [this link](#) to find the latest updates.

## **CHECK OUT OUR DIGITAL MEDIA OFFERINGS:**

Web Page - <https://clintoncodems.org/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ClintonCoDemsMI/>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/ClintonCoDemsMi>

THE PARTY'S OVER. IT'S TIME  
TO GET BACK TO WORK.



SEE YOU AT THE  
SCHOOL BOARD.



GRETCH  
WHITMERE  
FOR GOVERNOR

Vote **SAM  
SINGH**  
FOR STATE SENATE

REPRESENTATIVE  
**ELISSA  
SLOTKIN**  
PROUDLY SERVING

**DANA  
NESSEL**

**BENSON**  
SECRETARY OF STATE

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