

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 11, 2019

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WHITMER DELIVERS FIRST STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

New Governor gives broad plans but few details for improving roads, water and education

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer delivered her first State of the State address in less than an hour at the Capitol on Tuesday, painting broad strokes over her plans for improving Michigan's roads, education, and drinking water and promising to fill in the details later. Her priorities include:

Michigan's Roads

During her speech, Whitmer sketched a dire scenario of Michigan's failing infrastructure and encouraged Michigan's citizens to chime in by using social media to share their road horror stories. She remained light on details for the legislation or how the changes would be funded:

"Right now, we have crumbling bridges with hundreds of temporary supports holding them up. Buses of school kids and families travel over them—and under them. Chunks of concrete have slammed through windshields... We need to act now, before a catastrophe happens or the situation becomes truly unrecoverable."

Drinking water

Whitmer outlined the problem in Michigan, including the Flint water crisis, the need to replace old pipes and PFAS in our water systems:

"Over the past year, toxic chemicals known as PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) have been found in our lakes, our rivers and our water systems in more than 70 communities spanning both of our peninsulas. This problem may not have commanded the same kind of national attention as the situation in Flint. But it is just as urgent. It is time to step up our efforts to protect the health and safety of all Michiganders."

Education

Citing a broken system where childhood literacy is declining and the lowest growth of K-12 spending of any state, Whitmer promised to support educators and fix the system:

"Our educators deserve our support — not a funding crisis that undermines their work, weakens our schools and hurts our kids. We know that potential is universal, but right now opportunity is not."

Our students are not broken. Our teachers are not broken. It's our system that's broken. We can't fix it overnight. And greater investment alone won't be enough."

Whitmer will also push to create new scholarships to make specialized training and higher education more affordable and set a policy to ensure that at least 60 percent of all adults have some type of post-secondary certificate by 2030.

Other key topics:

LGBTQ rights: Whitmer plans to expand the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include protection for Michigan's LGBT community.

Public records access: Whitmer discussed how she has already established stronger ethics for the executive branch by banning the use of private email accounts to conduct state business. She will also be pushing for an expansion of FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) to the Governor's office and the Legislature.

Auto insurance reform: Whitmer brought Legislators from both sides of the aisle to their feet when she talked about being "eager to engage with any and all people of good faith about ideas and priorities, including your ideas on bringing down car insurance rates."

Whitmer will present her 2019-20 budget address next month and has pledged to continue the tradition set by former Governor Rick Snyder to get the state's budget done before summer recess.

Senate rejects Governor Whitmer's Executive Order on DEQ restructure

The state Senate rejected Gov. Whitmer's executive order that proposed restructuring the Department of Environmental Quality on Thursday. The move is the first time the Legislature has fully rejected a governor's executive order since 1977.

The Senate voted 22-16 along party lines against HCR 1, which would have reorganized the DEQ and eliminated three oversight panels including the Environmental Rules Review Committee and the Environmental Permit Review Commission.

It is unclear if Whitmer, who vowed to increase environmental protections in the state, will issue an amended executive order. Whitmer also asked Democratic Attorney General Dana Nessel to give an opinion on whether two of the three panels violate federal law.

DUGGAN PUSHES FOR NO-FAULT AUTO INSURANCE CHANGES

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan was in Lansing on Wednesday to speak to the Senate Insurance and Banking Committee. The House Select Committee on Reducing Auto Insurance Rates held its first meeting also on the same day.

In his testimony, Duggan gave an overview of the problems he sees with Michigan's high auto insurance rates, criticized the current system and said it doesn't allow Michigan motorists to make

their own choice about how much auto insurance to carry. He also remarked that the current system benefits health institutions and lawyers.

“It says we can’t trust you to make the choice to buy what you can afford. We’re going to mandate the most expensive insurance in Michigan,” Duggan said.

Even with opposition from the Michigan Health and Hospital Association, and groups who want the protections to remain to protect people who suffer catastrophic injuries in auto accidents, Duggan, and others including the Republican legislative leaders, are optimistic reforms could happen this year.

JOHN DINGELL, LONGEST-SERVING MEMBER OF CONGRESS, DIES AT 92

The longest-serving member of Congress in U.S. History, former U.S. Rep. John Dingell, died at age 92 on Feb. 7 in his home in Dearborn. A funeral was held in Dearborn on Tuesday, with a second service in Washington, D.C. before being buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

During his time in office, he became one of the most influential members of the House, helping to write and pass some of the most significant legislation enacted by Congress during that period, including Medicare, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. He also helped craft and pass the Affordable Care Act, in 2010. His wife, U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-Dearborn) was elected to his seat after he stepped down.

MM&A Briefs

Casperson joins McBroom staff

Term-limited former Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) is working as a top aide for his successor, Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Vulcan). McBroom represents the 38th Senate District with includes all except the eastern edge of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

Singh joins Public Policy Associates

Former House Minority Leader Sam Singh (D-East Lansing) is joining Public Policy Associates as a senior consultant focusing on nonprofit management, philanthropy, education, energy, and workforce development. Singh formerly worked for PAA before being elected to the House in 2012.

Calendar of Important Events

Feb. 17 Rep. Sara Cambensy (D-Marquette) Fundraiser

Location: 9 a.m., Landmark Inn, Marquette, 9 a.m.

Feb. 19 Rep. Julie Alexander (R-Hanover) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing

Rep. Sarah Anthony (D-Lansing) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

- Feb. 19** **Rep. Yousef Rabhi (D-Ann Arbor) Fundraiser**
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Rep. Sheldon Neeley (D-Flint) Fundraiser**
Location: 8:30 a.m., Michigan Health and Hospital Association, Lansing
- Senate Republican Campaign Committee Fundraiser**
Location: 5 p.m., Cascade Hills Country Club, Grand Rapids
- Feb. 20** **Rep. Greg Markkanen (R-Hancock) Fundraiser**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Credit Union League, Lansing
- Rep. Jason Wentworth (R-Clare) Fundraiser**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Beer & Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Sen. Jim Runestad (R-White Lake) Fundraiser**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing
- Rep. Steve Johnson (R-Shelbyville) Fundraiser**
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing
- Sen. Jim Stamas (R-Midland) Fundraiser**
Location: 12 p.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing
- Feb. 21** **Rep. Diana Farrington (R-Utica) Fundraiser**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League,
- Rep. Sarah Lightner (R-Springport) Fundraiser**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Association of Counties, Lansing
- Rep. Steve Marino (R-Harrison Twp.) Fundraiser**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Feb. 23** **Michigan Republican Party State Convention**
Location: 9 a.m., Lansing Center, Lansing, 9 a.m.
- Feb. 26** **Rep, Roger Hauck (R-Mt. Pleasant) Fundraiser**
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Rep. Beau LaFave (R-Iron Mountain) Fundraiser**
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Credit Union League, Lansing

Feb. 27

Rep. Doug Wozniak (R-Shelby Twp.) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

Rep. Sue Allor (R-Wolverine) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Credit Union League, Lansing

Sen. John Bizon (R-Battle Creek) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Lambert/Sterling, Lansing

Rep. Andrea Schroeder (R-Independence Twp.) Fundraiser

Location: 8 a.m., Grand Traverse Pie Company, Lansing

Sen. Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) Fundraiser

Location: 8:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing

Sen. Ken Horn (R-Frankenmuth) Fundraiser

Location: 11:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing

Rep. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores) Fundraiser

Location: 5 p.m., Kelly's Downtown, Lansing

Feb. 28

Rep. Henry Vaupel (R-Handy Twp.) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

Rep. Mary Whiteford (R-Casco Twp.) Fundraiser

Location: 7:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing

8th Annual Legislative Polar Plunge

Location: 3 p.m., East Steps, Capitol, Lansing