

# CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 25, 2019

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## **WHITMER'S BUDGET PRESENTATION TO FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE, SKILLS**

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said her first state budget presentation on Tuesday, March 5, will focus on fixing to Michigan's infrastructure and closing the skills gap with Michigan's workers through scholarships and workforce training.

Whitmer has said these key areas are where she can find common ground with the Republican-dominated Legislature.

Whitmer set a statewide goal this week for 60 percent of Michigan's residents to have some type of post-secondary education by 2030, and plans to fill out the details of her two programs mentioned in the State of the State address—the Michigan Reconnect and the My Opportunity scholarship.

## **WHITMER/REPUBLICANS AGREE ON RESTRUCTURED DEQ**

After the state Legislature rejected Gov. Whitmer's executive order that proposed restructuring the Department of Environmental Quality, Whitmer issued an amended executive order last week that is similar but keeps the two oversight panels — the Environmental Rules Review Committee and the Environmental Permit Review Commission. The panels were created last year to oversee the DEQ.

Whitmer's order changes the Department of Environmental Quality to the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. Whitmer's new plan keeps the panels pending legal review from Attorney General Dana Nessel.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey said he appreciated Whitmer's "willingness to extend this act of bipartisanship." Senate leaders also said they would not hold hearings on the new order.

## **LEGISLATORS MOVE TO ELIMINATE STATE PENSION TAX**

The House Tax Policy Committee took a step toward removing the state tax on pensions on Thursday, with a 14-1 vote to repeal the tax on most pensions.

The bill, HB 4006, will now move to the House Ways and Means committee for consideration before going to the full House of Representatives.

The unpopular tax was originally passed in 2011, with legislators talking of repealing it for the past eight years. A House Fiscal Agency analysis of the bill, however, shows that removing the tax means losing \$330 million in the state's budget.

Democrats are concerned how the proposed legislation will replace the revenue. Some republicans have said that the \$56 billion state budget can absorb the cut. Others have cautioned law makers to wait until Gov. Whitmer presents her budget. Whitmer, who supports repealing the pension tax, is also under pressure to find funds to fix roads.

The original legislation removed total and partial tax exemptions for income from public and private pensions, with a complex three-tier system that phased in the tax depending on the year a taxpayer was born.

The new HB 4006 removes the three-tier system while allowing taxpayers with pensions to claim exemptions on up to \$51,570 of pension income for single filers and up to \$103,140 for joint filers.

### **PROPOSED 'RED FLAG' LEGISLATION ALLOWS GUNS TO BE TAKEN IF THREAT TO SELVES OR OTHERS**

Rep. Robert Wittenberg (D-Huntington Woods) and Sen. Rosemary Bayer (D-Beverly Hills) introduced legislation this week called the "Extreme Risk Protection Order Act" as an effort to help protect the public from mass shootings and suicide.

The bills, HB 4283, HB 4284 and HB 4285 and SB 156, SB 157 and SB 158 allow a judge to temporarily bar a person from possessing or buying firearms, and also allow law enforcement to temporarily seize a person's weapons, if family members or law enforcement prove the person could harm themselves or others. The person who has been issued the order can ask at any time that the order be cancelled or modified. Also, the order would end after one year unless it is renewed in court.

Gun rights advocates blocked similar bills last year. Wittenberg has said the new version gives a narrower definition of who can request the protection order, and what law enforcement can confiscate.

Republican Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, has worked with Wittenberg and Bayer on the legislation, and said because of due process and penalties for false reporting, the bills do not affect a person's right to bear arms.

The bills were sent to the House Judiciary Committee and Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

### **MM&A Briefs**

#### **Michigan Republicans vote against Trump**

Two Michigan congressmen voted for the U.S. House of Representatives resolution that passed last week to block President Donald Trump's state of emergency declaration designed to secure funding for the border wall. U.S. Reps. Fred Upton (R-St. Joseph) and Justin Amash (R-Cascade) voted for the resolution which passed 245-182. Amash was the only Republican co-sponsor of the resolution.

## **Auto insurance reform website goes live**

Rep. Jason Wentworth (R-Clare) unveiled a new website connected to the House Select Committee on Reducing Car Insurance Rates. The site, [www.ReduceMiRatesNow.com](http://www.ReduceMiRatesNow.com), has video of committee hearings, links to news about the committee, and a form for the public to give input on auto insurance reform.

## **Calendar of Important Events**

### **March 5 Pure Michigan Governor's Conference on Tourism (March 5-7)**

Location: Grand Traverse Resort and Spa, Acme

#### **Rep. Matt Hall (R-Emmett Twp.) Fundraiser**

Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing

#### **Sen. Peter Lucido (R-Shelby Twp.) Fundraiser**

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

#### **Rep. Ben Fredrick (R-Owosso) Fundraiser**

Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

#### **Sen. Betty Alexander (D-Detroit) Fundraiser**

Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

#### **Michigan Fire Service Coalition Legislative Lunch**

Location: 11:30 a.m., North Wing, Capitol, Lansing

#### **Rep. Kara Hope (D-Holt) Fundraiser**

Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

#### **Sen. Peter MacGregor (R-Rockford) Fundraiser**

Location: 4 p.m., Kelly's Downtown, Lansing

### **March 6 Rep. Matt Hall (R-Emmett Twp.) Fundraiser**

Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing

#### **Rep. Triston Cole (R-Mancelona) Fundraiser**

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

#### **House Minority Leader Christine Greig (D-Farmington Hills) Fundraiser**

Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Health and Hospital Association, Lansing

#### **Rep. Ronnie Peterson (D-Ypsilanti) Fundraiser**

Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing

- March 7**      **Rep. Michael Webber (R-Rochester Hills) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing
- Rep. Shane Hernandez (R-Port Huron) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Restaurant Association, Lansing
- Rep. John Cherry (D-Flint) Fundraiser**  
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing
- Rep. Terry Sabo (D-Muskegon) Fundraiser**  
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Association of Counties, Lansing, 8 a.m.
- Sen. Rosemary Bayer (D-Beverly Hills) Fundraiser**  
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Health and Hospital, Lansing
- Michigan Political Leadership Program Fundraising Dinner**  
Location: 5 p.m., Suburban Collection Showplace, Novi
- March 8**      **Michigan Political Leadership Program Fundraising Breakfast**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., JW Marriott, Grand Rapids
- March 12**    **Rep. Joe Bellino (R-Monroe) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing
- Sen. Kevin Daley (R-Lum) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, Lansing
- Rep. Robert Wittenberg (D-Huntington Woods) Fundraiser**  
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing
- Rep. Pauline Wendzel (R-Watervliet) Fundraiser**  
Location: 4:30 p.m., Michigan Licensed Beverages Association, Lansing
- Rep. Ryan Berman (R-Commerce Twp.) Fundraiser**  
Location: 5 p.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Rep. Julie Brixie (D-Okemos) Fundraiser**  
Location: 5:30 p.m., Reno's East, East Lansing
- March 13**    **Rep. Eric Leutheuser (R-Hillsdale) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Grand Traverse Pie Company, Lansing
- Rep. Gary Eisen (R-St. Clair Twp.) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing

- March 13**    **Rep. Cara Clemente (D-Lincoln Park) Fundraiser**  
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Rep. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor) Fundraiser**  
Location: 9 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing
- Sen. Wayne Schmidt (R-Traverse City) Fundraiser**  
Location: 11:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, Lansing
- Rep. Brian Elder (D-Bay City) Fundraiser**  
Location: 12 p.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Rep. John Chirkun (D-Roseville) Fundraiser**  
Location: 5 p.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- March 14**    **Rep. Jason Wentworth (R-Clare) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Beer & Wine Wholesalers, Lansing
- Rep. Julie Calley (R-Portland) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, Lansing
- Sen. Aric Nesbitt (R-Lawton) Fundraiser**  
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association, Lansing
- March 15**    **House Minority Leader Christine Greig (D-Farmington Hills) Fundraiser**  
Location: 7 p.m., 21031 East Farm Lane Court, Northville