

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF JULY 22, 2019

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MITCHELL ANNOUNCES SURPRISE EXIT FROM CONGRESS

U.S. Rep. Paul Mitchell (R-Dryden), who was so determined to be a congressman that he ran in two different congressional districts, moved twice and spent millions of his fortune to finally win election said Wednesday he is not seeking re-election in 2020 and will step down after just two terms, citing his frustration with partisan struggles and Washington's focus rhetoric over policy.

Mitchell first told Politico about his decision saying he wanted to spend more time with his family, including his 9-year-old son who has special needs; but he's also tired of not being able to advance public policy in Congress.

"A career in Washington has never been my objective. My objective has always been simply to work to address significant challenges this nation faces: health care, immigration, and infrastructure for example," he said in a floor speech. "However, it appears to me that rhetoric overwhelms policy, and politics consumes much of the oxygen in this city. The time has come to make a difference for my family – to focus my time and energy upon them – their needs and goals."

The unexpected announcement means no successors were waiting in the wings. The U.S. 10th House District covers strongly Republican regions including northern Macomb County and the Thumb region.

Possible front-runners to replace Mitchell could include former U.S. Rep. Candice Miller of Harrison Township, former Sen. Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair), and former Rep. Anthony Forlini (R-Harrison Township). Three current state senators who represent large portions of the district and could potentially run include Sen. Keven Daley (R-Lum), Sen. Dan Lauwers (R-Brockway) and Sen. Peter Lucido (R-Shelby Township).

NESSSEL DEFENDS REMOVAL OF LINE 5

Attorney General Dana Nessel submitted op-eds this week to several publications including MLive and Bridge Magazine, defending her position to decommission Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline under the straits of Mackinac.

In the piece, Nessel said the pipeline will only shut down "after a reasonable notice period to allow orderly adjustments by those who are affected." She wrote:

"Let me repeat that last phrase, as it is being lost in a cloud of political rhetoric: We are asking the court to order a shutdown and decommission of Line 5 only AFTER a reasonable notice period to allow orderly adjustments by affected parties. That means residents of the Upper Peninsula, who likely get a majority of their propane via Line 5, are not being ignored, neglected or frozen out of the process – literally or figuratively."

Several House Democrats, along with Republicans, voiced their concerns earlier this month, and asked Nessel to drop her lawsuit – and instead allow a utility tunnel to house the pipelines beneath the straits to be built.

BENTON HARBOR DISTRICT SENDS NEW PLAN TO GOVERNOR WHITMER

Benton Harbor Area Schools leaders sent Governor Gretchen Whitmer a new proposal this week as part of a reform plan to address an acute financial and academic crisis in the district. The plan is in reaction to Whitmer's May proposal to close the district's high schools in 2020.

City and school officials, along with several hundred community members soundly opposed Whitmer's proposal and have raised questions about Whitmer's authority to close schools or dissolve districts.

A column in the *Detroit News* last week said that Attorney General Dana Nessel had issued an opinion that Whitmer lacked the power to close the district. Nessel's office has since said she did not issue an opinion on the matter.

Whitmer's spokesperson has also said that she has never "threatened to close the high school or dissolve the Benton Harbor Area School District" and has never acted "outside her authority."

The district has insufficient money to finish the 2019-20 school year, according to the Department of Treasury.

Whitmer's other options include organizing a financial review team which could result in an emergency manager, asking the Legislature to reconfigure or dissolve the district, or asking the state treasurer and state superintendent of public instruction whether the district has lost enough pupils to qualify for dissolution. Whitmer has not yet said whether she will consider those options.

GOV. WHITMER WILLING TO LOOK AT GRADUATED INCOME TAX TO PAY FOR FIXING ROADS

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer told the Detroit Free Press this week that she would be willing to take a "close look" at a proposal to create a graduated income tax in Michigan to support a \$2.5 billion annual revenue boost – the exact number needed to fix Michigan's roads.

Opposed by Republicans and business leaders, a graduated income tax would increase the tax burden on wealthier residents in Michigan and generate more than two billion dollars annually.

Whitmer has supported graduated income tax in the past.

Because graduated income tax is banned under Michigan's constitution, it would have to be amended by voters. Organizers would have to submit at least 425,059 valid signatures by July 6 of next year to get the measure on the November 2020 ballot.

Republican legislators have so far held up Whitmer's efforts to raise the state's gasoline tax by 45 cents to generate revenue to fix the roads.

Whitmer, who was in Flint this week, told reporters, "I'm still resolute that we've got to fix the roads. And when we do it the right way, it gives us the ability to put school aid fund dollars back in the education of our kids. General Fund dollars out of potholes and into cleaning up things like drinking water."

MM&A Briefs

Inman faces recall petition

A petition was filed last week to recall Rep. Larry Inman (R-Williamsburg). Inman, who has fought calls from Republicans and Democrats to resign, is facing three felony charges in federal court for attempted extortion, soliciting a bribe and lying to the FBI. If the recall petition moves forward, 12,200 valid signatures from registered voters would need to be collected within 60 days. The petition claims Inman, who has been absent from session since mid-May, has missed 80 votes. Inman's attorney has said he is seeking treatment for long-term opioid use.

On Thursday, former chair of the Grand Traverse County Republican Party, John Roth, filed to run in the 104th House District seat currently held by Inman.

Calendar of Important Events

- July 27** **Rep. Jim Haadsma (D-Battle Creek) Fundraiser**
Location: 12 p.m., 1651 Monroe Beach, Battle Creek
- July 29** **Rep. Joe Tate (D-Detroit) Fundraiser**
Location: 5:30 p.m., Pop+Offworld Arcade, 128 Cadillac Square, Detroit
- Rep. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores) Fundraiser**
Location: 5:30 p.m., WaterMark Bar and Grille, St. Clair Shores
- Aug. 5** **Sen. Curt VanderWall (R) Fundraiser**
Location: 10:30 a.m., Crystal Mountain-Betsie Valley Course, Thompsonville
- Aug. 8** **Sen. Ken Horn (R) Fundraiser**
Location: 6 p.m., Slo'Bones BBQ Smokehouse, Frankenmuth
- Aug. 9** **Rep. Leslie Love (D-Detroit) Fundraiser**
Location: 5:30 p.m., The Detroit Club, 712 Cass Avenue, Detroit