

CAPITOL NEWS UPDATE

WEEK OF MAY 30, 2022



McAlvey Merchant
& ASSOCIATES

MCALVEY, MERCHANT NAMED CRAIN'S TOP "50 NAMES TO KNOW IN LOBBYING"

Crains Detroit Business has named McAlvey Merchant & Associates partners Jeff McAlvey and Rusty Merchant to their recently released 50 Names to Know in Lobbying 2022 guide. The list is a selection of professionals representing trade groups, major corporations, law firms and multiclient firms.

GOP GUBERNATORIAL DEBATE FOCUSES ON SCHOOL SAFETY, BUDGET AND TRUMP

Four of the five remaining Republican gubernatorial candidates participated in a debate at the Mackinac Policy Conference on Thursday. Tudor Dixon, Ralph Rebandt, Garret Soldano and Kevin Rinke were invited to participate. Overall, the group called for drastic reductions to the state budget, and resisted any changes to the firearms laws.

The debate was the first gubernatorial debate since five earlier candidates, including former Detroit Police Chief James Craig and Oakland County businessman Perry Johnson, were disqualified for failing to submit enough valid signatures. The fifth candidate who qualified for the debate, Ryan Kelley, decided not to come due to the Detroit Regional Chamber requiring proof of a COVID-19 vaccination or negative test to attend the conference, but not the outdoor debate).

The candidates agreed on issues such as abortion, and none supported firearm restrictions, however they had different approaches to ending gun violence in schools. Dixon said the Legislature should look to past reports from the Department of State Police to implement policies and said federal COVID funding should be used to improve school safety. Rembandt said the problem was more a lack of emphasis on Judeo-Christian values in society, and not access to firearms. He also suggested hiring retired law enforcement officers or veterans and gun sniffing dogs for schools.

Rinke also agreed with hiring armed retired police or veterans. Soldano, however, suggested arming teachers, which Rinke disagreed with.

The discussion also included reforming mental health in Michigan, Education funding with a focus on opposition to the state spending more money on higher education than public and charter schools, including Soldano arguing to cut funding from public universities.

Rinke also proposed eliminating the personal income tax and giving back \$12 billion to Michigan residents. Dixon criticized the K-12 low test scores and said the state was focused on spending in the wrong areas.

Rebandt said he would have over 1,000 administrators retire, would eliminate “the general budget” and “get rid of corporate welfare.”

On the topic of former President Donald Trump, Soldano and Dixon said they would welcome his endorsement. Rinke also said he would welcome the endorsement but acknowledged that he is not popular with everyone.

GOP GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES LOSE COURT CHALLENGES TO APPEAR ON BALLOT

After five Republican candidates for governor were disqualified from the ballot due to invalid signatures on their nominating petitions, several Michigan courts have rejected the candidates’ legal challenges to the denials.

On Wednesday, the Michigan Court of Appeals rejected businessman Perry Johnson’s challenge, sending Johnson to immediately file an appeal with the Michigan Supreme Court. The same court also denied a motion to intervene from candidate Michael Markey later that day. On Thursday, the Michigan Court of Claims denied an appeal from James Craig, a former Detroit Police Chief and previously considered leading candidate. Markey and Craig have also pledged to take the case to the Supreme Court.

The three lawsuits argued that all the signatures on the petitions needed to be looked at individually. Both the Court of Appeals and the Court of Claims said that the Board of State Canvassers did not have a “clear legal duty” to check each signature against the qualified voter file.

Donna Brandenburg and Michael Brown were also deemed ineligible. Brandenburg has solicited donations to “help fight this.”

FORD ANNOUNCES NEW \$2 BILLION INVESTMENT IN STATE

Alongside state leaders on Mackinac Island on Thursday, Ford Motor Company Chief Policy Officer Steven Croley announced the company will be investing \$2 billion across all its plants in Michigan.

Croley was joined by Gov. Whitmer, Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake), Speaker of the House Jason Wentworth (R-Farewell), Senate Minority Leader Jim Ananich (D-Flint) and House Minority Leader Donna Lasinski (D-Scio Twp.).

“We are thrilled that Ford is advancing its long legacy in Michigan by investing \$2 billion to create 3,200 good-paying UAW jobs,” said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Ford’s investments are in part supported by \$100.8 million from the state’s Strategic Outreach and Attraction Reserve Fund (SOAR) and a State Essential Services Assessment Exemption worth \$34.4 million.

The announcement will include money for both traditional engines and Ford’s work on electric vehicles. Sixty-five percent of the funds will go to new jobs supported through the Critical Industry Program to help drive electric vehicle production-related activities.

Croley also said the \$2 billion investment is part of a larger, \$3.7 billion investment including 6,200 jobs impacting Michigan, Ohio and Missouri. The investment will include increasing production of the new F150 Lightning at the Red Cedar Electric Vehicle Center; producing the new electric Ford Ranger Truck at the Wayne Assembly Plant; and producing a new Mustang EV Coupe at Ford's Flat Rock Assembly facility.

"This announcement hopefully will ripple into other attractive opportunities for Michigan," Wentworth said.

BUTTIGIEG ANNOUNCES INFRASTRUCTURE AND SAFETY GRANTS

The day after he spoke at the Mackinac Policy Conference, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg announced \$368 million in rail infrastructure and safety grants on Thursday. Buttigieg also toured the Lake State Railway Co. in Saginaw with U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee (D-Flint Twp.).

"It's urgent for us to modernize our railroad infrastructure to get people and goods where they need to get faster, safer and more affordable," Buttigieg said on Wednesday.

Two of the Michigan projects which will benefit from the grants include building new miles of track and allow for safety upgrades to avoid potential derailments and other repairs.

The agency is granting up to \$21.3 million for a proposed project to rehabilitate track and rail assets operated by the Great Lakes Central Railroad just north of Ann Arbor, according to the Federal Railroad Administration.

The scope of the project involves installing 4.25 miles of new rail, eliminating joints on over 41 mainline track miles, replacing or rehabilitating 11 bridges and culverts, and installing approximately 30,000 ties on mainline and siding track.

The second grant of up to \$8.7 million will go to the West Michigan Railroad Co. to pay for infrastructure improvements on roughly 10 miles of track in southwest Michigan.

The proposal includes rail and crosstie replacements, reconstructed roadbeds, bridge and turnout repairs, upgrade and replacement of two at-grade crossings and rebuilding approximately 5.6 miles of track, according to the Federal Railroad Administration.

The grants are through the competitive Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program.

MM&A BRIEFS

LET MI KIDS NOT TURNING IN SIGNATURES FOR 2022 ELECTION

The Let MI Kids Learn initiative, designed to allow people to donate money tax deductible for K-12 private school scholarships, announced that although it has enough petition signatures to put the issue in front of the Legislature, it will not be turning the signatures in just yet.

A spokesperson for the initiative, Fred Wszolek, said that they will continue collecting past the June 1 date because they do not think they are confident the Legislature will pass the initiative, and that there is no need to have it available for the November 2022 ballot. Governor Whitmer has already vetoed similar legislation that was passed by both the House and the Senate. The next election which the initiative would qualify to be on the ballot for would be in 2024.

RIGHT TO LIFE ENDORSES DIXON

Republican gubernatorial candidate Tudor Dixon has become the only candidate in the race to be endorsed by the Right to Life Michigan Political Action Committee.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- June 5** **Rep. Julie Brixie (D-Okemos) Reception**
(With special guest U.S. Representative Elissa Slotkin.)
Location, TBA, 5 p.m.
- June 6** **Rep. Sarah Lightner (R-Springport) Golf for Majority Event**
Location: 9 a.m., Burr Oak Golf Club, 3492 North Parma Road, Parma
- Rep. Kara Hope (D-Holt) Gear Up: Evening Reception**
Location: 5 p.m., R.E. Olds Transportation Museum, 240 Museum Dr., Lansing
- June 7** **Rep. Nate Shannon (D-Sterling Heights) Summer Fundraiser**
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, 332
Townsend St., Lansing
- June 8** **Rep. Ann Bollin (R-Brighton) Leadership Breakfast Reception**
Location: 8 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, 208 North Capitol Ave., Lansing
- Rep. Ranjeev Puri (D-Canton) Lunch Fundraiser**
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Municipal League, 208 North Capitol Ave.,
Lansing
- Rep. Tyrone Carter (D-Detroit) - Birthday Happy Hour**
Location: 4:30 p.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, 332
Townsend St., Lansing
- June 9** **Rep. Mike Mueller (R-Linden) Leadership Reception**
Location: 7:30 a.m., Karoub Associates, 121 West Allegan St., Lansing
- June 10** **Rep. Phil Green (R-Millington) Golf Outing**
Location: 9 a.m., The Timbers, 7300 Bray Road, Vassar

- June 13** **Rep. Ken Borton (R-Gaylord) Golf Outing**
Location: 11 a.m., Treetops Resort, Treetops Golf Course, 3962 Wilkinson Road,
Gaylord
- Rep. Richard Steenland (D-Roseville) Campaign Kickoff**
Location: 5 p.m., The Villa Restaurant and Pizzeria, 21311 Gratiot Ave.,
Eastpointe
- June 14** **Rep. Jim Haadsma (D-Battle Creek) Summer Fundraiser**
Location: 11:30 a.m., Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, 332
Townsend St., Lansing.
- June 15** **House Speaker Jason Wentworth (R-Farwell) Leadership Breakfast
Reception**
Location: 8 a.m., Karoub Associates, 121 West Allegan St., Lansing