

To: Amy Malmer, Metropolitan Affairs Coalition
From: Mike Compagnoni, Adam Wright, and Dusty Fancher, Account Lobbyists, Midwest Strategy Group
Date: November 25, 2025
Subject: Lobbying and Government Relations Activities Summary

Session Schedule

The legislature is currently on a several week break and will return to session after the Thanksgiving Holiday. We expect at least two weeks of session in both chambers or around six session days total before the legislature breaks for Christmas. Typically, the legislature will be back to sessions in Mid-January following the Christmas and New Years Holidays. There is discussion that a possible deal on economic development programs could occur before the end of the year.

Budget Transparency Bills Signed

Starting in 2026 legislators in both chambers will need to submit earmark requests publicly at least 45 days before the budget passes based on compromise legislation signed by the Governor. This legislation was heavily debated and was one of the few remaining portions of the FY25-26 budget deal that hadn't been completed. [HB 4420](#) requires earmarks to include the sponsor, the intended recipient, amount requested, and public purpose to be disclosed.

House Moves First Senate Bills Since Budget Standoff

After a month-long pause tied to negotiations on earmark transparency, the House resumed action on Senate bills. The House approved [SB 370](#), sponsored by Senator Sam Singh (D-East Lansing), to create a Tricare premium reimbursement program for Michigan National Guard members, as well as [SB 540](#) and [SB 542](#), sponsored by Senators Kevin Hertel (D-Saint Clair Shores) and Veronica Klinefelt (D-Eastpointe), to support child-care and higher-education assistance for National Guard personnel and their families.

Court Rules on 9-Bills from Last Session

The Michigan Court of Appeals ruled recently that the House must formally present nine bills passed during the 2024 lame-duck session to Governor Gretchen Whitmer, finding that the Legislature has a constitutional obligation to transmit all enacted legislation for gubernatorial action. The decision stems from a lawsuit filed by Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks (D-Grand Rapids) against Speaker Matt Hall (R-Richland Township), who had refused to advance the bills, arguing that the current Legislature is not responsible for unfinished business from the prior term. The court determined that presentment is a "clear legal duty" of the Legislature, though it left the timing of compliance to the Court of Claims.

The ruling applies to the following measures, which cover topics ranging from retirement benefits to museum funding and debtor protections. House Republicans are planning to appeal the decision to the Michigan Supreme Court, meaning the bills are unlikely to reach the Governor's desk in the short term.

A full list of the bills from last session is below:

- [HB 4177](#) (2023) Allows corrections officers to join the state employee retirement system
- [HB 4665](#) (2023) Establishes debt relief protections for individuals undergoing bankruptcy
- [HB 4666](#) (2023) Updates procedures for debt collection and repayment plans
- [HB 4667](#) (2023) Expands consumer protections in bankruptcy-related proceedings
- [HB 4900](#) (2023) Authorizes funding for the Detroit Historical Museum
- [HB 4901](#) (2023) Creates mechanism to raise private and public funds for cultural institutions
- [HB 5817](#) (2024) Adjusts retirement benefit provisions for certain state employees
- [HB 5818](#) (2024) Makes technical and administrative changes to the retirement system
- [HB 6058](#) (2024) Modifies 80/20 healthcare cost sharing for local governments and education institutions

Governor Rules Certain Boilerplate Language Unenforceable

Nearly a month after signing the final budget for FY 25-26, Governor Whitmer informed the Legislature that more than 40 pieces of boilerplate language in the FY 2025-26 budget are unenforceable, citing separation-of-powers violations or attempts to amend statutory law by reference. The unenforceable list spans multiple executive departments and includes several recurring provisions legislators traditionally insert each year—such as language preventing agencies from disciplining employees who communicate with lawmakers, requirements to spend down work project funds before new appropriations are used, and language limiting how a veteran’s affairs grant can be used. Whitmer emphasized that her letter to the Legislature fulfills a June 25 budget negotiation agreement requiring her to provide a list of unenforceable items, limited to provisions affecting executive branch departments.

AG Announces \$450M Recovered from Child Support Unit

In a statement AG Dana Nessel said the department's Child Support Unit of the Financial Crimes Division has collected \$450M since its inception. Created in 2003, the unit works with the Friend of the Court to identify parents that are capable of paying child support but refuse to. Since its establishment, the \$450M collected has benefitted 31,000 children. The division recovered \$28.2M alone last fiscal year.

Business Leaders Unveil New Report Focused on Economic Growth

Business Leaders for Michigan (BLM) released a new 40-page report, “[Michigan in a New Era](#),” that urges the state’s next governor to adopt a “laser focus” on reversing Michigan’s long-term economic slide. The roadmap calls for decisive, unifying leadership to tackle three core areas: education, workforce/talent, and business fundamentals.

The recommendations emphasize transformative education reform; streamlined, predictable regulatory processes; and a modernized, strategy-driven approach to economic development that prioritizes high-wage jobs and retains existing employers. BLM and other business leaders urge the next administration to improve school performance, address chronic absenteeism, strengthen pathways from high school into apprenticeships and degrees, and modernize economic development away from “crisis-driven” incentives.

AG Files Motion to Halt DOE's Latest Campbell Coal Plant Order

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) filed its third order to continue the operations of Consumer Energy's J.H. Campbell Coal Plant in West Olive, Michigan, until February 17, 2026, despite the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) approval to retire the plant in 2022. In response, Michigan Attorney General, Dana Nessel, [filed a motion to stay the order](#), stating that the directive was utilizing "outdated information to fabricate an emergency". The Attorney General's full statement can be found [here](#).

Michigan Alliance for Legal Reform launches to curb lawsuit abuse

A broad coalition of more than 30 business and policy organizations have launched the Michigan Alliance for Legal Reform, arguing that Michigan's increasingly unbalanced legal climate is driving up costs for families and undermining the state's competitiveness. The Alliance is seeking to highlight lawsuit abuse and the drag it has on job creation, contributing to a "tort tax" that costs households thousands each year.

A top priority for the group is restoring Michigan's long-standing "Open and Obvious" doctrine, a legal standard in 41 other states that protects property owners from being held liable for hazards that are plainly visible and could reasonably be avoided. Supporters say the doctrine is a basic safeguard that prevents courts from punishing businesses, homeowners, and communities for accidents caused by conditions any reasonable person would recognize. The Michigan Association for Justice representing many of the state's plaintiff attorneys criticized the effort and framed it as an attempt by corporate interests to evade accountability.

Senate Moves UIA Overpayments Bill

A bill advanced to the Michigan Senate floor would forgive repayment of certain unemployment benefits issued during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sponsored by Sen. Darrin Camilleri (D-Trenton), [SB 700](#) would waive recovery of benefits paid between February 2020, and September 2021, if they resulted from administrative or clerical errors by the Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA) unless the payments were obtained through fraud. The UIA has been tasked with efforts to recoup nearly \$2.7B in state unemployment funds given out to roughly 350,000 unemployed residents who should not have qualified for them, largely due to an administrative discrepancy between state and federal government regulations at the time.

House Passes Bill to Redact Names and Addresses of Legislators

In a move to help encourage the safety of public officials, the legislature passed a bill to restrict the release of their home addresses and phone numbers on public documents. [HB 4397](#), sponsored by Rep. Sarah Lightner (R-Springport) passed 84-17. Similar legislation sponsored by Sen. Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit), [SB 82](#), has passed the Senate and is awaiting passage on the House Floor that would do the same for judges and their immediate family members. A potential deal is in the making here should both chambers pass each other's bills on the subject. However, critics of the legislation have flagged HB 4397 may not be highly effective in protecting elected officials while allowing them to potentially make real estate moves outside the public eye - a concern after past development grants have gone awry.

U.P. Lawmakers Warn of 2026 Rate Hikes Without RICE Generator Bills; Critics Call Claims Misleading

On Wednesday, Upper Peninsula lawmakers held a press conference urging swift passage of HB 4007 and HB 4283, arguing the bills are needed for the future of 13 natural gas-powered reciprocating internal combustion engines (RICE) generators in the U.P. operated by the utility Upper Michigan's Energy Resources Corporation (UMERC). The UP-Delegation's concern is rooted in UMERC's renewable energy plan that it's now required to submit to the Michigan Public Service Commission under Michigan's 2023 clean energy law (PA 235 of 2023). Because RICE generators are not defined as clean energy systems, UMERC modelled their proposed renewable energy plan to assume the RICE units would need to be prematurely retired, triggering daily surcharges for the Tilden Mine and higher costs for households beginning in 2026. Their solution, via this legislation, is to explicitly classify RICE generators as clean energy systems under state law, before the end of the year.

Opponents reject these claims, saying lawmakers are misrepresenting the state's clean energy law. In October, Administrative Law Judge Jonathan Thoits wrote that premature retirement of the generators is not required under Act 235 and that UMERC could operate them past 2040 while still complying with clean-energy standards. MPSC staff who gave testimony before the judge came to the same conclusion, noting other utilities have submitted amended renewable energy plans without seeking customer surcharges.

Federal Court Reverses Cap on State Energy Funding

A U.S. District Court in Oregon has ruled that the Department of Energy's 10% cap on administrative and employee costs for state energy programs violated the Administrative Procedure Act. The decision followed a lawsuit filed in August by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, joined by 18 other state attorneys general and two governors, challenging the reimbursement limit. The plaintiffs argued the cap would restrict staffing and operations for state energy programs. The ruling allows states to access the full funding previously allocated for renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives.

House Republicans Drop Bills to Abolish MEDC

Several House Republicans including Reps. Steve Carra (R-Three Rivers) and Jay DeBoyer (R-Clay) introduced legislation recently that would eliminate the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). In a press conference, Rep. Carra highlighted a string of failures and mismanagement as arguments in favor of abolishing the organization. The MEDC was created by interlocal agreement by then Governor John Engler in 1999. Sen. Tom Albert (R-Lowell) has also introduced a much more substantive, 53-bill package, in the Senate to also abolish the MEDC - these are unlikely to advance in the Senate given the Democratic majority. Governor Whitmer has already made statements suggesting she would veto such legislation should it reach her desk.

MPSC Approves Consumers Energy Terms for Large Data Centers; DTE Asks MPSC to Fast Track

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) approved new service terms for Consumers Energy to serve data centers and "other large-load users" (minimum service threshold of 100MW). The terms of service are designed to protect rate payers from subsidizing the massive loads required by data centers and ensure they remain in service long enough that they will contribute significantly to new and

embedded costs while also giving Consumers time to plan for unprecedented changes to its overall load.

Key provisions include:

- 15-year minimum contracts, with a required 80% minimum billing demand that must be paid regardless of use,
- A five-year ramp up period,
- Automatic contract extensions of five years,
- Required four-year notice for contract termination, with an exit fee equal to the minimum monthly bill multiplied by the number of months remaining on the contract; and
- Consumers is permitted to suspend service to the data center if its usage exceeds the contracted capacity.
- Consumers must also file detailed cost-of-service studies and individual case filings for each large-load customer, showing that their service does not raise costs for other ratepayers.

In contrast, DTE Energy asked the MPSC to bypass public hearings and quickly approve a proposed 1.4-gigawatt data center planned for farmland in Saline Township, backed by billionaire Stephen Ross' Related Companies, Oracle, and OpenAI. A public hearing on this subject has been planned.

Senate Committee Moves “Reconnect” Bills

An expansion of the Michigan Reconnect program would be codified under legislation reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee. The legislation, Senate Bills [232](#) and [233](#), which would expand the program for those aged 21-24, with a sunset of September 30, 2032. The Michigan Reconnect program was originally designed to attract adults aged 25 or older without a college degree into higher education by providing free access to a skill certificate or degree. In 2023, the program was expanded to temporarily include those aged 21-24. Similar legislation passed the Senate last session. However, without the bills, the budget language doesn't allow new enrollees under age 25 going forward. Both bills passed 13-2, signaling fairly broad, bipartisan support for the legislation.

House Judiciary Takes Up Vulnerable Roadway User Bills

An individual who hits or kills a cyclist or runner could face a five-year felony under bills taken up recently in the House Judiciary committee. The change is supported by cycling and transportation groups that effectively create a middle tier penalty between relatively light (misdemeanor) charges and more severe felony charges that are often reserved for people who intentionally hit someone not in a car. Past versions of the bills have seen bipartisan support and nearly got to the governor's desk, this cycle House Bills [4334](#) and [4335](#) are being sponsored by Reps. Julie Rogers (D-Kalamazoo) and Pauline Wendzel (R-Watervliet) respectively.

Waymo Coming to Detroit

In November autonomous vehicle company [Waymo](#) announced testing and mapping beginning in Detroit. Waymo's autonomous vehicles will be mapping the city before a planned rollout of commercial services sometime soon. Detroit will be the first Midwest city to host a fully autonomous robotaxi service when this occurs.

Chatfield Staffer Pleads Out to Corruption Charges

Rob Minard, who was Chief of Staff for Former Speaker Lee Chatfield (R-Levering) pled guilty to several charges as part of a plea deal that allows him avoid prison-time. Minard and his wife Anné both were

under indictment for corruption and fraud related to hundreds of thousands in inappropriately used campaign funds. Minard agreed to a suspended 6-month prison sentence, 36 months of probation and pleaded guilty to one felony charge of stealing at least \$20,000 but less than \$50,000 from a nonprofit organization and one felony charge of filing a false tax return. Chatfield remains under indictment and both Rob and Anné Minard have agreed to testify against him as part of their deals.

Senate Committees Looks at Water Affordability Bills

The Senate Housing and Human Services Committee heard testimony on a multi-bill package that would create a statewide affordability program and the following week reported the bills to the Senate Floor for further action. The [nine-bill package](#) collectively would set a \$1.25 per month fee to pay for the program. This fee would be charged on each domestic-use metered water account. It would then rise by 25 cents per year over the next three years. Communities could also opt-out by having their own internal compliance programs. Committee action is expected as soon as next week, but questions remain over the Republican-held House's willingness to consider the bills should they pass. Sen. Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit) has been spearheading the effort for some years and garnered support from water utilities and community advocacy groups.

Stargate OpenAI Datacenter

A \$500B six-site OpenAI Stargate data center project at a Washtenaw County site was dubbed by Gov. Whitmer as "the largest one-time investment in the state's history." OpenAI, Oracle, and SoftBank, announced the 700-acre site in Saline Township to be developed by RelatedDigital. It would be one of the six sites that would be used in a major AI push nationally. The other four sites are in Texas, New Mexico, Wisconsin, and Ohio. The project promises to deliver 450 longer-term and high-paying jobs.

Good Session in the House for Pets

The House took up several animal-related bills in committee, including Queenie's Law (HB [4254](#)), which prohibits public institutions from using dogs in painful experiments. The bill passed the House Regulatory Reform 12-0, with 2 members passing. The House Rules Committee also passed a pair of bills that allow veterinary telehealth bills to the House floor, HBs [4220](#) and [4221](#).

Veterinary telehealth was allowed during the COVID Pandemic but has since been limited again as Executive Orders expired post-pandemic. Both telehealth bills await consideration on the House floor after HB 4220 cleared committee 8-0.

Bills to Change Primary Election Date Introduced

Legislation that would move Michigan's statewide August primary election when the Republican and Democratic parties nominate their candidates for partisan offices to May, along with a host of other election law changes, was introduced in the Senate. SBs [691-98](#) make significant changes to Michigan elections, including eliminating the August election altogether, editing campaign finance filing deadlines, and altering some signature gathering requirements. The bills would not go into effect until 2027, so they would not impact the upcoming 2026 election.

House Proposal to Roll Back 2011 Workers' Compensation Reforms Introduced

House Democrats have introduced a 15-bill package (HBs [5177-5191](#)) that would reverse many of the 2011 changes to Michigan's workers' compensation system. The legislation is intended to expand benefits for injured workers by increasing after-tax wage replacement, and limiting the use of so-called "phantom jobs" — positions that workers could theoretically perform but may not actually exist.

Those arguing for the legislation state that the current system places too many barriers between injured employees and the benefits they need, and that these updates would restore fairness and predictability for workers who are temporarily or permanently unable to return to their jobs. Insurers and business organizations have voiced concern that repealing the 2011 reforms would increase costs and reduce Michigan's competitiveness. Between 2011 and 2018, those reforms contributed to consistent premium reductions and greater economic certainty for employers statewide.

The proposal marks one of the most significant potential changes to Michigan's workers' compensation system in more than a decade. Proponents of the 2011 rollbacks are expected to face an uphill battle in the Republican-controlled statehouse.

Election and Political Update

New Polling Shows Early View of 2026 Elections

New [EPIC-MRA polling](#) shows an extremely tight Michigan governor's race, with U.S. Rep. John James (R-Shelby Township) holding a narrow 34% to 33% lead over Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, running as an independent, posts a significant 20%, a meaningful share in a three-way contest.

In the U.S. Senate races, Democrats Haley Stevens and Mallory McMorrow each hold slim, 1–2 point leads over Republican Mike Rogers, highlighting another competitive statewide matchup. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer clocks in at 51% job approval, while President Trump sits at 43%, reflecting deeply polarized views of national leadership. The survey also found voters increasingly concerned about inflation and the impact of federal tariffs, with 64% saying President Trump's tariffs have increased prices. The poll was conducted Nov. 6–11 among 600 voters and has a ±4% margin of error.

Former Rep. Beeler Files for Senate

Former State Rep. Andrew Beeler (R-Port Huron) has filed for the 25th Senate District to replace term-limited Sen. Dan Lauwers (R-Brockway Township). Beeler previously served in the House from 2021-2024. He is a graduate of the US Naval Academy and served as a Surface Warfare Officer in the Navy before his time in the legislature. The seat is considered very safe for Republicans.

Rep. Hoskins Files for Senate

Rep. Jason Hoskins (D-Southfield) has formally filed for the 7th State Senate District. Hoskins is seeking to backfill the seat soon to be left vacant by Sen. Jeremy Moss (D-Southfield) who is seeking a US Congressional seat. Hoskins is a former legislative staffer in Lansing and is considered a favorite in this heavily Democratic seat.

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House staffer, County Commissioner Files for Senate

Democratic Oakland County Commissioner Brendan Johnson filed for the 9th State Senate District. Johnson is seeking the seat currently held by Sen. Mike Webber (R-Rochester Hills). Johnson also spent time doing legislative staff work for Rep. Samantha Steckloff (D-Farmington Hills) in Lansing. Webber is running for reelection and this is considered a battleground seat with Webber winning his first election in 2022 by just under 800 votes districtwide.

Former Rep. Abraham Aiyash Files for Open Senate Seat

Former Democratic Majority Floor Leader Abraham Aiyash filed to run in the heavily Democratic 1st Senate District, covering parts of Detroit and several Downriver communities. He joins a field that currently includes 29-year-old attorney and community organizer Justin Onwenu.

Cox Reports \$3.8 Million on Hand

Republican gubernatorial candidate Mike Cox said he will report raising \$2.1 million and having \$3.8 million cash on hand ahead of the Oct. 27 campaign finance filing deadline. Cox, who has contributed some of his own funds, said his campaign has raised \$4.5 million total since launching.

Prestin and LaFave Declare for SD 38

State Representative Dave Prestin (R-Cedar River) announced his campaign for Senate District 38 to replace termed-Senator Ed McBroom (R-Vulcan). A day earlier, former State Representative and now House staffer Beau LaFave (R-Iron Mountain) also declared for SD 38. LaFave served in the Michigan House for three terms from 2017-2022. Prestin entered the race with the endorsements of Senator McBroom, Representative Karl Bohnak (R-Negaunee), and Representative Greg Markkanen (R-Hancock), LaFave's current boss in the legislature.

Mike Bouchard Files for Congress

Son of long-time Oakland County Sheriff and former State Senator Mike Bouchard has filed for congress. Captain Michael Bouchard, freshly stateside after a nine-month Army National Guard deployment to Iraq, has joined the race for the Republican nomination in the 10th U.S. House District. He seeks to fill the seat that will be left vacant by Congressman John James who is running for Governor in 2026. Bouchard will face attorney Robert Lulgjuraj in the primary, though there is still time left for additional Republican candidates to file.

Earlier in November were local elections in cities across Michigan:

Detroit Mayor

After 12 years of Mayor Mike Duggan, the city will now be led by its first female mayor in history, [Mary Sheffield](#). Rev. [Solomon Kinloch](#) lost 22-77% against Sheffield. Sheffield is the current City Council President, and her campaign was also endorsed by Duggan.

Detroit City Council

Of note, State Reps. Tyrone Carter (D-Detroit) and Karen Whitsett (D-Detroit) ran for city council. Whitsett ultimately lost to Denzel Anton McCampbell and Carter lost to Gabriela Santiago-Romero, both

by around 20 points. In Detroit's Council District 5, Renata Miller defeats Willie Burton to replace Mary Sheffield as the local council member.

Lansing Mayor

Incumbent Mayor [Andy Schor](#) won reelection against [Kelsea Hector](#), with over 66% of the vote going to Schor. Relatedly, the City of Lansing also approved its charter commission proposal.

Other Local Races of Note

Pontiac's City Council President Mike McGuinness was elected as Pontiac's new mayor. He replaces outgoing mayor and congressional candidate Tim Greimel. McGuinness won the race 54%-45% over former Pontiac City Councilman Kermit Williams.

Royal Oak Mayor Michael Fournier won his 3rd reelection handily 58-41%. Nearby Southfield also saw Ken Siver win his reelection campaign as well 53-46%. Mo Baydoun successfully won the race to be mayor of Dearborn Heights.

Individual Election Information Sites

Oakland County results

<https://results.enr.clarityelections.com/MI/Oakland/124349/web.345435/#/summary>

Ingham County results

<https://app.enhancedvoting.com/results/public/ingham-county-mi/elections/NovemberElection11042025>

Wayne County results

<https://michigan.totalvote.com/Wayne/ResultsSW.aspx?type=CIT&cid=05&map=>

City of Detroit results

<https://app.enhancedvoting.com/results/public/city-detroit-mi/elections/DetroitGeneralElection110425>

Internal Poll Shows Benson Dominating Democratic Primary

An internal poll from Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson's gubernatorial campaign shows her leading Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist 56% to 17%, with Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson at 5% and 23% undecided.

The survey of 453 Democratic primary voters found Benson favored across all demographics, with a 77% favorability rating among Democrats and double-digit leads in every age group.

Poll Shows Limited but Broad Interest in Independent Governor Bid

A new Detroit Regional Chamber sponsored poll by the Glengariff Group found 57% of Michigan voters open to an independent gubernatorial candidate, though pollster Richard Czuba said the support is "broad but thin." Interest is highest among independents and voters earning over \$200,000, but Czuba cautioned that curiosity doesn't necessarily translate into votes. The Chamber, which has endorsed

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independent candidate Mike Duggan, said it plans to track voter attitudes toward independents more closely in future polls.