



To: Amy Malmer, Executive Director, Metropolitan Affairs Council
From: Mike Compagnoni, Adam Wright, and Dusty Fancher, Account Lobbyists, Midwest Strategy Group
Date: 1 May 2026
Subject: Lobbying and Government Relations Activities Summary

Session Schedule

The legislature has returned to their regularly scheduled spring session in 2026 after their spring break ended in mid-April and are expected to have regular session through the end of June. As a reminder, all introduced legislation in Michigan is valid for the full two-year session which will expire at the end of 2026. While the legislature has had a historically slow year thus far, having only a handful of bills signed into law, we do expect session activity to pick up as we get closer to summer break. The House and Senate are currently on track for getting the state budget completed before their statutory deadline of July 1, but much remains to be negotiated, and revenues are tighter than in past years.

Important Upcoming Dates

Below is a list of upcoming dates that are relevant to the political and legislative calendar for 2026:

- May 5: Special General election for the 35th state senate seat
- May 26-29: Detroit Regional Chamber Mackinac Policy Conference
- July 1: Statutory deadline for budget passage
- Aug. 4: Primary election date
- Aug 29: Democratic nominating convention
- Sept 30: End of fiscal year, constitutional deadline for budget passage
- Nov. 3: General election date

Senate Moves Budgets

With Senate passage of their versions of the omnibus and school aid budgets, all three legs of the stool (Governor, Senate, and House) now have their recommended budgets completed. Lawmakers are currently on pace to be able to complete the annual budget process prior to the 4th of July holiday, which is a change of pace compared to last year's slow schedule. However, this legislature has struggled to reach political compromises in divided government, so there is no guarantee of a final product early.

The House has cut the state's overall budget by \$106M and general fund spending by nearly \$600M, touting a significantly lower budget total than last year at \$75.8B. However, there is more than \$9B from Medicaid provider taxes that would be put in a separate fund and almost certainly to be spent in full again, making the House's proposed budget total (counting the \$9B in Medicaid contingency money) just under \$85B, about \$3B short of Governor Whitmer's \$88B proposal.

Other interesting pieces of the budgets include:

- The House passed budget is not contingent on the Speaker's plan for reducing property taxes.
- The House passed a budget pulling \$300M out of the lapsed Strategic Outreach and Attraction Reserve (SOAR) Fund to make a deposit in the Budget Stabilization Fund.



- The Senate unanimously passed bills establishing a revenue sharing trust fund.
- The Senate Labor and Economic Opportunity budget did not include funding for Going Pro or site readiness funding.
- Both the House and the Senate have pushed forward proposals for funding Selfridge Air National Guard Base infrastructure improvements.

All eyes will be on the Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference, also known as CREC, on Friday, May 15 which will set the final revenue estimates for the budget. After CREC, negotiations on the final budget target numbers will begin.

House Holds Hearing on Property Tax Reform Package

House Republicans held a hearing on a package of bills proposing a significant restructuring of Michigan's tax system, including a new 6% excise tax on services ([House Bills 5873-80](#)). The proposal is designed to offset an estimated \$5B in property tax reductions, including cuts to the statewide 18-mill property tax and utility rate rollbacks, by generating approximately \$4.7B in new revenue from a tax on services. As introduced, the bill defines "covered services" very broadly as any activity performed for another person for a fee that does not predominantly involve the transfer of tangible personal property. We have been told staff and analysts are working through what services may or may not be taxed.

The package is in the early part of the legislative process and is widely expected to be changed should negotiations move forward. Speaker Matt Hall (R-Richland Township) has previously indicated the intent is to focus the tax on "luxury services," though the current bill language does not reflect that limitation.

House Reshuffles Democrats on Committees

Michigan House Speaker Matt Hall (R-Richland Township) reshuffled committee assignments, naming former Democratic Speaker Joe Tate (D-Detroit) as minority vice chair of House Appropriations, a role vacant since Hall ousted Rep. Alabas Farhat (D-Dearborn) last summer after disagreements. To seat Tate, Hall also removed Rep. Natalie Price (D-Berkley), who pushed back publicly, saying she was cut for doing her job too well. In related moves, Farhat got the minority vice chair slot on House Rules, and Rep. Angela Witwer (D-Grand Ledge) shifted to Health Policy as vice chair, replacing Rep. Karen Whitsett (D-Detroit), who hasn't shown up in Lansing in over a year.

Automated License Plate Reader Bills in House Judiciary

Michigan's House Judiciary committee heard testimony on a bipartisan pair of bills [House Bill 5492](#) from Rep. Douglas Wozniak (R-Shelby Township) and [House Bill 5493](#) from Rep. Jimmie Wilson Jr. (D-Ypsilanti) that would set new rules for how private and governmental entities use automatic license plate readers (ALPRs). Privacy advocates from the ACLU of Michigan and Michigan League for Public Policy pushed for guardrails, citing roughly 125 Michigan communities already using the technology and the risk of long-term surveillance. Law enforcement groups oppose the bills, saying the proposed 14-day data retention cap and sharing limits would gut a proven investigative tool. Committee members, including Chair Sarah Lightner (R-Springport), signaled the retention window is likely too tight stating Jackson County uses 30 days, and one lawmaker floated a full year. The bills have yet to move but may soon with amendments.



Senate Dems Plan State-Based Health Exchange Bill

Senate Democrats announced plans to reintroduce legislation shifting Michigan from the federally facilitated Affordable Care Act exchange to a state-based exchange, paired with a reinsurance pool. Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-Saint Clair Shores) said the move would lower administrative costs to roughly \$30M annually, freeing an estimated \$40 million for navigators or reinsurance, and citing Colorado as a model state. The bill includes a one-year transition. Currently, twenty states and Washington D.C. currently run state-based exchanges.

DTE Promises Pause on Rate Hikes After This One

DTE Energy will file a new rate increase request with the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) on April 28 for nearly \$500M, then self-impose a two-year moratorium on further rate applications. The pause is conditional on DTE's first data center project coming online by the end of 2027 and receipt of other regulatory approvals. If those conditions hold, the utility says it will not file another request until at least 2028. The announcement follows sustained criticism of DTE and Consumers Energy for filing rate cases at 12-month intervals, the minimum allowed between applications and sometimes filing days after the previous hike was approved. DTE's most recent increase, a \$242.4M hike, was approved by the MPSC on Feb. 19. The newly formed Michigan for Responsible Data Centers coalition praised the move.

Ypsi Utility Puts Moratorium on Datacenter Water Use

The Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority (YCUA) voted on April 22 to pause water and sewer service to hyperscale and mid-size data centers, AI computing facilities, and high-performance computational centers for 12 months pending environmental and capacity studies. The moratorium directly impacts the University of Michigan and Los Alamos National Laboratory's proposed \$1.2B data center (up to 500,000 gallons/day) and Thor Equities' \$1B Augusta Township project (up to 1 million gallons/day). While the university is exempt from local zoning as a public university, it still depends on YCUA for service, making the utility's decision one of the few practical levers available. Township Supervisor Brenda Stumbo warned that "two large data centers could take our capacity just like that," potentially crowding out housing and business growth.

State Warns Employers on "Ethics" Over Prediction Markets

The Office of the State Employer issued an email reminding Michigan state workers and contractors that the State Ethics Act and Civil Service Rules prohibit using confidential or nonpublic information gained through their positions for personal financial gain, including on prediction markets like Kalshi and Polymarket. Office of the State Employer Director Liza Estlund-Olson cited recent federal reporting on prediction market abuse, most notably the case of a U.S. special forces master sergeant charged with using classified intelligence about the operation to depose Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro to net more than \$404,000 on Polymarket, as the impetus for the reminder. Estlund Olson warned that violations could trigger discipline up to termination and possible administrative or legal referral.

Senate Passes Revenue Sharing Trust Fund Unanimously

Several weeks after passing the legislation to create a Revenue Sharing Trust Fund for local units of government out of committee, the Senate has now passed the bill unanimously (37-0). [Senate Bill 912](#) creates a fund inside the state's Department of Treasury to preserve annual disbursements in revenue sharing at a funding floor going forward. This would prevent the legislature or governor from



raiding the funds in the future during budget shortfalls, which local governments broadly support. The bills now go to the House for further consideration.

Senate Moves “Clicks Over Kids” Social Media Legislation

The Senate passed a four-bill package to regulate minors’ use of social media and AI, sending it to the House with narrow bipartisan support (20-17). The legislation ([SBs 757-60](#)) would restrict addictive algorithmic feeds without parental consent, limit notification timing, strengthen data privacy protections, and block minors from accessing certain AI chatbots. Children’s advocacy groups have said the bills address a growing youth mental health crisis linked to social media. The debate on the legislation highlighted constitutional constraints, with Senate Democrats saying the package reflects the strongest action possible without violating First Amendment rights.

House Energy Moves Clean Energy Repealers

The House Energy Committee reported [House Bills 5710](#) and [5711](#) to the House floor for further consideration. This legislation received significant opposition from many environmental groups as they would repeal Michigan's 2023 clean energy laws. Several groups testified that utility filings with the state’s Public Service Commission show renewables are among the most affordable generation sources over the long term, pushing back on arguments that the 2023 policies are driving rate increases. Rep. David Prestin (R-Cedar River) raised concerns about stranded assets from prematurely retired generation like Upper Peninsula RICE generators, while House Democrats offered several failed amendments — including caps on utility return on equity at 7% and protections shielding ratepayers from costs tied to keeping the coal-fired J.H. Campbell Generating Plant operating. We would note that Senate passage or signature of the Governor on this legislation is unlikely as both were supportive of the original 2023 legislation.

EGLE Rolls Out Community Energy Management Program Grants

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) is announcing the release of the Fiscal Year 2026 Community Energy Management Program Request for Proposals (RFP), a grant opportunity designed to help local governments and community organizations improve energy management, reduce costs, and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Priority will be given to projects that:

- Advance energy planning, benchmarking, and data-driven decision-making
- Reduce energy waste and lower operating costs
- Increase access to renewable energy and clean technologies
- Support fleet electrification and EV charging infrastructure
- Promote community engagement, outreach, and workforce development
- Align with the goals of the MI Healthy Climate Plan

A total of \$750,000 in funding will be available through this competitive grant program. Individual awards will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and a match is not required (though additional investment could be helpful in approvals). Additional details including [applications are online here](#).

Supreme Court to Decide Fate of Nine Bills Stuck in Limbo

The Michigan Supreme Court is set to hear arguments in May over a dispute involving nine bills from the end of the 2023–24 legislative term that were never transmitted to Governor Whitmer for approval or



veto. At the beginning of the new term, and after the legislature shifted from Democratic to Republican control, Speaker Matt Hall (R-Richland Twp.) declined to present the nine bills to the governor. Lower courts, including the Michigan Court of Appeals, previously ruled that the Michigan Constitution requires the House to present the bills, with the appellate court explicitly ordering that action. House Republicans have since appealed, arguing that the Senate lacks standing and that compelling the House to act would violate separation of powers, particularly because the legislation originated in a prior session.

The Supreme Court's ruling will determine the fate of several policy measures, including a bill requiring public employers to pay a larger share of employee health insurance, allowing Detroit museums to seek a regional millage, pension changes for corrections officers, and protections preventing certain public benefits from being garnished. The Court, which currently holds a 6–1 Democratic majority, has given the parties 28 days to submit their briefs before hearing the case.

Microplastics Federal and State Hot Topic

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to add microplastics and certain pharmaceuticals to a federal watchlist of potential drinking water contaminants, which would allow for more research and could eventually lead to regulation. However, being placed on the list does not mean immediate action; rather, it is an early step that primarily prioritizes study and data collection.

In Michigan, the response has been mixed. Some officials and environmental advocates see it as a positive step toward addressing growing concerns about these substances in water, especially given their presence in the Great Lakes and uncertainty around health impacts. Others are frustrated that the move stops short of requiring monitoring or stronger regulation, which state leaders like Governor Gretchen Whitmer had pushed for.

The federal announcement comes after the Michigan Senate Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee unanimously advanced a three-bill package that would prohibit the manufacture, sale and distribution of products containing plastic microbeads in Michigan and establish a statewide microplastics assessment program. The lead bill, [SB 503](#), sponsored by Sen. Jeff Irwin (D-Ann Arbor) would direct the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to create a pilot program which determines microplastic baseline conditions in public water supplies and develop recommendations to reduce microplastics statewide. Dow Inc., the Michigan Chemistry Council, and the Michigan Farm Bureau opposed the bills; the Michigan Environmental Council and Sierra Club supported them. The bills were passed unanimously after changes from the committee.

Senate Delays Vote on “Clicks Over Kids” Package

A scheduled Michigan Senate vote on a four-bill package ([SB 757-60](#)) regulating minors’ access to social media and AI platforms has been delayed until after spring recess, after concerns were raised from members of both caucuses before spring break. The delay reflects ongoing negotiations with stakeholders and an effort to build stronger bipartisan support, particularly among Senate Republicans, despite the bills advancing out of committee with some cross-party support.



The package includes restrictions on algorithm-driven “addictive” feeds, enhanced data privacy protections for minors, and limits on youth access to AI chatbots. Lawmakers are proceeding cautiously, however, as similar laws in other states have faced legal challenges, particularly around First Amendment and regulatory overreach concerns. Consequently, Michigan legislators are taking additional time to fine-tune the bills. The expectation is that revisions will continue during the legislative spring break, with a potential floor vote later this spring.

Whitmer Signs Licensure Compact Bill

Gov. Whitmer signed three bills, most notably [HB 5455](#) (now PA 6 of 2026), which keeps Michigan in the [Interstate Medical Licensure Compact](#). The compact, which Michigan joined in 2019, allows physicians to obtain expedited licenses across more than 40 member states. Her signature on the bill comes one day before the state's withdrawal would have been official. The compact streamlines physician licensing across states and exiting would have affected roughly 8,000 doctors practicing in Michigan. The bill was a compromise with Rep. Rylee Linting (R-Wyandotte) getting the public act while Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-St. Clair Shores) will get a public act on [SB 581](#) (PA 5 of 2026), allowing downtown development authorities in mainland-plus-island municipalities to span separate geographic areas. Gov. Whitmer also signed [HB 4044](#) (PA 7), which designates the wood duck as Michigan's official state duck.

MiLEAP Hosts Meeting on Transfer Credits

The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) convened nearly 250 faculty and higher education leaders from 55 Michigan colleges and universities at Delta College for a two-day workshop focused on improving credit transfer and speeding degree completion. The event centered on expanding [MiTransfer Pathways](#) designed to make transfer more transparent and consistent, reduce lost credits, and help students move more efficiently from community colleges to four-year institutions.

State officials framed the effort as part of Michigan’s broader Sixty by 30 goal and workforce strategy, emphasizing that smoother transfer pathways can save students time and money while strengthening completion rates. The work is being guided by MiLEAP’s Advisory Council on Transfer Success, with Michigan aiming to grow from 10 to more than 20 MiTransfer Pathways as part of a more coordinated, student-centered transfer system.

Senate Passes May Primary Date Changes

The Michigan Senate passed a bill package moving the state's primary election from August to May, with broad bipartisan support. The main bill, [Senate Bill 691](#), sponsored by Sen. Sam Singh (D-East Lansing), passed 29-4. Several Republicans debated a proposed optional February election date — critics like Sen. Thomas Albert (R-Lowell) and Sen. Jonathan Lindsey (R-Coldwater) argued February elections create disadvantages for seniors who winter out of state and could enable low-turnout millage increases. Legislative Democrats cited years of requests from local clerks struggling with the tight August-to-November turnaround for ballots and election management as reasons to support the bills. The package also includes reductions in petition signature requirements and campaign finance disclosure changes.

VP Vance Visits Michigan

Vice President JD Vance visited an Auburn Hills manufacturing facility to stump for Republicans, taking questions from many Michigan reporters covering gas prices, the Gordie Howe Bridge, a recent synagogue attack, ICE enforcement, election integrity, and the Iran conflict. Vance called rising gas prices a "temporary blip," defended ICE operations in southeast Michigan, and framed local Democratic leadership as the cause of enforcement chaos seen in other cities. He also pushed the SAVE Act, a federal voter ID bill, and said the Iran operation is solely aimed at preventing a nuclear weapon — not a prolonged war. Vance did not mention any Michigan Republicans by name during the visit.

Petition Fraudster Sentenced to Prison

Shawn Wilmoth, the ringleader of a fraudulent petition signature scheme that knocked five Republican gubernatorial candidates off the 2022 primary ballot, was sentenced to 4 to 20 years in state prison and ordered to pay approximately \$376,000 in restitution. The judge noted Wilmoth and co-defendant Willie Reed were motivated by money, not politics — the pair charged campaigns nearly \$400,000 for valid signatures but delivered tens of thousands of forgeries. Reed's sentencing has been adjourned.

Senate Democrats Pass Resolution Calling Out Federal Energy Policy

Pointing to a 13% hike in national energy costs since the start of the second Trump Administration and urging action to stabilize prices, Senate Democrats passed [Senate Resolution 104](#). This resolution highlights the rising energy costs for Michigan families, businesses, and the agricultural sector. Senate Resolution 104 urges federal action to reverse energy policies Senate Democrats believe caused soaring fuel and fertilizer costs for consumers, businesses, and farmers. The resolution passed along party lines.

Bills Back in House Comm and Tech

Last year, the House Communications and Technology Committee, chaired by Rep. Jaime Greene (R-Richmond), had its bills removed from committee and referred elsewhere after the Chair missed session days due to a trip abroad. However, the bills were returned to the committee, signaling repair in the relationship between House leadership and Chairwoman Greene.

Michigan Secretary of State to Fight New Presidential Order on Mail-In Voting

Following a [recent executive order](#) from President Donald Trump regarding mail-in voting requirements, Michigan Secretary of State and Democratic Gubernatorial candidate Jocelyn Benson promised legal action to fight the order in court. The order directs federal agencies to create a national list of eligible voters and limits mail ballots to individuals on those lists, while also adding new ballot tracking requirements. Benson argues that election administration is primarily a state responsibility under the U.S. Constitution, and that the executive order raises legal concerns about federal authority over state-run elections.

The issue is expected to be resolved through the courts, as multiple states consider or pursue legal challenges. In the meantime, Michigan officials say they intend to continue administering elections under current state law while the situation plays out.



Gov. Whitmer Issues Executive Order and Directive

Executive Order on Energy Emergency

Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared an energy emergency in Michigan to help bring down gas prices. As outlined in [Executive Order 2026-4](#), global issues like the Iran war have led to disrupted oil supplies and, in response, the emergency declaration temporarily loosens rules on certain fuel blends to allow the sale of higher vapor pressure gasoline (E15 Fuel), which could save drivers about 10-20 cents per gallon.

This mainly affects eight counties in southeast Michigan (including Metro Detroit counties), but drivers statewide should see some benefit since cheaper fuel is already allowed elsewhere. The move also lines Michigan up with a federal waiver from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Executive Directive on Impact of Tariffs

In addition to the governor's executive order, Gov. Whitmer also issued [Executive Directive 2026-2](#), addressing the economic impact of recently invalidated federal tariffs on Michigan's economy. The directive outlines how the tariffs increased costs for businesses and consumers, disrupted supply chains, and negatively affected key sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, without delivering the intended economic benefits. The directive also notes that retaliatory tariffs further harmed Michigan exports and contributed to broader economic uncertainty.

The directive instructs relevant state departments to assess the full scope of the tariffs' impact and report findings within 30 days. It also emphasizes the importance of ensuring that Michigan businesses and residents can access any available refunds tied to the unlawful tariffs. The directive further acknowledges that federal tariff policy remains in flux, and that continued monitoring will be necessary to understand and mitigate ongoing effects on the state's economy.

Line 5 Dispute Continues

The U.S. Supreme Court denied Michigan's appeal regarding Governor Whitmer's previous order to shut down the Line 5 pipeline, which means the state cannot claim sovereign immunity to block Enbridge's lawsuit. At the core of the dispute is Michigan's effort to shut down the Line 5 pipeline due to environmental concerns, particularly the risk of a spill in the Great Lakes. Enbridge, however, argues the pipeline is operating legally under federal law and plays a critical role in regional energy supply. As a result of the denial, the lower court rulings stand, and Enbridge's case against Michigan will continue moving forward in federal court.

Palisades Nuclear Plant Moves Closer to Opening

Holtec International announced it has completed another milestone in restarting the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant with the successful passivation of the primary system. The project now moves into the next phase of cooling, additional testing, and equipment upgrades as the company continues working through regulatory approvals and federally supported financing. The roughly 800-megawatt facility is expected to operate through at least 2051 once restarted. The plant is projected to create 600 jobs and would mark the first restart of a previously retired U.S. nuclear plant.



House Democrats Focus on Affordability Agenda

House Minority Leader Ranjeev Puri (D-Canton) and the House Democratic caucus unveiled their "[Vision for a Brighter Michigan](#)," a policy roadmap they say would guide their priorities if they regain the House majority in November. Developed through statewide listening tours, the plan centers on four key areas: affordability, health care, education and workforce development, and housing. The proposal builds on initiatives Democrats have previously advanced, including the Rx Kids program, universal school meals, and efforts to cap prescription drug costs. It also includes a focus on safeguarding Medicare and Medicaid services and addressing housing challenges, such as rising rents and limited supply. Caucus members say the agenda reflects ongoing concerns about cost of living and is intended to present a unified approach to "kitchen table" issues facing Michigan residents.

Another Cannabis Lawsuit on the Books

The Michigan Cannabis Industry Association (MiCIA) has filed another lawsuit regarding the state's new 24% wholesale tax on cannabis that passed in 2025 in a larger conversation around Michigan's road funding. The association filed the suit in the Michigan Court of Claims against the Michigan Department of Treasury, again claiming the wholesale tax is unconstitutional. The industry claims the tax creates a "tax on a tax" situation resulting in a total tax burden that exceeds what voters approved when they legalized recreational marijuana in 2018. The tax, which received bipartisan support during last year's budget negotiations, took effect in January of this year and is projected to generate roughly \$400 million annually for road funding.

Former Gov. Snyder Releases Policy Roadmap

Former Republican Governor Rick Snyder released an updated "[2026 Michigan Roadmap](#)" outlining 53 bipartisan, long-term policy recommendations aimed at improving governance and reducing political polarization. Key proposals include tax cuts, shifting K-12 education toward competency-based learning, expanding integration of physical and behavioral health services, increasing government transparency through public records laws, eliminating opaque earmarks, and introducing career pathways earlier for students. Governor Snyder developed the roadmap with the Making Government Accountable group. The roadmap spans 10 policy areas and is intended as a resource for candidates and lawmakers to adopt regardless of party.

Senate Passes Medical Debt Package

The Michigan Senate approved a five-bill medical debt package with broad bipartisan support. The lead bills, [SB 449](#) and [450](#), passed 33-2, with Sen. Thomas Albert (R-Lowell) and Sen. Joseph Bellino (R-Monroe) opposed; [SB 451](#) passed 27-8, while [SB 701](#) and [702](#) passed 35-0. The package would prohibit large health care providers from charging interest or late fees on medical debt for at least 90 days after a final invoice, and cap interest rates at 3% annually. Sen. Sarah Anthony (D-Lansing), the package sponsor, said the bills modernize debt collection rules without changing the medical billing process itself. Sen. Jonathan Lindsey (R-Coldwater), sponsor of SB 701, called the effort a strong bipartisan step toward addressing medical costs. The bills now head to the House, where Anthony said discussions are ongoing.



Gov. Whitmer Meets with President Trump

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer met with President Donald Trump at the White House to discuss recovery efforts following recent tornadoes in southwest Michigan and ongoing recovery from ice storms that struck northern Michigan roughly a year ago. Trump agreed to direct additional federal funding to Michigan to offset recovery costs. Utilities in the region sustained over \$100 million in infrastructure damage from the storm last year. Whitmer and Trump also discussed the proposed new fighter wing at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Macomb County and the Brandon Road Interbasin Lock and Dam project in Joliet, Illinois, which aims to prevent invasive Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes.

Political Update

Michigan Republican Attorney General, Secretary of State Nominees Selected

At the Michigan Republican Party endorsement convention last month, Doug Lloyd secured the party's endorsement for Attorney General, while Anthony Forlini was endorsed for Secretary of State. Lloyd defeated private attorney Kevin Kijewski by a wide margin, with delegates citing his long tenure as prosecutor and track record of winning elections. Forlini won a three-way contest outright with over 55% of the vote, avoiding a second round, and pointed to his focus on election security and restoring public confidence.

The convention focused on broader party priorities, including strengthening voter trust, emphasizing experienced leadership, and improving turnout in 2026. GOP Chair and State Senator, Jim Runestad (R-White Lake), expressed strong confidence regarding the November elections, highlighting the qualifications of the endorsed candidates and a more organized, less contentious convention process compared to prior years.

Democrats Nominate AG, SOS, and University Board Candidates

A group of around 7,500 Democratic delegates gathered in Detroit on April 18 to nominate several key party positions for the ballot in November. Current Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II managed to secure the nomination for Secretary of State handily against former Lottery Commissioner Suzy Shkreli and Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum. While this race was relatively straightforward, the attorney general's race had a surprise upset for Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald, who lost 58-42% to progressive Washtenaw Prosecutor Eli Savitt. McDonald had locked up much of the institutional support, including nearly all labor, education, fire, and police unions.

The crowd was largely seen as a more progressive-leaning group, causing a similar groundswell to propel more progressive candidates like Savitt forward to nomination. This is very similar to 8 years ago when progressive, now A.G. Dana Nessel bested the more moderate Pat Miles for the nomination.

Controversial University of Michigan Regent Jordan Acker, who's drawn fire for inappropriate comments about students in messages and strongly pro-Israel stances, lost to lawyer and activist Amir Makled. Makled has also made controversial statements including the Detroit News reporting he made social media comments critical of Jewish people, which have since been deleted. Makled also defended a group of Michigan student protesters who were facing charges related to activities opposing the Israel-Palestine war.



The convention proceedings also saw widespread heckling and booing of several more moderate Democratic candidates, including Congresswoman Haley Stevens (D-Birmingham) by supporters of her primary challenger, public health official Abdul El-Sayed. El-Sayed publicly condemned the behavior of some of his supporters several days later.

Michigan State University trustees Brianna Scott and Kelly Tebay Zemke received the party's endorsement (both incumbents) as State Sen. Sylvia Santana (D-Detroit) failed to gain a spot on the November ballot. Republicans endorsed Julie Maday and term-limited State Sen. Roger Victory (R-Hudsonville).

Savitt and Gilchrist will go on to face Republican attorney Doug Lloyd and Macomb County Clerk Anthony Forlini respectively in November.

Partisan Candidate Deadline Draws Hundreds of New Candidates to Ballot

The August primary is now fast approaching and the candidate fields for state elected, and federal offices are largely set. Candidates had until Friday, April 24 to withdraw, and a few additional names came off the list of roughly 800 candidates for state and federal office. Of note, all major party candidates for governor have turned in their needed signatures to qualify for the ballot (those will now need to be validated by the Secretary of State). Former Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan does not need to formally file until July due to the fact he will not be on the partisan primary ballot in August. Some additional notes on the gubernatorial races:

- After submitting his signatures, Republican gubernatorial candidate and former Michigan House Speaker Tom Leonard, announced he would be dropping out of the race.
- AxMiTax ballot proposal leader Karla Wagner has exited the Republican gubernatorial race, citing party leadership she says is unresponsive to Michigan voters, and will continue her campaign as an independent. Her primary focus has been repealing property taxes.
- Fellow gubernatorial candidate Anthony Hudson made a similar exit from the Republican race recently and is now running as a Libertarian. Both candidates framed their departures as the party shutting out outside voices.
- A new Detroit Regional Chamber poll released (conducted by Glengariff in Mid-Late April) shows John James leading the Republican gubernatorial primary field with 37%, followed by Perry Johnson at 19.8%, while Mike Cox (9.9%) and Aric Nesbitt (6.9%) trail in a fragmented second tier, and a sizable 22.6% of voters remain undecided, highlighting both James' early advantage driven by name ID and the still-fluid nature of the race as consolidation has yet to occur. With former House Speaker Tom Leonard exiting the field so we will see where those supporters go.
- Republican gubernatorial candidate Perry Johnson unveiled a property tax reform plan built around four pillars: lowering and capping school operating millages, a constitutional amendment to reduce taxes for seniors, expanding property tax credits, and funding relief through spending reform. The plan would phase out the 18-mill school operating tax on owner-occupied primary residences and proposes a constitutional amendment for voter approval in 2026 or 2028. The plan draws from proposals recently advanced by House Speaker Matt Hall (R-

Richland Township), which include eliminating the state education tax, personal property tax, real estate transfer tax, and the pop-up tax.

- Johnson's broader "\$4,747 plan" also proposes returning that amount to every family via property tax reform, eliminating the income tax, and cutting two cents of every dollar in discretionary spending.

The U.S. Senate primary between State Sen. Mallory McMorrow (D-Royal Oak), Congresswoman Haley Stevens (D-Birmingham), and public health official Abdul El-Sayed will undoubtedly be closely watched nationally. The winner in the race will likely face former Congressman Mike Rogers in November. U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts) has endorsed State Sen. Mallory McMorrow in her U.S. Senate bid, becoming the fourth sitting Democratic U.S. Senator to back her campaign. Warren praised McMorrow as a fighter with a proven record, citing her focus on working family economic issues like housing and childcare costs.

However, McMorrow was tagged in a [CNN report](#) citing critical and now deleted social media comments she made regarding Michigan. The highly contested Democratic US Senate Primary between McMorrow, Congresswoman Haley Stevens, and public health official Abdul El-Sayed has garnered national attention. Several of the posts made negative comments about the rural Midwest, expressed sadness over ever leaving California, and even claimed she continued to vote despite moving to Michigan. While this may not sink her campaign, should she win the primary this will undoubtedly be used by Republicans against her.

Another interesting note regarding the U.S. Senate seat, El-Sayed's rally with online political commentator Hasan Piker fueled debate among Democrats over the role of progressive influencers in campaigns. While El-Sayed says the event is about engaging new voters, some party leaders have raised concerns about Piker's past rhetoric as a frequent Israel critic who many accuse of pushing antisemitism, and his potential impact on party unity.

The State Senate is seeing several contentious primaries for swing seats. In the 12th Senate district, there is a five-person primary for the Republican candidacy against current State Sen. Kevin Hertel (D-Saint Clair Shores). Nearby in Macomb County, State Sen. Veronica Klinefelt (D-Eastpointe) faces a primary challenge in her bid for a second term in the 11th Senate District. Another critical seat for Senate Democrats to win will be the 9th Senate District, currently held by Sen. Mike Webber (R-Rochester Hills). He will face either Oakland County Commissioner Brendan Johnson (D-Rochester Hills), Troy City Councilmember Theresa Brooks, or Renis Nushaj, a founding partner at the Troy Law Center, in November.

State Rep. Matt Koleszar (D-Northville Township) avoided a primary challenge for a newly drawn seat in western Wayne County - this area is reliably Democrat, meaning unless something unusual pops up, he is likely to be the next Senator from the area.

Several House seats which are rematches in battleground seats saw candidates avoid primaries, including former Rep. Jim Haadsma (D-Battle Creek) running against Rep. Steve Frisbie (R-Battle Creek) in Calhoun County and former Rep. Jaime Churches (D-Wyandotte) and Rep. Rylee Linting (R-



Wyandotte) in a downriver based seat. In some cases, this will allow Democratic challengers to run directly against their respective Republican incumbents without the cost and time of a primary challenge. A contentious multi-way primary is also brewing in Oakland County with current Rep. Donni Steele (R-Lake Orion) running for Senate. This seat will be a critical swing seat for Democrats to pick-up a House majority.

A full list of candidates is available [online here](#).

Slotkin Says She'd Consider 2028 Presidential Run

U.S. Senator Elissa Slotkin (D-Michigan) indicated she would be open to running for president in 2028. She's been making some moves behind the scenes including in states like Iowa to build her profile and has positioned herself as a moderate Democrat who could take on Republicans in a competitive 2028 national election.

Kumar Launches Independent Bid in 11th Congressional District

Wayne State University Gov. Dr. Anil Kumar, who previously ran as a Democrat in Michigan's 10th Congressional District, announced he will run as an independent in the neighboring 11th District. Kumar said the decision reflects frustration with partisan gridlock and a belief that he can better advance priorities like healthcare and education reform outside the two-party system.

Schor Drops State Rep Run

Erin Schor, wife of Lansing Mayor Andy Schor, has withdrawn from the race for Michigan's 74th House District seat, citing unexpected family obligations. She had recently announced her candidacy for the seat being vacated by Rep. Kara Hope (D-Holt). The district remains a safe Democratic seat with several other viable candidates for Democrats.

Michigan School Tax Campaign Pauses, Eyes 2028

The Invest in MI Kids ballot proposal is suspending its 2026 ballot petition campaign after falling short of the 446,198 signatures needed to place a millionaire surcharge on Michigan's ballot. The measure would have imposed a 5% surcharge on Michigan state income taxes for earnings above \$1 million (or \$500,000 for single filers), on top of existing tax rates. The proceeds would be constitutionally protected and flow directly to public education funding. Organizers collected roughly 250,000 signatures but saw no viable path to the finish line. They plan to stay active in advocacy and relaunch in 2027, targeting the 2028 ballot instead.