



## **UPDATES FROM THE CAPITOL**

### **February 15 - 28, 2025**

#### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Sunday, March 9, 2025**

Daylight Saving Time

#### **GOVERNOR WHITMER'S 2025 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS: A SUMMARY**

Governor Whitmer's 2025 State of the State Address featured several initiatives that emphasized public health and improving outcomes for Michigan children. A few of her noteworthy priorities include:

##### **Healthcare Initiatives**

The Governor emphasized her continued commitment to expanding healthcare access, with a focus on reducing prescription drug costs and improving maternal healthcare. She proposed additional funding to support community health programs and initiatives to address disparities in healthcare access, particularly in underserved communities.

##### **Medical Debt**

A historic allocation of \$4.5 million is set to ease the burden of medical debt affecting nearly 700,000 residents, ensuring that health emergencies do not lead to long-term financial hardship.

##### **Vaping Tax**

In an effort to curb youth vaping and promote healthier communities, Whitmer proposed closing longstanding loopholes by introducing a new tax on vaping products similar to cigarettes. The revenue generated would be directed toward public health initiatives and educational campaigns aimed at preventing youth nicotine addiction.

##### **No Phones in Class**

To enhance learning environments and reduce distractions, the Governor suggested a statewide policy restricting cellphone use in classrooms. The goal is to improve student engagement, academic performance, mental health, sociability, and overall well-being.

##### **Children's Literacy & Education**

The Governor highlighted a renewed focus on early childhood literacy, proposing increased investment in reading programs, teacher training, and access to educational resources to ensure students meet grade-level proficiency standards.

##### **Mental Health & Child Care**

Expanding support programs, the address highlighted efforts to nurture mental well-being and

expand affordable child care, reinforcing the link between mental health and educational success. Whitmer emphasized the critical need for enhanced funding and integration of mental health services in schools and communities to ensure that both children and their caregivers have timely access to comprehensive support.

In addition to these priority areas, Governor Whitmer touched on several other important initiatives in her speech:

- **Housing Investments:** A \$2 billion plan to build, buy, or repair nearly 11,000 homes, creating over 10,000 construction jobs and reducing living costs.
- **Energy Assistance:** Expansion of the Michigan Energy Assistance Program to help tens of thousands of households save on winter utility bills.
- **Tax Relief:** Measures including a retirement tax rollback and expanded Working Families Tax Credit to put over \$1 billion back into households.
- **Permitting & Licensing Reforms:** Streamlined processes aimed at accelerating construction and job creation.
- **Workforce Development:** Initiatives to boost job skills and educational opportunities, including targeted outreach to young men for tuition-free career and technical programs.
- **Road Funding:** Proposed investments in road maintenance and infrastructure upgrades aim to improve transportation safety and efficiency, benefiting all Michiganders and supporting local economies.

You may read Governor Whitmer's entire 2025 address [HERE](#) for a detailed outline of her 2025 priorities.

### **MICHIGAN LEGISLATURE EXPANDS PAID SICK LEAVE AND RAISES MINIMUM WAGE**

Governor Whitmer has signed two bipartisan bills aimed at supporting Michigan's workforce by expanding paid sick leave and increasing our state's minimum wage. [Senate Bill 8](#) gradually raises the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2027, giving small businesses time to adjust to the pay increase for over 730,000 Michigan employees. Following 2027, the minimum wage will continue to rise based on inflation. It also increases the tipped wage credit over time to align more closely with wages in our neighboring states.

The second bipartisan bill - [House Bill 4002](#) - expands paid sick leave policies, allowing employees to use earned time off for medical appointments, illness, or caregiving without being required to find their own replacement. Both bills were crafted through bipartisan collaboration to balance worker protections with business sustainability, reinforcing Michigan's commitment to a strong and competitive workforce.

Related Article: [SENATE PASSES TIPPED MINIMUM WAGE BILL WITH CAUCUS RESISTANCE](#)

### **JUSTICE CLEMENT ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT**

Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement has announced she will step down from the bench by April 30, 2025. Appointed by former Governor Rick Snyder, Clement has been recognized for her commitment to judicial independence and fairness. During her tenure, she worked to improve access to justice and modernize Michigan's court system. Her departure gives

Governor Gretchen Whitmer the opportunity to appoint a replacement, furthering the current 5-2 Democratic-nominated majority on the court.

Following her resignation, Clement will take on a new role as president of the National Center for State Courts, a nonprofit dedicated to improving judicial systems. Her successor will serve the remainder of her term and will need to run for reelection in 2026.

### **HERTEL AND RUNESTAD TO SERVE AS NEW MDP AND MRP PARTY CHAIRS**

Former state senator Curtis Hertel Jr. has been elected as the new Chair of the Michigan Democratic Party (MDP). Hertel, who previously served as Governor Gretchen Whitmer's legislative director before running for U.S. Congress, emphasized his commitment to strengthening the party and fighting for working families. Hertel has vowed to expand Democratic influence in Michigan ahead of the 2026 elections.

Meanwhile, at the Michigan Republican Party (MRP) convention, current Senator Jim Runestad (R-White Lake) won the party chair election, defeating former MRP co-chair Meshawn Maddock. Runestad, who will continue serving in the Senate while leading the party, secured 63% of the vote before Maddock conceded. A staunch conservative, Runestad has pledged to refocus the party's efforts on election integrity and grassroots engagement to regain legislative control in the Senate.

