

# MICHIGAN COUNTIES



Doug Johnson of Otsego County is currently the longest-serving county commissioner in Michigan, having first taken office in 1981. (Courtesy photo)



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## ON THE COVER

COMMISSIONER  
DOUG JOHNSON OF  
OTSEGO COUNTY

PHOTO CREDIT:  
COURTESY

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MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

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# Letter from the Executive Director



**STEPHAN W. CURRIE**  
MAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**“Through our Service Corporation, MAC works with a select group of firms (‘sponsored programs’) that have long provided ‘essential’ services, if you will to our members.”**

Among the many instances at our recent Legislative Conference that brought a smile to my face were the interactions our members had with various vendors who offer products and services that counties need to do their jobs well. Some of these business representatives have been coming to MAC events so long they seem like members themselves.

And, in a way, some of them are.

Through our Service Corporation, MAC works with a select group of firms (“sponsored programs”) that have long provided “essential” services, if you will to our members. I’d like to discuss what a few of them do and why we think these partnerships are so important.

First on the list is CoPro+. I admit I’m a bit biased here, as the initiative that became CoPro was one of my first projects when I joined MAC as deputy director in 2011. In the succeeding decade, the idea of a collaborative purchasing portal for counties (and others) has grown substantially into a firm that provides great deals on products, connects counties to key consultants (e.g., ARP funding oversight) and even can provide staff to operate your procurement process.

Four decades strong, our Michigan Counties Workers’ Compensation Fund continues to issue record dividends of more than \$3 million per year and provides members with personalized safety analysis and an innovative grant program to make equipment investments to keep your employees safe. (Learn more at <https://michigancountieswcf.org/>.)

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, of course, has been with our Service Corporation from its beginnings in the mid-1980s. The quality of its offerings is growing ever-more important, too, as the hunt for, and retention of, county employees become ever-more challenging.

Also relevant to counties attracting talent are the offerings from Nationwide Retirement Services. At last report, Nationwide, in partnership with MAC and the National Association of Counties, had more than 11,000 active participants in its retirement plans, with assets of nearly \$800 million.

Beyond these firms, our sponsored programs cover:

- Telecommunications bill management (Abilita)
- Health spending accounts and supplemental insurance (American Fidelity)
- Out-of-pocket health expenses (HealthBridge)
- Disability insurance (Lincoln Financial)

To learn more about any of these programs, visit the MAC website at <https://micounties.org/macsc/> or drop me a note at [scurrie@micounties.org](mailto:scurrie@micounties.org). I’m happy to answer any questions about all the ways that MAC can help you. ♦



**KEN KELBEL (LEFT) OF NATIONWIDE RETIREMENT SERVICES CHATS WITH CLINTON COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR CRAIG LONGNECKER DURING THE 2022 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE IN LANSING IN MARCH. (ROD SANFORD PHOTOGRAPHY)**

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*\*Special thanks to Jim Maike for his \$500 to kick off the 2022 campaign*

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Michigan Counties is your gateway to all things related to county government in the Great Lakes State. For an annual fee of \$15, you will receive all six printed editions of the magazine (February, April, June, August, October and December).

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# Letter from the President



**PHIL KUYERS**  
PRESIDENT, MAC BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS

**“The roles of state legislator and county commissioner are naturally complementary. Both jobs require attention to detail and process, yet also the ability to grasp the challenges on every aspect of daily life.”**

In late March, it was my privilege and pleasure to welcome about 200 of my county colleagues to our 2022 Legislative Conference.

Opening the conference’s first plenary session, I was eager to set a tone for the event and for our advocacy work in Lansing for the entire year:

“During my years of involvement with MAC, and especially in my time on the MAC Board, I have learned many things and met more interesting people than I can really recall.

“This morning, though, I want to focus — briefly — on my ‘revelation,’ if you will, from my service in this organization:

“The power of a personal relationship with your state lawmakers.

“If the lights weren’t bright, I’m sure I could see Deena and Meghann and Steve nodding their heads in unison. They have told me over and over again that the power of MAC is in our membership and in the efforts of that membership. To succeed, we must have a good staff – and we are most fortunate that we have an excellent one – but nothing matches up to one elected official speaking directly to another elected official from the same community or area.

“To be honest, I’m not sure that even qualifies as a ‘revelation.’ The roles of state legislator and county commissioner are naturally complementary. Both jobs require attention to detail and process, yet also the ability to grasp the challenges on every aspect of daily life. We both read budgets. We both field requests and complaints from our constituents. We both have far too little time to put up against far too many problems, or so it feels many days. ...

“So, as I leave it with you today, my one — and only — ask of you is this: Make a point of talking — regularly — with your representative, and with your senator.

“Yes, I know, many — if not most — of the folks here today are doing so. The fact you sit before me shows you are among the most engaged MAC members.

“But we can all do more, even if that ‘more’ is to nudge our county colleagues to adopt some of the practices we employ personally. If you have coffee with your rep, make a point of inviting a colleague — and rotate your invitations. If you regularly exchange emails with your senator, copy in a colleague. Show them how it’s done.

“We owe each other, and ourselves, that much.” ♦



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## Hundreds gather in Lansing for 2022 Legislative Conference

Nearly 300 county officials, vendors, policy experts and others gathered in Lansing this week for the 2022 Michigan Counties Legislative Conference, hosted by MAC, in association with the Michigan County Medical Care Facilities Council (MCMCFC).

During the three-day event, participants had access to a dozen policy workshops, heard from plenary speakers on the legislative situation in Lansing and the rapidly changing circumstances on broadband in Michigan and enjoyed ample networking time.

During his welcome address to county leaders, MAC Board President Phil Kuyers of Ottawa County said, “This morning, I want to focus – briefly – on my ‘revelation,’ if you will, from my service in this organization: The power of a personal relationship with your state lawmakers. If the lights weren’t bright, I’m sure I could see Deena and Meghann and Steve nodding their heads in unison. They have told me over and over again that the power of MAC is in our membership and in the efforts of that membership.”

## Walterhouse, longtime Benzie commissioner, passes

Frank Walterhouse, who served on the Benzie County Board of Commissioners for 37 years, passed away on March 21, 2022, at his home.



**WALTERHOUSE**

During his tenure, Walterhouse helped develop the Betsie Valley Trail along Crystal Lake and improved the Maples Medical Care Facility in Frankfort. He retired from the Benzie board in early 2018 due to declining health.

Walterhouse also served for many years on the Board of Trustees for the Michigan Counties Workers’ Compensation Fund.

“Frank had an insurance background,” noted Timothy McGuire, administrator of MCWCF. “In the beginning stages of the fund and throughout his career, he served as a sounding board for us in many respects. He was devoted to Benzie County and the success of the fund. His spirit will live on.”

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## Senators honored for work on 4-year terms

Sens. Ed McBroom (R-Dickinson) and Jeremy Moss (D-Oakland) were very special guests at the 2022 MAC Legislative Reception on March 22, as they were honored as 2022 County Advocate Award winners for their work in 2021 in passing four-year terms for county commissioners.

The senators were lauded by Governmental Affairs Director Deena Bosworth and Board President Phil Kuyers during a program that also included some “catch-up work,” the presentation of MAC’s 2020 County Advocate Awards that were disrupted by the pandemic. Honored for their work in 2019 were Sen. Roger Victory (R-Ottawa) and Reps. Sarah Lightner (R-Jackson) and Julie Alexander (R-Jackson).

Bosworth also praised Allegan County’s Jim Storey, a



**ALLEGAN COUNTY COMMISSIONER JIM STOREY SHOWS OFF HIS COPIES OF THE PUBLIC ACT AUTHORIZING FOUR-YEAR TERMS SIGNED BY BILL SPONSORS (AND COUNTY ADVOCATE AWARD WINNERS) SENS. ED MCBROOM (LEFT) AND JEREMY MOSS.**

MAC Board member, for his long efforts and testimony in support of four-year term legislation.

## House honors County Government Month

To mark National County Government Month (NCGM) in April, the Michigan House of Representatives on April 12 passed a resolution drafted by MAC noting the key contributions that county governments make to daily life in our state.

State Rep. Julie Rogers, D-Kalamazoo, herself a former county commissioner and former MAC Board member, sponsored the resolution and spoke on its behalf during a House session on April 12.



“As a former county commissioner, I know firsthand that county governments play a vital role in the delivery of key public services in our state,” Rogers said.

MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie thanked Rogers for her support: “Our members across Michigan greatly appreciate Rep. Rogers’ sponsorship of this resolution and its quick adoption by the full House of Representatives. Nearly 50,000 of our friends and neighbors work in county government each and every day to make our state a better, safer and healthier place to live. Such service is deserving of recognition this month — and every month.”

## Longtime MAC employee from '70s, '80s passes

Laura “Liz” Grant passed on Feb. 6, 2022, at the age of 95. She worked at the Michigan Association of Counties for 36 years, retiring in August 1991 as MAC’s office manager.



**GRANT**

The July 1991 edition of Michigan Counties lauded Grant, noting, “(S)he could always find time to exercise her talent for smoothing off rough edges, counseling the harried, leveling the hasty, teaching the art of compromise and pursuing her vocation ...”

“Liz was a truly dedicated employee for MAC,” said Timothy McGuire, administrator of the Michigan Counties Workers’ Compensation Fund. “The office staff consisted of five people when I got there in 1978. We all looked up to Liz for advice, counsel and direction. Everyone appreciated her compassion, insight and wisdom.”



## County leaders cash in at conference

Kristine Bosley, human resources director at Benzie County, and Rob Pallarito, vice chair of the Otsego County Board of Commissioners, claimed \$250 cash prizes in the Legislative Conference Exhibitor Bingo contest. Executive Director Stephan Currie presented the money to both after their names were drawn by Second Vice President Eileen Kowall of Oakland County on the last day of the conference. ♦

# Dollars are finally flowing for infrastructure

BY DEENA BOSWORTH/MAC GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

“Among the most vital of the priorities identified by MAC and the coalition is an investment by the state in broadband infrastructure. SB 565 starts that ball rolling.”

After months of negotiations and recommendations by counties, the Legislature and Gov. Gretchen Whitmer finally came to an agreement on a \$4.7 billion water and infrastructure supplemental spending bill. Combining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds and some dollars from the state General Fund, Senate Bill 565 brings forth an unprecedented investment in counties, parks, water infrastructure, roads, bridges, airports and affordable housing.

As part of the Coalition for a Strong and Prosperous Michigan, MAC partnered with more than 60 other organizations to form a plan and advocate for the adoption of such strategic investments in Michigan’s people, businesses and infrastructure. The plan calls for investments to improve our aging infrastructure, fiscal health, our economy, public health and safety and create thriving communities.

Among the most vital of the priorities identified by MAC and the coalition ([www.miroadmap.com](http://www.miroadmap.com)) is an investment by the state in broadband infrastructure. SB 565 starts that ball rolling.

By allocating \$5 million for the Michigan High Speed Internet Office and authorizing eight full-time positions, Michigan can proceed with the analysis and develop a plan that is necessary to access more than \$1.3 billion in federal funds for broadband. Individual grants will become available for local governments, school districts and providers to start the process at the local level. While many of the grant details have not been fleshed out yet, investment in our global economic and educational opportunities is closer to becoming a reality.

Additional highlights of the programs and loan made available in the supplemental bill appropriation include:

- \$1.1 billion for drinking water, lead line replacement and grants to small and disadvantaged communities and for



- addressing emerging contaminants
- \$677 million for Clean Water Infrastructure revolving loan fund
- \$317 million for roads and bridges
- \$206 million for the Four Lakes Task Force in the Midland area
- \$97.8 million for airport infrastructure grants
- \$66 million for public transportation
- \$66 million for pump station backup generators
- \$65 million for competitive grants for local parks and trail infrastructure
- \$50 million for a missing middle gap housing program for nonprofit developers to build housing for those earning between 185 percent and 300 percent of the median income for the area (30% of funds expended must be for rural areas)
- \$43.2 million for dam risk reduction program
- \$35 million for failing septic system loan program (with low or zero interest loans)
- \$15 million for PFAS remediation

More detail on the water infrastructure funding was covered in a recent webinar co-hosted by MAC and the Michigan Department of Treasury. A recording of the webinar can be found at <https://bit.ly/37ncUoz>.

If you have additional questions or would like to discuss specific projects and funding opportunities, contact Deena Bosworth at [bosworth@micounties.org](mailto:bosworth@micounties.org). ♦

## COVID-19 Relief Consulting Services

CoPro+ is a program that provides public entities with the opportunity to collaboratively procure valuable goods and services at competitive prices, while receiving a dividend as a reward for being a shareholder in the program.

### AVAILABLE CONTRACTS:

The Covid-19 Relief Consulting Service contracts are hosted by Livingston County; however, available to all counties. They were competitively bid and approved through the county's procurement process and are posted at [coproplus.org](http://coproplus.org).

The vendors chosen through this process are prequalified to provide various services to the counties to assist them in managing the Covid-19 Relief funds allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The contracts will offer a means to counties to receive financial accounting, oversight monitoring, auditing, and/or reporting services as required for each individual project.

### Four Contracts Were Awarded

#### Guidehouse

Jeff Bankowski  
[jbankowski@guidehouse.com](mailto:jbankowski@guidehouse.com)  
734-644-0595

#### iParametrics

Michelle Erste  
[michelle.erste@iparametrics.com](mailto:michelle.erste@iparametrics.com)  
Direct: 770-290-1477  
Cell: 770-238-7408

#### Pierce, Monroe & Associates

Kim Ball  
[kbball@piercemonroe.com](mailto:kbball@piercemonroe.com)  
313-961-8419

#### Public Sector Consultants

Misty Elliott  
[melliott@publicsectorconsultants.com](mailto:melliott@publicsectorconsultants.com)  
517-371-7434

### PROCESS:

The contractor will deploy a team of one or more professionals to the requesting county. The number of staff required will vary with each county and will depend on the individual needs of each county.

The contractor will work at the direction of each county's designated lead to help them determine proper use and distribution of the funds to intended beneficiaries, recordkeeping, compliance for SEFA and dashboard-like reporting to governing boards and other community stakeholders. The county will have access to the full range of the contractor's knowledge and tools will be updated daily on what the contractor learns from its federal expert sources and from experiences/insight from similar projects in other states.

Prior to closing the contracts, the contractor will provide a roadmap and recommendations for continued use of tracking and reporting tools, and any other knowledge transfer to key county personnel to successfully complete in progress tasks/outcomes.

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For more information, visit [www.coproplus.org](http://www.coproplus.org)

#### THE TASK MAY INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO, THE FOLLOWING:

- Inventory finding opportunities along with requirements for obtaining, utilizing, and accounting
- Assist in administering Federal and State grant monies
- Track and manage progress (applications made, receipts, distributions, etc.)
- Provide project reports
- Project auditing
- Project budgeting
- Financial forecasting
- Recommend internal controls
- Schedule and conduct/assist in meetings
- Other activities as deemed beneficial for the outcomes, and as mutually agreed to by the participating county and the Contractor

# For Otsego's Johnson, it's all about making a difference

BY WILL HANSEN/COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING INTERN

**“In late 2021, MAC undertook a survey of continuous office tenure for all of Michigan’s county commissioners. Johnson, now in his 42nd year of service, topped the list”**



**DOUG JOHNSON SHARES A LAUGH WITH OTSEGO COUNTY BOARD CHAIR KENNETH GLASSER PRIOR TO AN APRIL MEETING. (COURTESY PHOTO)**

In 1980, Doug Johnson was four years into ownership of his father’s company, Mid-North Printing, in Gaylord. Living and working in a county seat of just 3,000, Johnson already knew several county commissioners and the importance of public service.

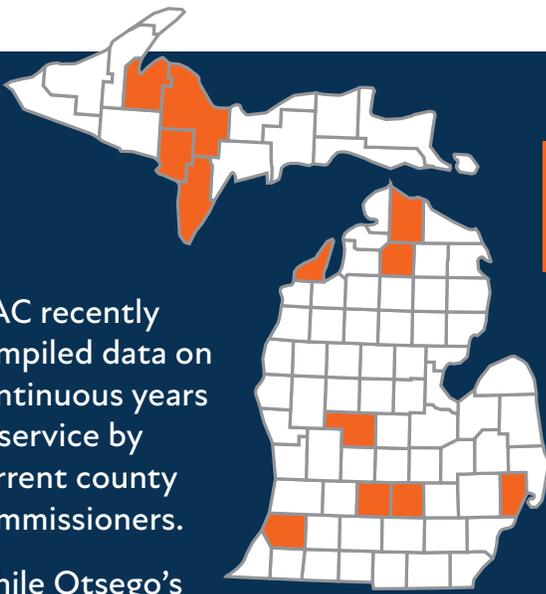
So, when a vacancy occurred on the Otsego County Board, Johnson said, “I thought, ‘It’s easy to sit on the sidelines and complain about something.’ (This is my) chance to get in there and make a difference.”

And that he has kept doing – through hundreds of board sessions, 40-odd county budgets, seven U.S. presidents, six Michigan governors and five Masters titles for Tiger Woods. In the process, Johnson has now become the dean of Michigan’s county commissioners.

In late 2021, MAC undertook a survey of continuous office tenure for all of Michigan’s county commissioners. Johnson, now in his 42nd year of service, topped the list (see at right).

The challenges of public life came early in Johnson’s tenure, he said, when Otsego was faced with what to do with a 600-acre piece of property that once housed a state hospital. “Since (purchasing the land from the state for \$1), the county has been able to revitalize the acreage into a new high school, a community college and the Health Department, which haven’t cost taxpayers anything,” Johnson explained. “People didn’t agree with the move at the time, but since then it’s developed into quite a savings over the years, and I’m proud of that.”

Johnson, of course, has witnessed firsthand



MAC recently compiled data on continuous years of service by current county commissioners.

While Otsego's Doug Johnson leads the pack, there are more than a dozen commissioners who have been serving their counties for more than 25 years.

### THAT'S A LOT OF ELECTIONS!

## TOP TEN FOR TENURE ON COUNTY BOARDS

NAME	COUNTY	STARTED
Douglas Johnson	Otsego	1/1/1981
Randy Schafer	Ingham	1/1/1985
Gerry Corkin	Marquette	1/1/1985
Joseph Brehler	Eaton	1/1/1989
Bernie Lang	Menominee	1/1/1989
Don Brown	Macomb	1/1/1990
Gale Eilola	Baraga	4/1/1992
Patrick Carr	Montcalm	1/1/1993
John Wallace	Cheboygan	1/1/1995
Joe Stevens	Dickinson	1/1/1995
Melinda Lautner	Leelanau	1/1/1995
Donald Hanson	Van Buren	1/1/1995

just how the responsibilities and routines of county government have changed between the 20th and 21st centuries. "It's definitely gotten harder," he said. "People are less patient and more frustrated."

He's also seen a change in how public servants are perceived and public life is conducted.

"It used to be you could respect one another and disagree and walk out of the meeting knowing that you disagreed on that, but leave it at the door," he explained. "It's just I sense a lot of frustration, which I can understand. But a lot of disrespect, if you will, and rudeness from the general public that I didn't see 10 or 20 years ago.

"People's attitudes change towards you once you get into office," he added. "They are not always going to agree with you. And it's always a challenge to help them understand why you do what you're doing, and you're doing what you think is right for the majority of the people that you serve. I've actually lost customers because of something that I took some action on, but I guess if that's the type of people they are I don't need them for customers."

Through all these years, all those meetings, what keeps Johnson going?

"It is still important for me to continue to serve," he replied. "There is still important work to be done, and ways I can still make a difference to be valuable to my constituents."

Not content to contain his service to Otsego, Johnson leads the Board of Trustees for Michigan Counties Workers' Compensation Fund and serves on the board of the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority.

Outside of public life, Johnson recently celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary with wife Sherry. They have three children and nine grandchildren. In what free time he has, Johnson loves to golf, fish and hunt – and for the past 13 years he's been a member of a curling club.

Johnson named Ernie Harwell and Arnold Palmer as two inspirational figures in his life. "I met Ernie a couple of times," he said. "I've had the opportunity to sit in meetings with him and have been able to have a conversation with him afterwards. He was inspiring, had great focus and knew how to treat people with respect." Johnson also met the golfing great Palmer while at a tournament with his family: "We were invited to a dinner party after the tournament and my family was able to sit with him at his table."

For those interested in starting a public career, Johnson advised, "Stay focused on the work and be true to yourself, your beliefs and your values.

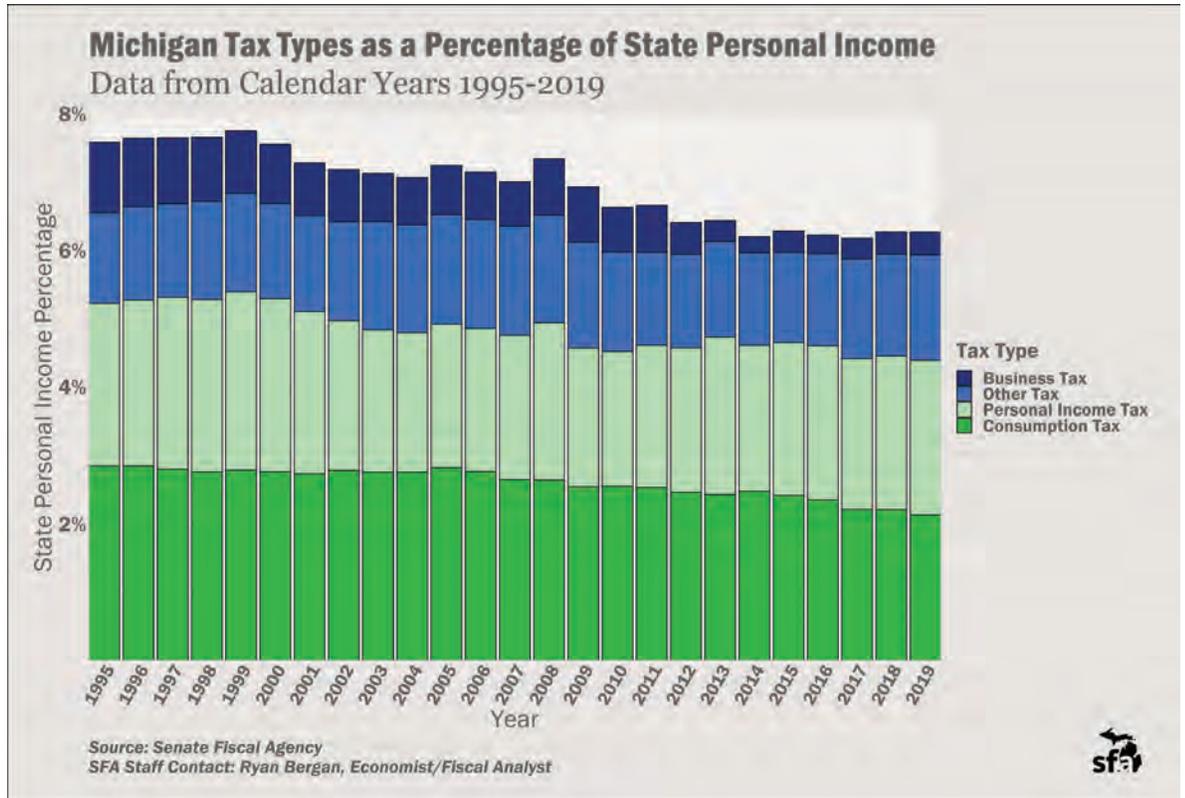
"It is important to be honest and dependable and follow through on your promises; also, accept the fact that not everybody is going to agree with you and to not beat yourself up over it." ♦

# ‘Common sense’ could improve state government

BY ERIC LUPHER/PRESIDENT, CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN



MAC strongly supports the work of the **Citizens Research Council of Michigan**, a nonpartisan, independent public policy research organization. MAC Executive Director Stephan Currie currently sits on the CRC Board.



**“Both major political parties have offered tax cuts that would use up most, and in some cases all, of the state’s revenue growth.”**

In *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine wrote, “Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one ...” Michigan’s funding of state government over the past two decades has contributed to it becoming an intolerable evil.

For in the past two decades, the state government has attempted to maintain services but with less funding. The result has been that very few services have been adequately funded and the state been left looking inefficient and incapable of performing key services.

Michigan is worse off because of this reduced spending. The public health apparatus was unprepared for the pandemic. Child Protective Services has failed some children under its charge. Colleges are less affordable. Infrastructure is decaying around us.

The economic contraction in the first decade of this century and the 2007 recession hit

Michigan’s General Fund particularly hard. Revenues decreased almost 30 percent from FY2000 to FY2010 and did not recover to FY2000 levels until FY2017. Adjusted for inflation, they remain almost 25 percent below that FY2000 level. The state is taxing a smaller proportion of personal income.

Unfortunately, neither party has outlined a plan to prioritize available resources and eliminate affordable services; this would then allow the state to be much better at providing the public services that remain. Instead, both parties seem content to continue the same basket and level of services, but with many inadequately funded.

State policymakers, either for ideological reasons or for failure to recognize these recent revenue trends, seem content with the smaller revenue levels. Both major political parties have offered tax cuts that would use up most, and in some cases all, of the state’s revenue growth.

After more than a decade of relatively slow

**“Gov. Gretchen Whitmer does not prioritize using that new funding to recover diminished services.”**

economic growth, the state is benefiting from a strong economy. Spurred by federal COVID funding, state revenues are projected to grow over the next three years.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer does not prioritize using that new funding to recover diminished services. Instead, her budget proposes to return to taxpayers about two-thirds of this projected growth by undoing some of the tax changes enacted during the Snyder administration to pay for a business tax cut. Her proposal would restore the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and undo the 2011 changes in the treatment of retirement income.

The balance of projected new revenues would increase funding for a number of services that have suffered from two decades of budget scarcity, including state revenue sharing and university funding. The funding would help, but it is not sufficient to return service levels to prior levels.

This plan would cause the state to return to tight budgets and fiscal constraints next year.

The Republican legislative majority proposed an income tax rate cut, since vetoed by the governor, that would have returned the projected tax revenue growth to the taxpayers. It would not have left any windfall from economic growth to undo past spending cuts or invest in state services.

Policy makers may decide that this is in fact the preferred size of state government. If that is the case, then they should prioritize the menu of services to properly fund those services that the state should do well and, identify those that the state can do without. Because trying to do all the same things with insufficient resources spread among all of them is not working well.

Taxation can be seen as a necessary evil, if it is used to make Michigan a better place to live and work. But if tax dollars are not used efficiently, we get service levels that are intolerable. ♦

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# Let's talk about the victims of crime

BY DOUG LLOYD/EATON COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

Doug Lloyd is president of the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and a non-voting member of the MAC Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.

**“Rights that crime victims in Michigan are guaranteed include the right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process...”**

**A**s this issue of Michigan Counties goes to press, it is Crime Victims' Rights Week in Michigan, during which counties pass resolutions, hold vigils and remember those impacted by crimes. It is both a somber time to remember and honor those we have lost and those who have been impacted by crime

It's also a moment to celebrate the accomplishments and reflect how far the victims' rights movement has come.

Crime has life-altering effects. One of my constituents in Eaton County, Randy Gilbert, is a survivor of a violent attack by a serial murderer. When he talks about his experience, he shares, "It's impacted my sleep. It's impacted my health. I feel like I've been sentenced. I feel like I'm the one in prison."

We have come a long way toward safeguarding victims' rights. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the American criminal justice system focused on protecting the constitutional rights of the accused. In fact, there has been much discussion recently in the Michigan Legislature about criminal justice reform and the constitutional rights of the defendant. But crime victims did not choose to be a part of criminal proceedings and they too have state constitutional rights.

In 1985 the Crime Victim's Rights Act (CVRA) created comprehensive rights to notification and participation in all stages of the criminal justice process for felony crime victims in Michigan, adding serious misdemeanors and juvenile crimes in 1988. Michigan's CVRA has been, and continues to be, a model for crime victims' rights statutes around the country. Sen. William VanRegenmorter, the "father" of crime victims' rights then led the charge to enshrine victim rights in Michigan's Constitution. On Dec. 24, 1988, Article I, Section 24 of the Michigan Constitution went into effect. While Sen. VanRegenmorter has since passed away, his legacy continues, and the Act is now commemorated in his name.



**RANDY GILBERT OF EATON COUNTY POSES WITH GOV. GRETCHEN WHITMER AFTER THE GOVERNOR SIGNED INTO LAW PUBLIC ACTS 28 AND 29 REGARDING STATE PAROLE RULES. (COURTESY PHOTO)**

Rights that crime victims in Michigan are guaranteed include the right to be treated with fairness and respect for their dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process, the right to consult with the prosecutor about the case, the right to attend the trial and any other hearings in which the defendant is entitled to attend, the right to make a victim impact statement, and the right to address the parole board, among others.

The CVRA has continued to evolve over the years.

Gilbert and I recently worked with the Michigan Legislature to enact Public Acts 28 and 29 of 2022, which corrected an oversight created by legislation passed in 2018 requiring annual review of prisoners for parole. At the bill signing, Gilbert stated, "This legislation ensures that survivors of horrific crimes are not retraumatized year after year by being forced to relive the worst thing that happened to them. It protects communities and families like mine." Other bills the Legislature is currently considering include broadening the CVRA to include other crimes and enacting victim privacy protections.

MAC, the Michigan Sheriffs' Association, the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and victim advocacy groups have been active partners with the Legislature in protecting victims and funding the appropriate resources needed to protect victim rights in discussions on criminal justice reform. PAAM appreciates the support county commissioners continue to provide prosecutors at the local and state level. We encourage you to prioritize victim safety issues in your discussions with legislators. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to your local prosecutor if you have any questions or want to discuss specific policy issues.

To learn more about Michigan's Crime Victims' Rights Act: <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Publications/Crime%20Victims.pdf> ♦

**Editor's note:** This was originally posted to PAAM's website and is reprinted with permission.



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NRM-12870M5 (01/15)

# How a county used a Zencity community survey to secure a broadband grant

BY ARIEL FISHER/ZENCITY

“According to research by Barracuda Networks, 44 percent of global ransomware attacks in 2020 targeted municipalities.”

In Augusta County, Virginia, a mountain topography and large geographical area of almost 900 square miles has meant different parts of the county have had vastly different experiences in internet connection. In many places, the distance across a small valley means one neighbor is connected, while another is not.

The need for improved internet was identified close to a decade ago, and in 2016, the county obtained its first planning grant for high-speed internet. Yet with approximately eight internet providers serving the area, each with a different quality of service and none with an exact coverage map, the extent of that need has been difficult to pinpoint.

As the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, saw people shift to remote work and schooling, making reliable high speed internet access even more crucial, an opportunity for another grant arose: a Virginia Telecommunications Initiative Grant. For the 2022 grant round, county administrators needed to understand if the need for access to high speed internet that they had identified in 2016 and later years was still present, if so to what degree, and where in the county that need existed. Answers to these questions were important in applying for the grant.

## The Zencity solution: A community survey tackles the question

With the chance to secure another broadband internet grant on the line, the county decided to use a Zencity survey to gain a better understanding of its residents' high speed internet needs within Augusta County.

Table 1

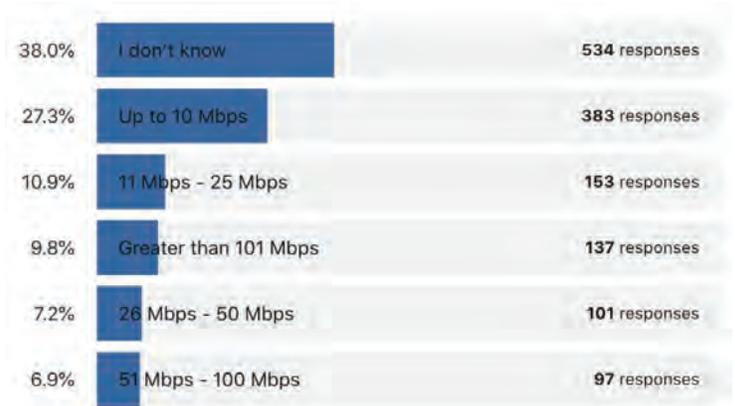
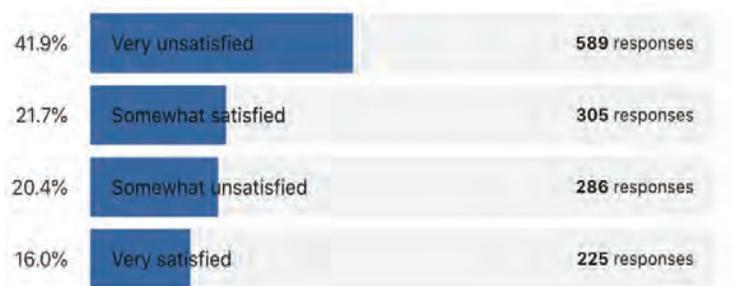


Table 2



With a survey designed and analyzed by Zencity and deployed by the county, the county was able to gather responses from 1,537 residents, learning about residents' current internet availability and about the importance of internet to their work and quality of life. In addition, the county was able to gain a better understanding of where geographical coverage gaps remained.

The results were unequivocal: 99 percent of respondents said having internet access was important to them (with 91.9 percent describing internet access as “very important”). Yet 62 percent of respondents were unsatisfied with the current speed of their internet service, and only 25 percent of respondents had internet speeds that met the minimum recommendation by the Federal Communications Commission. Furthermore, the survey analyzed responses by

city and zip code within the county, showing in which geographical areas high speed internet was missing.

### **The impact: A state grant is secured to increase coverage**

The county applied for a Virginia Telecommunications Initiative Grant and used the results of the survey to show where high speed internet coverage was lacking. Along with other counties in the area, Augusta County was granted the funding requested, which will connect 6,000 homes in the county and 37,000 homes in the region over the next three years, providing coverage to close to 100 percent of residents.

### **Results of two questions from the Zencity survey**

#### ***What is the speed of your current internet connection?***

**See Table 1.** Less than a quarter (24 percent) had access to internet speeds greater than 25Mbps—the minimum speed recommended by the Federal Communications Commission.

#### ***How satisfied are you with the current speed of connection?***

**See Table 2.**

“Running a Zencity survey was particularly helpful to us—especially compared to surveys we’ve run in the past—because having a third party design the questions and analyze the results ensured the analysis was unbiased, therefore lending greater authority to the results,” said Jennifer Whetzel, deputy county administrator ♦



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# Anxiety at work: What to do about it?

BY BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN

**“According to research by Barracuda Networks, 44 percent of global ransomware attacks in 2020 targeted municipalities.”**

**A**nxiety is one of the most common behavioral health conditions in the country, according to the American Psychiatry Association. In fact, nearly one-third of adults will experience anxiety at some point in their life. And 40 million Americans are struggling now.



buttons are being pushed frequently, it's time to stop and look at taking a break to reenergize.

## How can you create a culture that reduces anxiety?

One way is for workplaces to encourage employees to take a break during their off-hours.

## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the intense, excessive and persistent worry or fear about everyday situations.

“You experience a fast heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating. And after the anxiety passes, you actually may be quite fatigued and tired. We all have experienced anxiety at one point or another,” said Dr. William T. Beecroft, medical director of behavioral health for Blue Care Network of Michigan.

## Why is it a workplace issue?

Anxiety can become a serious workplace issue. When people are anxious, their brains become busy and active, and they can't think through problems as well.

“That's where productivity really comes,” Beecroft said. “It's not just doing the same task over and over; it's figuring out a different way of doing the task or surpassing the task altogether and going to a better outcome. This is where productivity really improves and the employer wins.”

## How does anxiety trigger behavior?

Anxiety also has an impact on the body's biochemistry. When anxiety takes up people's energy and they are running on empty, they can't really be productive.

“You become very inefficient in the work that is normal for you to be able to do. You get angry, irritable, short-tempered, you snap at people. You're not as effective in meetings,” Beecroft said.

The goal is to pace themselves by understanding their limitations and recognizing their triggers. When they are reaching the point that those

“It has to go from leadership on down to be genuine,” said Beecroft, adding they need to repeatedly remind employees that it's OK to take a break. As a matter of fact, studies show that, after a break, employees are more motivated and go back to work with more energy than before the break.

The message employees hear needs to be that, when they take a break, they're not shirking responsibility; they're taking care of themselves, so they'll have the stamina to be their best.

## How can employees address their anxiety?

The key is for them to learn how to train their brains to release the chemicals that cause natural relaxation. This can be done with mindfulness meditation and progressive muscle relaxation. All are simple but very effective tools to get into that state. The key is making these practices a habit.

“Those aha moments really come out and that's really valuable, but you have to practice them,” Beecroft said. “You have to be able to do it about 20 to 50 times to create a new habit, but then that allows your brain to be able to just release those chemicals quicker every time because now it knows what you want it to do. When you do that, the benefits are just pretty amazing.”

Learn more from Dr. Beecroft about anxiety in the workplace and strategies for addressing it in this Blue Cross® Virtual Well-Being webinar at <https://www.mibluesperspectives.com/virtual-webinar/dr-beecroft-discusses-anxiety-at-work/>. ♦



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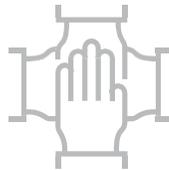
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### ORGANIZE:

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### COLLABORATE:

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## Bryan Crenshaw



**Name:** Bryan L. Crenshaw

**County/MAC Region:** Ingham/Region IV

**Position:** Director

**County Service:** Ingham County  
Commissioner, September 2013–Present

**Profession:** Attendance Specialist, Lansing  
School District

**Previous Public Service:** Lansing Board of  
Education, Member

### What part of the job of county commissioner gives you the most pleasure or pride? Why?

The best part of being county commissioner is being able to be part of the decisions

that affect quality of life services for county residents. From providing health services through the health department, 911 services for first responders in the county and helping to provide quality roads and infrastructure, the Board of Commissioners can provide services for every county resident. The other part of the job that gives me the most pleasure is being able to work with 13 other individuals who share in this commitment to provide quality services to county residents. While at times we disagree on priorities or funding, we can disagree and be respectful to each other.

---

## Veronica Klinefelt



**Name:** Veronica Klinefelt

**County/MAC Region:** Macomb/Region V

**Position:** Director/Immediate Past President

**County Service:** Macomb County  
Commissioner, 2013–present

**Previous Public Service:** City of Eastpointe,  
Mayor Pro tem, 8 years; East Detroit School  
Board, Member, 6 years

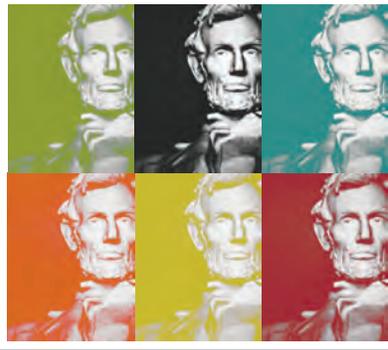
### What part of the job of county commissioner gives you the most pleasure or pride? Why?

Ensuring that our county invests in our senior services and veterans departments has been a priority of mine. Gathering input from the residents who use our services to enable us to see areas that need improvement has been very informative and valuable.

I like serving on one of Macomb County's biggest drain boards because I like to see the results in our investment in infrastructure paying off with cleaner water in Lake St. Clair. We are mapping and cleaning out every drain in the county.

One of the biggest highlights of my time as a county commissioner has been learning about all the proposed laws that affect counties through MAC and putting that knowledge to work talking to legislators about specific laws and their consequences and or benefits. Through this, I have really been able to feel like I'm making a difference and having a positive impact on the lives of residents in our county and state.

I take pride in working to make government efficient and to ensure tax dollars are spent wisely. ♦



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# ARP funds will propel an Ingham County housing surge

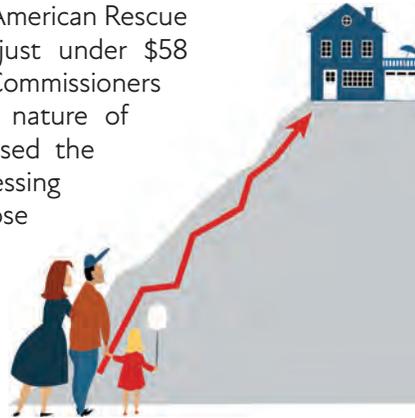
BY GREGG TODD/INGHAM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Gregg Todd is a member of the Michigan County Administrative Officers Association. For more information on MACAO, visit <https://micounties.org/macao-michigan-association-of-county-administrative-officers/>

Ingham County's allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) funds was just under \$58 million. The Ingham County Commissioners recognized the transformative nature of this level of funding and focused the first tranche of funds on addressing the immediate needs of those most affected by COVID-19. This included more than \$9 million in grants to small businesses, \$5 million in direct aid to households, \$1 million in mortgage assistance, and additional funds for mental health, emergency first responders, premium pay for essential workers, and various public health initiatives.

For the second tranche funding, the commissioners are focused on programs that will provide long-term, sustainable benefits for Ingham residents. Given that Ingham County's owner-occupied housing rate is 5 percent below the national average and the City of Lansing's is 13.4 percent below the national average, funding for affordable housing is critically needed, fits the Commissioners' goals for second tranche funding and is an allowable use of ARP dollars.

To that end, the commissioners, through



Resolution 21-398, created the Ingham County Housing Trust Fund Committee to develop the goals, objectives, funding parameters, eligibility requirements and other policies and procedures required to successfully implement this program and committed \$9 million in second tranche funding to affordable housing. The Housing Trust Fund Committee consists of the

county commissioner who chairs the County Services Committee, the county treasurer, the county controller, the Ingham County Land Bank executive director, a representative of the Racial Equity Taskforce and two county residents.

Homeownership helps citizens build wealth and equity. This is the central tenet that the Housing Trust Fund Committee operates on. The Committee will utilize the \$9 million investment as “seed money” to:

1. Create partnerships to construct energy-efficient, affordable housing options, including medium-density housing such as row houses and small



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- apartment buildings, single-family homes and duplexes
- 2. Create a revolving loan fund for down payment assistance targeted to households under 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), including single parents and minorities
- 3. Create partnerships to provide energy-efficient home rehabilitation and reconditioning assistance programs for low and moderate-income households

- Coordinating and promoting state and federal financial assistance programs for residents and for small neighborhood businesses, including landlords

The Housing Trust Fund Committee is also committed to promoting neighborhood stabilization and entrepreneurship through several avenues, including:

- Partnering with job training programs to promote/incentivize building trades job training
- Creating a risk mitigation program to allow vulnerable populations to access rental housing more easily
- Avoiding projects that concentrate poverty
- Identifying vacant properties in neighborhoods for targeted re-development

**“Homeownership helps citizens build wealth and equity. This is the central tenet that the Housing Trust Fund Committee operates on.”**

Although \$9 million is a substantial investment, it will not go far in new home construction and renovation and there are time limits on the expenditure of ARP funds. Therefore, the Housing Trust Fund Committee is also developing the following mechanisms to ensure the Trust Fund is sustainable past the initial ARP investment:

- Leveraging ARP funding to secure additional federal/state/local funding
- Developing a 2024 housing millage proposal to generate \$3 million/year (0.4 mills)
- Pursuing other financing options/solutions such as private fundraising and grants

The Housing Trust Fund Committee also will partner with existing agencies in Ingham County, including the Ingham County Land Bank, Capital Area Housing Partnerships, Habitat for Humanity Capital Region and the City of Lansing Housing Commission. ♦



# Sen. Dan Lauwers



**Name:**  
Senate Majority Floor  
Leader Dan Lauwers

**District/counties:**  
25th/St. Clair

**Committees:** Energy  
and Technology,  
chair; Insurance  
and Banking, vice  
chair; Government  
Operations, vice  
chair; Agriculture,  
Economic, and  
Small Business  
Development;  
Regulatory Reform;  
Transportation and  
Infrastructure

**Term #:** 3

**Previous service:**  
N/A

## What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan right now?

Coming out of the Covid-19 closure of our state, we have seen and heard repeatedly that we have a huge labor issue. There are help signs everywhere you look, whether it's at a restaurant, office or manufacturing facility, there is a significant labor shortage.

## Based on your experience, how important are counties to the effective delivery of public services?

County services are the driving force behind nearly every public service, whether state or county created, and are essential to residents who use them every day. From balancing administrative responsibilities, building and maintaining roads, bridges and parks to supporting public health and safety and encouraging economic development, counties play a critical role in creating vibrant communities and supporting the well-being of residents.

## With Michigan general funds forecasting higher than expected and the receipt of federal dollars through the American Rescue Plan and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts, what are your priorities for remaining available funds?

Reducing the tax burden on all Michigan residents and making long term investments. I don't believe we will see this kind of one-time funding again in my lifetime. What we do now needs to have a long-lasting return on investment for years, hopefully decades to come.

## County commissioners around the state are working to improve access to broadband in their communities. As chair of Energy and Technology Committee, what are some ways state and county governments can partner to ensure all residents in Michigan have access to high-speed internet?

We need access to reliable internet. While much of Michigan's population is located in

Southeast Michigan, there are another 75 to 80 counties without reliable access to high-speed broadband internet. There is a difference between unserved and underserved.

For example, I would say I'm a step or two above dial-up out in rural St. Clair County. The last few years, many found it funny that the chairman of Energy and Technology froze during a Zoom call or was completely kicked off.

The cost to expand broadband across the state and especially in rural sparsely populated areas is extremely costly. I don't believe government should become an internet provider but should work in a public private partnership to draw down the federal dollars available to expand broadband access throughout the entire state. The sooner high-speed internet is made available throughout Michigan, the sooner we can attract and retain the workforce/individuals we need.

Counties may face future financial challenges caused by the pandemic due to declining revenues from commercial and residential property. Do you support a long-term fix to local government financing and creating a more stable fund source for county revenue sharing?

Though the magnitudes vary, there's no question that many communities, if they aren't already, will need to look for new and innovative ways to reinvent themselves as companies increasingly decide to maintain remote or hybrid work models.

I think most recognize that this is a shared challenge for the state and local governments. Having a more stable funding source and a formula that's fair will a more predictable future. I'd start by supporting a substantial overhaul of our state tax tribunal system. ♦

## What is the most pressing issue facing Michigan now?

I do believe that one of the most pressing issues facing Michigan right now has to do with our voting rights. There are so many petitions and bills that have been put forth to infringe upon our voting rights. This could lead to more polling places closing, voters having to give out more sensitive information like their social security numbers, elections will become more costly and less well-staffed, and it will be harder to apply for an absentee ballot. We should be doing more to protect our right to vote and make voting easier for individuals, not harder.

## Based on your experience, how important are counties to the effective delivery of public services?

Counties play a key role in delivering public services. As an elected official I try to do everything in my power to stay connected to the county’s needs to better serve them. If our counties are heard, we can better support them in serving the public.

## What improvements do you think the state could make to support county and local health departments and the many services they provide to communities?

I do believe the state is not doing enough to support our local health departments. Currently the state is supposed to have a 50/50 cost share with our local public health departments for Essential Local Public Health Services (ELPHS). This funding helps provide our counties with the necessary resources they need to provide safe drinking water, Infectious Disease Control, Sexually Transmitted Disease Control and Prevention, Immunization and Hearing Screening and Vision Services. It is estimated that the state is only reimbursing local health departments at 41%. We need to provide the full 50% to better support our counties now more than ever.

As you know, our county courts have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and are working to administer justice in a timely fashion but have an overwhelming amount of

case backlog. What are some ways in which you and legislative partners can help alleviate some of the strain on our criminal justice system?

There are so many criminal justice reforms that need to happen in Michigan but dealing with this backlog in our court system is essential right now so we can move forward. When I was elected, one of my first bills was HB 4184, to create better efficiency in our court systems by allowing magistrates to conduct informal hearings for civil infractions under the Michigan Regulations and Taxation of Marijuana Act. We already allow magistrates to hear all other civil infractions, but we just have to specifically list this one under statute. This common-sense fix passed the House with unanimous support. I am hopeful the Senate will pass it soon and we can help clear up some of the backlog in our court system.

## As a former commissioner, what do you think needs to happen at both the state and county levels for the state to succeed in attracting and retaining more workers?

There has been so much talk surrounding the workforce shortage and I am happy to see so many of my colleagues working together to come up with solutions to help Michigan stay competitive right now. The economic development package that was signed into law created the Strategic Outreach and Attraction Reserve Fund (SOAR). This state investment will create tens of thousands of jobs and is exactly what we needed to make Michigan more competitive. This led to the General Motors announcement of investing in Michigan for their electric vehicle plants, which will create 4,000 new jobs.

Now this is important when we look at communities like Saginaw, which has the Nexteer facility. Now they have incentive to want to invest in improvements here instead of elsewhere. I do believe that the County level also has a part to play in attracting and retaining workers. That is why I am so proud to see Saginaw making these investments. The education investments in our community play a major role in the economic development of our communities. ♦



**Name:**  
Rep. Amos O’Neal

**District/counties:**  
95th/Saginaw

**Committees:**  
Joint Capital Outlay, minority vice chair; General Government; School Aid & Department of Education; Appropriations Subcommittees on Workforce, Trades & Talent and Health and Human Services subcommittee.

**Previous Service:**  
N/A

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