

Issues Overview - 2024

As a team, read through each issue summary and the statements below them and come up with your own stance on each issue. If you have trouble accessing any of the websites, let a LEAD Crew Member know.

Abortion Prevention

Research has shown that there are many underlying causes of abortions, including financial insecurity and not wanting to raise the child in a single parent home. Does your candidate support adopting policies to address these underlying causes?

With abortion access now protected by the Michigan Constitution, can the annual number of abortions in our state be lowered through addressing underlying root issues of abortions instead of an outright ban on abortion?

**For this issue, we are defining abortions as pregnancies that end in elective abortion, not due to medical or emergency situations.*

- While the main factors for abortions are listed above, additional factors include the pregnancy affecting the mother's educational goals, affecting her ability to work, or having to care for other dependents. What can the federal, state, or local government do to help these underlying issues?
- Are there other policies that can lower the number of abortions aside from banning abortion? Is completely banning abortion going to have the desired effect?
- What preventative measures could be enacted specifically focusing on women in their 20s who get over half of the abortions in the U.S.?
- Would banning alcohol on public college campuses or harsher punishments for rape and assault reduce the number of abortions?
- Your candidate will need to reconcile expanding social programs and concerns about increasing the scope of governmental power. How does your candidate intend to address voter's concerns about a big government? How will they provide more than lip service to the larger issues at hand?
- Would policies that focus on improving women's healthcare before, during, and after pregnancy reduce the number of abortions in Michigan?
- Should the state provide funding for crisis pregnancy resource centers?

Research Resources:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/01/11/what-the-data-says-about-abortion-in-the-u-s-2/>
<https://www.guttmacher.org/2023/01/inequity-us-abortion-rights-and-access-end-roe-deepening-existing-divides>
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/reasons-for-abortions>
<https://www.usccb.org/committees/pro-life-activities/poverty-and-abortion-vicious-cycle>
<https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/21/health/abortion-restriction-laws/index.html>

Homeschooling Regulations

Michigan allows homeschooling without any requirements for state registration or enrollment. This has allowed tens of thousands of children to be educated without any oversight. There are concerns that such lack of oversight allows for the system to be abused. Since the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, there are estimates that homeschooling has experienced as much as a 50% increase.

With homeschooling becoming more popular, should new policies or safeguards be put in place to protect our children academically, emotionally, and physically?

You must select one regulation to support from the list below. You can also recommend other regulations with the approval of the Campaign instructor.

Regulations:

- 1) Require home schooled seniors to submit a FAFSA financial aid form and submit transcripts to the Department of Education prior to graduation.
 - 2) Require all homeschool parents to have completed an approved education preparation program.
 - 3) Require that homeschool families attend a homeschooling association in which all teachers in the association completed an approved education preparation program.
 - 4) Require homeschool students to take the grade appropriate state assessment, M-STEP (grades 3-8), PSAT (grades 8-10), or MME (grade 11), as well as taking the General Education Development (GED) test in order to graduate.
 - 5) Require background checks and restrict anyone convicted of a crime from teaching or conducting homeschool if that crime would prevent them from teaching in a public school.
 - 6) Require notification and registration with the local school district that student is opting to homeschool. The adult in charge of the homeschool must maintain a record of attendance, specifying the number of days and hours of schooling activity, which is to be submitted to the district each semester.
- What additional policies could your candidate support to help homeschooling families instead of exclusively making it more restrictive?
 - Does the State of Michigan have a responsibility to ensure that all students are provided with a quality educational?
 - What does your candidate propose we do about potential students of families that allege to be “homeschooling” when they are not doing any education?

Research Resources:

<https://www.wxyz.com/rebound/state-of-education/number-of-kids-being-homeschooled-spiked-last-year-with-major-increase-in-black-families>

<https://patch.com/michigan/across-mi/homeschool-laws-can-hide-child-abuse-cases>

https://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/2012/03/a_truant_officers_take_on_mich.html

<https://www.michigan.gov/->

[/media/Project/Websites/mde/2017/08/01/home_schools.pdf?rev=fef837db18ac4b75aa27c3ed78ff6679#:~:text=Michigan%20parents%20have%20the%20right,limited%20circumstances%20\(MCL%20380.1561\)](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/2017/08/01/home_schools.pdf?rev=fef837db18ac4b75aa27c3ed78ff6679#:~:text=Michigan%20parents%20have%20the%20right,limited%20circumstances%20(MCL%20380.1561))

Line 5 Pipeline

Since 2019, Michigan's governor and attorney general have engaged in legal action to permanently decommission the Canadian Enbridge Energy's Line 5 pipeline that runs under the Straits of Mackinac. The Line 5 Pipeline transports liquid crude oil and natural gas from Alberta to Ontario Canada, and supplies those products in Michigan, Wisconsin, and other Midwestern states. It is reported that economic risks of shutting down the pipeline vary from \$20 million to \$3 billion dollars.

The governor and other advocacy groups have expressed concerns over the threat of environmental hazards posed by the pipeline to the Great Lakes. Another Enbridge line in Kalamazoo experienced an oil spill in 2010.

Complicating matters, the federal government has a treaty with Canada that prevents Michigan or the U.S. government from interrupting the transport of crude oil as long as the pipelines are working correctly. Enbridge has continued operations while the legal action continues and has recently invoked the treaty in an effort to end the current lawsuit.

- What are the environmental and economic consequences of an oil spill in the Great Lakes? How will your candidate navigate competing concerns about energy costs and legitimate environmental dangers?
- What are the exact structural issues with the Line 5 pipeline? Are they truly cause for concern? With Enbridge already seeking to make repairs on the pipeline, will these repairs reduce the overall risk enough to keep the pipeline?
- If your candidate decides shutting down the pipeline is the best course of action, will they break the 1977 treaty or seek to find a different solution?
- After the public dispute, how does your candidate plan to improve relations with Canada?
- Does maintaining Michigan's energy independence outweigh preventing any chance of an oil spill into the Great Lakes?
- Are there ways that we can turn to renewable energies instead of relying on the pipeline?

Research Resources:

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2023/04/19/u-s-canada-delegates-continue-line-5-treaty-negotiations-in-d-c/70129795007/>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2021-11-15/united-states-canadian-government-invokes-1977-pipeline-treaty-in-ongoing-line-5-pipeline-dispute/#:~:text=The%201977%20treaty%20ensures%20that,with%20various%20rules%20and%20regulations>

<https://www.mlive.com/public-interest/2022/06/line-5-shutdown-would-hike-gas-prices-a-half-cent-per-gallon-court-filing-reveals.html>

<https://consumerenergyalliance.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CEA-Line-5-Shutdown-Impacts-on-Transportation-Fuel.pdf>

Criminal Justice Reform

The U.S. has 5% of the world's population but nearly 25% of its incarcerated population. Recently, our criminal justice system has attracted more attention with many calling for reforms and improvements to be made. How does your candidate view our current system? What reforms/policies does your candidate support? What reforms/policies does your candidate oppose?

- What kind of reforms should be enacted and to what extent (i.e. de-escalation training; diversity, equity, and inclusion training (DEI)? If needed, should reforms be made at the Federal or state level, or left to individual municipalities/departments?
- Should we reform laws controlling when non-violent offenders are eligible for release from prison?
- What policies could be made to address district attorneys not prosecuting certain crimes such as misdemeanors or judges posting inappropriately low money bail orders? Does this lack of enforcement against certain criminals or defendants drive up crime rates in Michigan?
- Should Michigan adopt stronger sentencing guidelines for felons? Should we amend the Michigan Constitution to allow the death penalty in cases of first-degree murder?
- What other issues do your candidates see in our justice system and what should be done?

Research Resources:

<https://www.mackinac.org/archives/2018/s2018-06.pdf>

<https://www.hollandsentinel.com/story/opinion/columns/2022/03/29/our-take-its-time-get-pretrial-justice-right-michigan/7190621001/>

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/04/13/michigan-offers-new-model-for-jail-reform>

<https://www.fox2detroit.com/news/michigan-criminal-justice-reform-act-aims-to-rehab-prison-inmates-for-release-help-crime-victims>

Election Reform

Following the passage of Proposal 2 of 2022, several new election law provisions were added to the Michigan Constitution. Among other things, these provisions enumerate of the fundamental right to vote, require local governments to allow early voting sites up to nine days before an election, allow voters to use a photo ID or signed affidavit to verify voter identity, require local governments to provide drop boxes, and permit the use of private funds for election administration. With this new constitutional framework for our elections, what proposals does your candidate have to improve Michigan's election laws?

- Should we expand the kinds of locations that can be used as polling centers for elections?
- How do we maintain the integrity of the state's Qualified Voter File?
- How can we ensure the fairness of our election process when voters only have to sign an affidavit to verify their identity?
- How strict should the signature verification process be for absentee ballot voters?
- Should the Secretary of State be allowed to send out unsolicited absentee ballot applications to voters?
- How long should applications, ballots, and electronic poll book software have to be retained after an election?

Research Resources:

https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/Ballot_Proposal_2_of_2022.pdf

<https://audgen.michigan.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/r231023521-4999.pdf>

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/whitmer-signs-michigan-election-law-overhaul-aims-prevent-chaos>

Budget Priorities

Michigan's most recent Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference determined that the state has a little over \$14 billion in its general fund to spend in the upcoming fiscal year. While that seems like a lot of money, it is actually an approximately 8% decrease from the \$15.3 billion the state had the year prior. Additionally, the state spent a large amount of surplus funding it had received from the federal government in one-time spending last year. While the budget numbers for this fiscal year look similar to last year's, because of inflation, all government departments are going to be looking for more money. The state will need to find ways to increase revenue or cut spending from last year. According to the House Fiscal Agency, these were the approximate amounts appropriated in last year's budget and the amount of revenue you will have for this next year's budget:

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Appropriations

- Agriculture and Rural Development: \$168.3 million
- Community Colleges: \$549.5 million
- Department of Corrections: \$2.09 billion
- Education: \$650.4 million
- Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy: \$1.15 billion
- General Government: \$4.39 billion
- Health and Human Services: \$35.7 billion
- Higher Education: \$2.29 billion
- Judiciary: \$354 million
- Labor and Economic Opportunity: \$2.89 billion
- Licensing and Regulatory Affairs: \$581 million
- Dept. of Lifelong Ed, Adv., & Potential: \$6.5 million
- Military and Veterans Affairs: \$248.2 million
- Department of Natural Resources: \$572 million
- School Aid: \$21.46 billion
- State Police: \$867.1 million
- Transportation: \$6.63 billion

TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS: ~\$80,685,300,000

BUDGET STABILIZATION FUND: \$200,000,000

ENDING FUND BALANCE: ~\$2,856,000,000

Revenue for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- General Fund: **\$13.95 billion**
* Revenue from various state taxes
- School Aid Fund: **\$17.78 billion**
* Revenue from an assortment of taxes that is restricted to be used specifically for schools
- Special Revenue & Permanent Funds: **\$12.57 billion**
* Revenue from taxes that were passed with particular required uses for the funding
- Transportation Funds: **\$8.4 billion**
* Revenue from fuel tax & vehicle registration fees
- Non-Itemized Federal Funds: **\$29.44 billion**
* Funds received from the federal government that are NOT required to be used for specific purposes
- Remaining available funds: **\$6.33 billion**
* Leftover funds from previous years

Total Revenue: ~\$88,470,000,000

Deducted Interfund State Transfers: \$4.5 billion

TOTAL BUDGET AVAILABLE: ~\$83,970,000,000

Come up with what your candidate's official Executive Budget Recommendations would be if elected. What is the best way to balance Michigan's budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year?

- Will you seek to cut spending?
- Should we increase taxes to avoid spending cuts? If so, will you tax the wealthier at a higher rate or start taxing income from pensions?
- Should we reduce taxes in order to spur more economic growth?
- Will you compromise with the legislature if they disagree with your budget recommendations?

Research Resources:

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-government/how-michigans-state-budget-process-works-important-dates-taxes-and-hearings>

<https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/news/budget>

https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/RevenueForecast/CREC_Memo_Final_Summary_Jan2024.pdf

<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/home.asp>

<http://www.mackinac.org/14470>