

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



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Dear Friends,

As we move forward into the holiday season, starting with Thanksgiving and heading into Christmas, here is an update about issues in Lansing and how they may impact those who live in our district. I've also included details about the next constituent coffee mornings and hope that some of you may be able to attend them. If you are planning to come - bring a friend, and please share the information about these meetings with friends and relatives, or any group that you belong to. Please feel free to share this newsletter.

Constituent coffee mornings

The last coffee meetings were very successful, a good turnout in St. Joseph County, with a smaller more intimate group in Cass County. The format seems to be working and it gives me an opportunity to hear your views.

**Friday, December 4th: 9:00 a.m. at Meeks Mill Restaurant,
138 East Water Street, Constantine, MI 49042**

**Monday, December 7th: 9:00 a.m. at The Broadway Cafe,
158 Broadway Street, Cassopolis, MI 49031**

I look forward to meeting with you.

Bi-Partisan Freshman Caucus

One of the most positive aspects of my first year in Lansing has been the concerted effort of the entire Freshman Caucus to try to work together across party lines. As a group, we have supported each other and voiced our opinions to leadership about aspects of the way in which the legislative process is approached. As a group, we have been dismayed at the delays in passing legislation and in particular with decisions made about the budget.

As a group, we approached the House Speaker Andy Dillon to express our united unhappiness regarding decisions reached during the budget, particularly with the education budget which has caused strife across the state.

The Speaker responded by asking us to formulate new ideas to bring to him, and thus the Bipartisan Freshman Caucus K-12 Work Group was formed. We have divided into sub working groups, studying all aspects of education funding, and I am now serving as co-chair of the Current Pro-ration and Immediate Issues Work Group. I have been joined by Representative Deb Kennedy as the other co-chair, with Representatives Paul Scott, Dian Slavens and Sarah Roberts.

K-12 work group goals:

The goal of all these groups is to find a stable revenue source to ensure continuity for the funding of education without all the last minute surprises and sudden cutbacks which have been evident since the beginning of the school year.

No authority is able to balance its budget and provide services when they do not know exactly how much money they have to deal with until nearly mid-way through their fiscal year. We also cannot continue to use our children as political pawns to exert pressure on legislators to make financial decisions that are not in the best interest of the state as a whole.

In the short term, my group would like to find a way to resolve the pro-ration proposal, which will hit all our school districts soon, and we are hoping to have an outline of those ideas shortly after the Thanksgiving holiday. It won't be easy, and we know eventually will involve considerable compromise across the board, but maybe taking a fresh look will facilitate that. Clearly within the longer term solution there will need to be rationalization of education costs, along with identifying a stable revenue stream.

Already, some constituents have come forward with ideas, and I'm sure by working in partnership with legislators, educators and citizens we will eventually reach our goal.

Governor agrees to rehire 55 state troopers

After strong representation from state representatives and the public, the governor decided to reinstate the state troopers, admittedly with some reservations due to the current revenue levels.

I was glad to learn that the governor had changed her mind as it was a total waste of the training that these troopers had gone through to then lay them off. Although I think that the argument about the new Michigan State Police headquarters is not going to go away, nor is the tussling about possible tax increase proposals, at least sanity prevailed and we'll have 55 more state troopers back in service again across the state.

Thank you for your feedback

I would like to thank all of you who have taken the time to send e-mails, call on the telephone or send letters to me over the past year on a variety of issues. All of your emails are opened, read and an individual response sent to you, and messages are shared with me. Having constituents who are willing to speak up and share their views on the issues that we are dealing with in Lansing is very helpful and adds another dimension to the information that we receive. Undoubtedly, there is a wealth of detail brought before committees, by many professionals and experts, but hearing your voices, and how you feel something may affect you, brings all the arguments back to how the decisions we make will affect those citizens that we represent. So, thank you for your time, it is appreciated.

Stay in Contact

If you need assistance with a state department, are planning on visiting Lansing, would like a tribute done for a special occasion, please take note of my office contact information:

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Happy Thanksgiving

I would like to wish all my constituents a Happy Thanksgiving, and hope that you are able to spend an enjoyable time with relatives and friends.

Stay safe, be happy.

