

Michigan Forest Products Council
Business Advocacy For the Forest Products Industry
Candidate Questionnaire

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1. What are your impressions of forest products and bioeconomy in Michigan, and how would you assess this sector's importance to the state's economy?

A: The <http://michiganforest.com/> website says, "Michigan's forest products industry accounts for 10% of the state's manufacturing sector jobs, sustains 154,000 jobs and generates \$12 billion in annual revenue." That sounds pretty important!

2. What are your plans, if elected, to fix our state's ailing economy and create more jobs? How would you reform the tax structure?

A: From my website at: <http://voiceforthepeople.net/issues.htm>

"If I had to pick one group of ideas proposed by any one group, it would be the [Business Leaders for Michigan, with its Michigan Turnaround Plan](#): (in great measure along the lines of Rick Snyder's [Reinvent Michigan: Rick's 10-Point Plan](#))

Five Steps For A Better Michigan

- Changing the Way We Manage Our Finances
- Right-sizing & Enacting Structural Budget Reforms
- Getting Michigan Competitive To Attract & Retain Jobs
- Making Investments That Create A Great Job Environment
- Accelerating Job Growth Through Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Of course, the devil is in the details. For example, in the point of "Getting Michigan Competitive to Attract & Retain Jobs" is the notion of drastically reducing or eliminating the Michigan Business Tax and its 22% surcharge. One way to do that is by adopting the [Michigan FairTax](#) (which I happen to like in general, but need to learn more of the specifics), but there may be other ways. For the National Issues Forum style Issue Guide on this topic, see [Reforming the Michigan Tax Structure: Putting Michigan Back to Work](#), which is my site for conducting civil, informed discussion forums on serious, complex and difficult subjects, with the goals of reaching better understanding of others' perspectives and hopefully find some common ground.

But, one thing I am very much in line with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the National Federation of Independent Business is that we must have restructuring of state spending concurrent with reforming the tax structure. We cannot leave in place a bloated bureaucracy and excessive spending on salaries and benefits for public employees and simply fund them better. **We must cut state spending to live within our means!"**

3. Michigan's forests grow 2.7 times more wood fiber than is harvested each year. Do you favor increased production from renewable forest land or an increased effort to set this aside as non-managed forest land?

A: I started MSU as a forestry major in 1967, and we learned that forests should be managed as multiple-use resources – wood production, recreation, watershed management, etc. That continues to be my view, as I don't see the various uses as necessarily opposed to each other if each is done in a reasonable manner. So, setting aside areas as "untouchable" makes no sense to me. None of our forests are pristine wildernesses that man has not touched. I am not for ruining them as an ongoing resource but rather keeping them as productive assets in a sustainable manner.

4. The DNRE has proposed an increase of Biodiversity Stewardship Areas across the state, potentially taking 20% more of the state forest system out of forest management and production. Would you be in favor of such a move? Please explain your stance on the issue.

A: No. This would have a negative impact on employment in the state, especially in rural areas. We must focus on creating jobs to get us out of this economic mess the state is in. We need to create an environment where business (job providers) can prosper, grow and create jobs in Michigan, not set up greater roadblocks to production and jobs.

5. Renewable biomass and emerging clean energy technologies have become key issues in economic development. Would you be willing to support continued research and growth in the renewable biomass sector?

A: Yes. My ultimate position is that we should allow the market to sort out the winners and losers in the energy field, and not subsidize any area. That way, we would have the lowest cost sources meeting demand, keeping our energy costs as low as possible. This would be best for individual and business consumers. However, there are some industries that are in the infant (or perhaps even prior to conception) stage in which research may ultimately find a way to be cost competitive. With the large forest resource (as well as potential switch grass production), Michigan has a vested interest in this resource being tapped. Any dollars spent at home for energy are dollars not sent overseas to countries and/or regimes intent on destroying our way of life.

6. Over ten million acres of Michigan's forest land are privately owned. Would you promote the expansion of these private working forests, and create more opportunities for private landowners? If so, how?

A: I have a strong bias towards private ownership, as owners have financial incentives to be better stewards of their productive asset. However, all private owners may not be aware of the best management practices to maximize the productivity (and therefore the value of) their forest lands.

How? The recommendations in http://michiganforest.com/documents/mi_industry_trends.pdf sound like a good start. I am a big believer in weighing the pros and the cons of issues, and recognizing the secondary or indirect effects of “feel good” actions, and look forward to learning more about these proposals and why they have not been adopted.

7. How would you enhance Michigan's image?

A: Our abundant creeks, rivers, lakes and forests make Michigan a beautiful state that many people love to make their home. We need to capitalize on that resource to attract people here not only to vacation, but to reside here. The key to much of that is creating sufficient jobs so people who want to stay here can.

I don't know if the “Pure Michigan” campaign is the very most successful manner to advertise Michigan's image, but it is a start. The great negative in the news worldwide is the destruction of Detroit, so we have a lot of negative publicity to overcome. I believe that a part of the enhancement of Michigan's image lies in rejuvenating Detroit, and much of that will actually require the demolition of much of Detroit and returning it to a more natural state as part of downsizing Detroit to match its diminished population. So, both jobs AND removing the eyesores of abandoned factories, stores, shops and homes will be needed.