

Washtenaw Republican Women “Meet and Greet” Candidate Questions

1. Do you Support the Attorney General in suing the Federal Government regarding healthcare reform?

Yes. The lawsuit challenges the mandate to purchase insurance. This is the first time the federal government has required a person to purchase a product or service. I don't find the ability of the federal government to do this anywhere in the U.S. Constitution. The erosion of the limits to government concerns me greatly, and is a major reason I got re-involved in the Washtenaw Republican Party 18 months ago. We must stop this further encroachment into our freedoms. If the federal government can force us to buy health insurance, what is there to stop the federal government from requiring us to buy other things?

Further, I support the Michigan Citizens for Healthcare Freedoms' attempt to put on the November ballot a Constitutional Amendment to opt out of Obamacare. Now, this effort at “nullification” may not be effective, but is one of the few remaining ways we can express our dissatisfaction with the law. That and electing Dr. Rob Steele to Congress and Dump Dingell.

2. What is your position on immigration in Michigan and do you think we need reform or enforcement?

First, I must say I support Arizona's effort to enforce federal law because the federal government has lost control of our borders. So, I support similar legislation in Michigan. I need to produce a driver's license when I am stopped for a traffic violation, so I don't see being required to produce identification as any great infringement on anyone's rights.

Now, I understand the Mexican people's wanting to come to the United States, the land of hope and opportunity, for themselves and for their children. After all, that is what my grandparents did around 1900. The difference is that my grandparents did it legally and the Mexicans crossing the border are doing it illegally. This is not fair to those Mexicans who wait in line to immigrate legally, is a burden on our welfare system, and takes away jobs that American citizens need now. Reform would do nothing except to further encourage more Mexicans to come across our borders.

3. What do you see as Michigan's biggest hurdle in bringing in new business and maintaining the companies we have?

Michigan is ranked as 48th out of the 50 states in attractiveness for business in one of the surveys. That ranking will not get our state's economy going again anytime soon. There is no single thing that causes this ranking or one single thing that will get us out of this mess, but I would start with significantly reducing the Michigan Business Tax or eliminating it entirely. (Story about the computer programmer from California)

4. What would be your plan to address this?

It will take some fairly dramatic changes to make our state a top 10 state again. The Michigan Turnaround Plan proposed by the Business Leaders of Michigan is a comprehensive set of proposals that would do that. Eliminating the Michigan Business Tax is a major part of that.

Making Michigan a “right to work” state would also send a clear message that we are open for business. If we don’t have the votes for a state-wide right to work status, I would support the local “enterprise zone” right to work concept.

Bringing under control the wage and benefit costs of state employees and school district employees is critical. Until that is done, no amount of money will be enough for schools. That is why I opposed the Washtenaw ISD millage last fall. Structural changes are needed to control those costs. School administrators and school boards will continue to cut services to kids, as they avoid the harder area of employee wages and benefits. The good news is that finally another district has gone to impasse with their teachers, as Flint Schools has imposed a contract on its teachers. This is a rarely used legal tactic open to school districts I outlined in detail in 2006 in my presentation to the MSBO Annual Conference, but few have done it, as “it is too hard”. My thought is, “if you can’t stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen!”

The recent reform of school employee retirement plans (MPERS) was a step in the right direction. Now that needs to be done to the other state employees. The employees need to be forced to pay 20% of the cost of their health insurance costs or have everyone in a statewide health insurance pool for state employees and school district employees. This was a Republican idea a few years ago with the Rasmussen Report, but now that the Speaker of the House Andy Dillon has proposed a similar plan, it might go someplace. It is projected to save from \$500,000 to \$900,000 per year, so is well worth adopting. A big plus would be that it would deny the MEA its major source of funds, money siphoned off from MESSA, and therefore lessen the MEA’s ability to fund Democrat candidates, in this incestuous relationship of vote buying.

5. The State of Michigan cut the revenue sharing dollars to the City of Ypsilanti by \$330,000 in 2009. This loss caused cuts to the Police, Fire and Building departments. What would your plan be to hold the State of Michigan accountable to funnel money to the communities?

There is no question that local governments are stressed financially. As property values have declined, so has the local governments' property tax revenues. But, we have just begun the process of declining property tax revenues, as there is a lag in the drop in taxable values. Further, as outlined by Robert Daddow, Deputy County Executive for Oakland County at the Leadership Conference held by the Business Leaders for Michigan on May 17, local governments will face even further stress when the results of the Michigan Tax Tribunal cases are announced. Even further, the general obligation bonds sold by almost every local government requires the municipality to tax its property owners whatever it takes to pay the debt service, and instead of the millage declining as forecast, the millages will need to be increased as property taxable values decline. These are time bombs few local government officials have even yet foreseen, according to Daddow.

But the question is about the state revenue sharing dollars. Part of the revenue sharing moneys is constitutionally required and some is statutory. In fact, under the current formula, next year the state would distribute \$388 million more than the minimum required. This encourages local governments to provide programs to their citizens greater than would be provided if the local residents had to totally pay for them themselves.

Rather than "hold the State of Michigan accountable to funnel money to the communities", I prefer to focus on enabling local governments to be more efficient, but eliminating the Urban Cooperation Act and PA 312. The Urban Cooperation Act discourages cost saving consolidations of government entities because the Act requires that no employee can receive less than the highest wages and the most expensive benefits after the consolidation than before. So, any consolidation actually increases costs because of this Act, rather than encourages cooperation among municipalities. PA 312 authorizes arbitrators to award contracts to police and fire fighters without regard to the municipality's ability to pay. Now I respect and honor our police and fire fighters who put their lives on the line. And, I think they should be fairly paid. But does it make sense to allow them to retire after 20 years of service at HIGHER compensation after retirement than when on active duty, as can occur in some cities? I don't think so!