Get it Done: Michigan Sunshine Plan

GRETCHEN WHITMER'S PLAN TO MAKE STATE GOVERNMENT MORE OPEN, TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

GRETCHEN WHITMER
FOR GOVERNOR

Michigan's next governor needs to be laser focused on getting things done that will actually make a difference in people's lives right now, like fixing the damn roads, improving education and skills training, and making health care more affordable for families.

The problem is that Governor Snyder and Republicans in Lansing have spent the past eight years rigging the rules of Michigan's economy to favor wealthy campaign donors like Education Secretary Betsy DeVos over regular Michigan families.

Since 2011, Republicans in Lansing have: passed the Emergency Manager law which created the Flint Water Crisis; doubled campaign contribution limits, infusing even more money into state politics; and refused to extend the Freedom of Information Act to the governor's office and the legislature.[1]

As a result, Michigan's lack of transparency and accountability earned us an F on the 2015 Center for Public Integrity's survey.[2] Michigan is now dead last in the nation for state ethics and transparency laws.[3]

My Michigan Sunshine Plan will rewrite the rules in Lansing to work for regular families by making state government more open, transparent and accountable to Michigan taxpayers. It's time to get it done so we can build a better Michigan for everyone, infuse integrity in governance and earn back public confidence.

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Whitmer's Plan Includes:

1) *Tough new lobbying rules, including real-time expenditure reporting, and a 5-year "cooling off" period for former legislators, which will be the longest in the nation*

2) *Greater transparency requirements for the MEDC, including stronger accountability measures for job creation*

3) *Repealing the 2012 Emergency Manager law[4] and restoring local elected government*

4) *Reversing the Citizens United on steroids legislation that allows unlimited campaign spending*

5) *Expanding the Freedom of Information Act to include the governor's office and legislature*

6) *Strengthening the Open Meetings Act to provide for the live streaming of all state board and commission meetings*

7) *Ending partisan gerrymandering and creating an Independent Redistricting Commission*

8) *Vetoing all legislation that is designed to circumvent the public's right to referendum and pursuing legislative change to prohibit future abuses*

9) *Passing personal financial disclosure and conflict of interest laws for political candidates and senior appointees*

10) *Requiring more transparency for campaign robocalls*

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Making State Government More Transparent & Responsive to Taxpayers

- **Expanding Freedom of Information Act** to include the governor's office and legislature. We are just one of two states that does not already do this.[5] If the legislature won't act, I will use the governor's authority under the Michigan State Constitution to extend FOIA to the Lieutenant Governor and Governor's Offices. Michiganders should know when and what their governor is working on.

- **Creating a Freedom of Information Act Liaison** to help the public navigate state government and work with any and all state offices to facilitate timely FOIA determinations and expedited responses. At the end of the day, FOIA should be a user friendly process that makes government more accessible -- not the opposite.

- **Extending the Open Meetings Act** to provide for the live streaming of all state board and commission meetings, as well as making the agenda and materials available online via an easily searchable portal. As part of the portal, meeting footage will be saved and searchable as well. Michiganders should be able to watch their state government in action and have the ability to track and follow state proceedings. The technology is there; we just need the leadership to do it.

- **Ending Legislative Referendum-Proofing** to ensure integrity in our legislative process. As the law is now, the Legislature can add in a dollar amount to any bill and it becomes referendum-proof. In controversial legislation, like Right to Work and the Emergency Manager laws, legislators added an appropriation so voters could not repeal it. If a non appropriations bill has a dollar amount added to circumvent the people's right to a referendum and it reaches my desk, I will veto it.

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- **Repealing the Emergency Manager Law** and restoring local elected government. I fought against the ill-conceived Emergency Manager law when it was pushed through the Legislature -- not once but twice -- during the early days of Governor Snyder's administration.[6] I will return power back to local governments and will provide meaningful investment, support and assistance to partner with local elected officials and make sure Michiganders have the government they need at all levels.
- **Creating Transparency in MEDC and Corporate Incentives.** To be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and make sure we maximize our resources, I will require 100% transparency of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). MEDC is going to have to disclose what they are willing to offer to businesses and hold them accountable for the promises they make on job creation. Under my leadership, we are going to create a one-stop shop for MEDC business recruitment in the form of a sharable database on the MEDC website. For any and all extended offers and incentive packages over the course of a year, Michiganders will be able to review and access those details online so the public is not left in the dark.
- **Prohibiting the Use of Personal Email** to do government business, because it is wrong and unlawful, and I won't allow for it to happen on my watch.

Creating Strong & Enforceable Ethics Laws

- **Requiring Personal Financial Disclosure** for all candidates running for seats in the Michigan Legislature and statewide office, because we should know where our elected officials' financial interests lie. Over 10 years ago, I co-sponsored legislation to require public personal financial disclosure,[7] but unfortunately, Michigan is one of only two states that does not require our state

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legislators to disclose information about their personal income.[8] This is an embarrassment. I will work with the legislature to require all candidates running for statewide office and the Michigan Legislature to submit the federal financial disclosure form. I will call for all department directors, appointees and key advisors to submit financial disclosures as well, because we owe it to Michiganders to be transparent and ethical in our decision making.

- **Enhancing the Ethics Act** to apply to all elected officials. As it is currently, the Ethics Act only extends to state employees.[9] I will work with my legislative counterparts to expand the definition and include all elected officials as well.
- **Strengthening the Definition of "Conflict of Interest" Laws** and significantly enhancing penalties. According to the Center for Public Integrity, from 2009 to 2017, the Michigan House voted on more than 10,000 bills, and a total of 25 members disclosed their own potential conflicts of interest only 38 times.[10] This is unacceptable. We can and MUST do better.
- **Implementing Stricter Lobbying Rules** because currently legislators do not have to wait to cash in on big lobbying gigs after they have spent years networking with special interests while being supported by taxpayer funded salaries.[11] I will work with lawmakers who value responsive, ethical government to push for legislation to require a 5-year "cooling off" period, the longest in the nation,[12] to require lawmakers to wait before landing big lobbying careers and putting an end to the "revolving door."[13]
- **Strengthening Lobby Regulations** to require lobbyists report all lobbying expenditures from the first dollar spent. According to the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, "the recipient of meals and gifts purchased by lobbyists don't have to be reported unless the lobbyist spends $60 on a lobbyable official in a month or $375 in a year."[14] Additionally, lobbyists do not have to report travel and lodging expenditures unless they exceed $800. I will work with my legislative partners to close those loopholes and ensure that every dollar spent influencing our policymakers is reported.
- **Offering Lobby Expenditure Reporting in Real Time** is something that should be available to Michiganders. I will work with my legislative partners to create a searchable state database on the Secretary of State website, where lobbyists will be required to submit daily reports on lobby expenditures. Michiganders should be able to see who is buying influence with our legislators in real time.

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Elections & Campaign Finance Reform

- **Reversing the *Citizens United* on Steroids Legislation** that Republicans enacted in late 2017 to allow for Super Political Action Committees or Super PACS to raise and spend unlimited amounts of money. I believe more money in politics is not the answer.[15]
- **Ending the Politically Motivated Redistricting** because voters should choose their elected officials, not the other way around. In 2011, as the highest ranking Democrat in the state, I was given a front row seat to redistricting in our state and quickly learned how politicized the process is. In 2005, well over a decade ago, I co-sponsored legislation to create an Independent Redistricting Commission.[16] Michigan has some of the worst gerrymandered elections maps in the nation,[17] and I knew it back then, and I still believe now we need an Independent Redistricting Commission to oversee the process.
- **Require Accountability for Robo-calls** to make sure people know who is calling them. I will work to require campaign robo-calls to clearly state the name and address of the organization paying for them at the beginning of the call.

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