

# From the President



**Rick Throop**  
*MSTA President*

With summer in full swing, I'm sure all of you are just like me, extremely busy and wondering where the first half of this year has gone. With the Fourth of July around the corner hopefully you will enjoy some downtime with family and friends to rejuvenate yourself for the rest of the summer and fall.

MSTA did have our spring meeting on April 23 in Cassopolis, Michigan. I would like to thank

Dervin Whitmer and his entire family for welcoming us to their amazing facility and providing us with an incredible lunch. His entire family was there helping with set up, cleaning, and taking things down. We were lucky enough to have some wonderful presenters to speak on topics about excavation and employee safety and an informative presentation about the proper way to tow a truck, even though it is something none of us want to think about.

As we move through summer and look to fall, we start planning for our fall meeting. This year the fall meeting will be returning to National Vacuum Equipment headquarters in Traverse City. We are still currently planning this meeting; however, we do intend to offer credits for attendees. A little change to this meeting will be that we are doing our gun raffle at this time as well. Since we are doing our annual conference at a casino, we are limited with what we can do on the site, so we were forced to make this change. Tickets are available at the same cost as usual \$10 a piece or three for \$25. National Vacuum

Equipment always provides a great lunch and a wonderful facility for us to have our meeting. Hopefully we will see many of you there.

Speaking of our upcoming conference, MSTA will again be having that at the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Count Pleasant. The dates for this conference are February 14 & 15, 2023. There will again be credits offered and vendors present. There's been a lot of interest from new vendors as well, so I'm sure the number of vendors will increase. Also, as usual, we are always looking for ideas for topics our members want to hear about. If there is something specific, please contact Karlyn and give her this information. This conference is for members and our goal is to make it beneficial for everybody.

Lastly, I hope the remainder of the summer and work season goes well for all of you. I look forward to seeing many of you at our fall meeting in Traverse City. Let's hope by then we will be looking at lower fuel prices.

Thank You,  
**Rick Throop**  
*MSTA President*





## **MSTA Fall Meeting**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2022  
TRAVERSE CITY**

Mark your calendars for the Fall Meeting at National Vacuum Equipment Headquarters in Traverse City. Details will be posted on the MSTA Website at [www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz) in late summer to early fall. Hope to see everyone there!

## **Attention MSTA Members and Vendors** **MSTA Fall Meeting – Registration coming in late summer**

**MT. PLEASANT, MICHIGAN  
FEBRUARY 14-15, 2023**

Make plans to attend or exhibit at the Michigan Septic Tank Association's Annual Conference. This event provides 2 days of networking time with fellow Septic and Portable business owners and up to 12 credit hours available. The Annual Banquet will be on February 14th along with a 50/50 raffle and auction.

More information along with registration will be coming this fall at [www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz).



## Meet your 2022 MSTA Board of Directors

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not to advertise certain items.

## Introducing two scholarships..... *The Mark Scott Scholarship Fund and the Dave Snyder Scholarship Fund*



We recently lost two of the “Best of the Best of MSTA”, Mark Scott and Dave Snyder. They were both instrumental in the progress of taking the Michigan Septic Tank Association to where it is today. Together they have over 50 years of history and experience with MSTA and many of us have know each of them for most of those years.

During the MSTA Conference at the Soaring Eagle Resort in February, we were honored to host the Scott Family and Snyder Family to the banquet. Many people shared stories and memories of Mark and Dave during the banquet and enjoyed the slideshow that was displayed as well.

To honor Mark and Dave, MSTA will be creating a scholarship for each of them. We are not sure yet the details of the scholarships, but they will be established and funded each year starting in 2023. During the banquet, some of our members pledged to give money to these scholarships. A huge thank you goes out to the following people whose generosity and thoughtfulness goes beyond words....

Rick Throop, Woods-Utica Septic Service  
Rodrigo Meirelles, Williams and Bay Pumping Service  
Rodrigo Meirelles and Daniel Meirelles, Northeastern Michigan Environmental (Halls Serv-All)  
Mick Natzel, General Agency Company  
Bob Burgdorf, Spartan Sewer & Septic Tank Service  
Paul Lawrence, All American Septic Service  
Susan Armstrong, Brendel’s Septic Tank Service LLC  
Chris Sloan, Sloan’s Septic Tank Service LLC

*If you have any questions, please email Karlyn Wickham, MSTA Executive Officer,  
at [executiveofficer@msta.biz](mailto:executiveofficer@msta.biz).  
Thank you.*

*The Mark Scott Scholarship Fund  
and the Dave Snyder Scholarship Fund*



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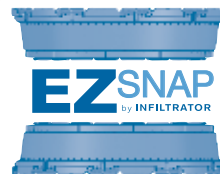
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## IMPORTANT CHANGES ABOUT THE GUN/CASH RAFFLE THIS YEAR

We will be drawing prizes for the Gun/Cash raffle at the Fall Meeting this year which is on October 8th in Traverse City. As always, you do not have to be present to win. If you want to be included in this raffle, be sure to fill out your raffle ticket stubs and send in payment at least 3 days before the Fall meeting which is on October 8th. Your raffle tickets were included in your Membership Invoice envelope that were mailed to you.

- 1<sup>st</sup> place: Bergara B-14 Hunter 65 Creedmore Rifle or \$750 Cash
- 2<sup>nd</sup> place: TriStar Upland Hunter O/U 410 or \$450 Cash
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Savage A-17 HMR Semi Auto Rifle (Blue/Synthetic) or \$400 Cash
- 4<sup>th</sup> place: Savage Axis II Rifle 270 WIN (Blue/Synthetic) or \$350 Cash
- 5<sup>th</sup> place: Iver Johnson Pump 12 guage 3" Camo or \$300 Cash
- 6<sup>th</sup> place: Taurus G2 9mm Pistol or \$200 Cash
- 7<sup>th</sup> place: Stevens 320 Turkey Shotgun 20 guage or \$175 Cash
- 8<sup>th</sup> place: Ruger Wrangler Revolver (Silver Frame) 22 LR or \$150 Cash

Tickets are 3 for \$25 and you do not have to be present to win. They would make a good present for the deer hunters on your Christmas list or just for yourself! Contact Chris Sloan if you want to purchase 10 or more tickets. Call Chris at 989-845-6280 right away as the tickets will go quickly.

Sincerely,

MSTA Raffle Committee

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# MSTA Member Spotlight

**Member Name:** Dervin Witmer

**Company Name:** Pump That Septic is a service of Dig-It Excavating, Inc.

**Company Address:** 62055 M62, Cassopolis, MI 49031



**Website:** [www.dig-itexcavating.com](http://www.dig-itexcavating.com) and [www.pumpthatseptic.com](http://www.pumpthatseptic.com)

**How many years have you been a member of MSTA?:**

16 Years

**When was the company founded?:** 2005

**How many employees do you have?:** 8

**What types of services do you provide?:** We focus on the service side of excavation.

**Did you start the business yourself or was it passed down to you?** I started the business and worked for the first 5 years alone doing sewer line hookups, septic tank cleaning and septic systems and repairs.

**How did you get started?:** Porter Twp built a waste treatment plant to service 5 local all-sports lakes and there were about 1500 homes to convert to city sewer connections. This opportunity kept me supplied with work for the first year I was in business.

**What services do you offer?:** Sewer/Water/Septic. New installation and repairs. Engineered septic systems are a specialty along with commercial and residential maintenance contracts. Drain cleaning, septic inspections with pipe camera equipment. We also offer Hydro excavation services for utility daylighting, safe trenching, catch basin cleaning and bulk material cleanup. We do a few new home sites a year as well as some small commercial sites.

**Tell us more about your business....:** We focus heavily on the image and marketing side of the septic and excavating industries. Educational videos promoting daily tasks and service including regular tank cleaning and system maintenance was a huge part of our early online presence and success.

**What do you like to most about owning your own business?** I like to see new challenges and opportunities where we can provide a service for our customers. Developing and maintaining a clean brand for our company is also something I enjoy. We like to help set the bar in the industry in that regard and appreciate other companies that do the same. We are professionals in public health and sanitation and our company culture should reflect that.





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***In Memory of Dave Snyder & Mark Scott***



(continued from page 10)

## MSTA Member Spotlight

**Do you have family members in the business?** I currently have all six of my kids working for me in some capacity. My oldest, Lucian (24) is a CDL driver for one of our vac trucks. He is very good with people skills and gets many compliments on the job. Olivia (21) is our dispatch and administrative assistant. (She prefers on the job work and has thrown around the idea of testing for her CDL license someday.) Isaiah (18) has been helping as a swamper on the Hydrovac crew and runs the inspection van for septic inspections. He is contemplating a degree in civil engineering to help with septic system design. Steffan (16) and Judah (13) help in the summer as excavation crew or vac truck support. Anastasia (11) is my youngest and often helps keep the shop and equipment clean. My wife Kari is happy to stay clear of anything business related!

My Brother-in-Law James Sanders is an excavation crew lead, Hydrovac operator and equipment mechanic for any in-house maintenance and light repairs. His brother Josh is CDL driver and runs our second vac truck.

**Do you or your business do social media? How does it work for you?** We have a robust social media presence which includes a website for the excavating side [www.digitexcavating.com](http://www.digitexcavating.com) and the septic side at [www.pumpthatseptic.com](http://www.pumpthatseptic.com) as well as YouTube channels under the same names. We have daily social media postings on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Truth Social and Tumblr. This gives us plenty of information for customer review and often we find customers have researched us before they request an estimate for their jobs.

**What kind of software programs do you use in your business? How well do they meet the needs of your business?** We use QB online for all our accounting and House Call Pro for CRM and job scheduling.

**Where do you find your employees?** So far it has been family and extended family. There have recently been some additional job interviews for new employees that have come to us via social media posts about hiring.

**What kind of employment packages do you offer to help retain your employees?** We are currently looking to add health insurance and we do offer a 3% match for any 401K contributions. Paid vacation time is also offered. We have found that a good company culture along with updating equipment and good wages are all part of retaining good employees.

**Any helpful hints?** Never underbid the quality of the work you provide. Set your price and cater to the clientele that wants that level of service. Provide a service that is value added, (complete septic service) and charge for any additional services you provide to complete the job. Look for niche areas within your industry to set you apart. Use data to determine your highest profit areas and focus/promote that particular service. Look for ways to diversify within your industry.

**Anything else.....** Have fun! If your business starts controlling you, look for ways to share responsibilities with others or hire others to fill in the many hats you are currently wearing. Or, turn down work to keep it manageable for yourself!

**-Dervin Witmer**

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# HOW TO NAVIGATE THE MSTA WEBSITE

[www.msta.org](http://www.msta.org)



**Karlyn Wickham**

*MSTA Executive Officer*

## HOW TO LOG IN TO YOUR PERSONAL PORTAL OF THE MSTA WEBSITE

1. Log into your account on [www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz)

If you do not remember your username /or password, click on “Forgot Your Password?” on the MSTA Homepage. You will receive an automatic email with instructions to get your username / password. Follow the instructions on this email to log in.

## GETTING YOUR CSE CREDITS OFF FROM THE MSTA WEBSITE

As you already know, we have a new website and database system to track your membership and CSE credits. The old website contained all your CSE Credits prior to August of 2017. If you don’t have records of your credits prior to August 2017, you will not be able to get them by logging onto the website. Instead you will have to send an email to the address below to request a report of those.

The new website contains your CSE Credits from August 2017 through now. To get a record of the credits you received from the Fall 2017 meeting or the 2018 Michigan Onsite WW Conference, follow the steps below:

1. Log into your account on [www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz) If you do not remember your username /or password, click on “Forgot Your Password?” on the MSTA Homepage. You will receive an automatic email with instructions to get your username / password.
2. Once you are logged in, go to “My Membership Information”
3. Click on the “other information” tab
4. Click on “Prior Event Registrations”
5. Find the class you just attended and click on the symbol with the checkmark inside the square
6. A copy of your transcript will appear showing the credits you earned by going to the meeting
7. Print this page and keep it for your records to be turned into the DEQ when you renew your license.

Please save these instructions for future use. Please also save your username and password somewhere safe as well so that you can log onto the MSTA website again. By the way, your username and password can be changed to something you remember more easily by clicking on “Member Information / change username and password” (right next to the “other information” tab).

## CHANGING CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP

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2. Once you are logged in, go to “My Membership Information”
3. Click on the “Membership Information” tab
4. Click on “change contact / profile”
5. Change your profile information
6. BE SURE TO PRESS SUBMIT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE

## ADDING EMPLOYEES OR ADDITIONAL PEOPLE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

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2. Once you are logged in, go to “My Membership Information”
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# Expect The Worst

*SEPTIC SERVICE SHORT STORIES WITH OLIVIA*

*6-19-21*

My brother Lucian and I pulled up to the next job of the day. It was about 3 in the afternoon. The sun was hot and the shade looked very pleasant. I can tell a lot about how the job is going to go just by the landscape. A survey of the property was not very promising.

A heavy-set man with a brush-cut and no shirt came out of the house. “No idea where the tank is,” He shrugged. This was not unusual. Lucian probed around, trying all the usual places. No hits. “Do you have a clean out cap?” “Yah, under the house.” The man jabbed his thumb in that direction. Now to help understand the scenario, there was a deck around the house and to put the camera into the clean out meant crawling into a dark lurking, tight, spider infested space. Maybe men don’t find this so intimidating, but I do, and it is time consuming. Lucian disappeared into the depths. The camera footage was so dark that we couldn’t go by visual. When Lucian pushed the camera out as far as he could, it was my job to find it with the locator. This was always like playing the game of hot and cold. The higher the beeping the closer you are to the camera head. This technology always impressed people with its weird design and alien-like beeping. I circled the house. I finally found the cameras location... right inside the front door, under the house. Perfect. Lucian reappeared from under the shambled little lake house wiping cobwebs out of his hair.

After hitting this brick wall of a situation, we pondered what approach we should take next. Was the tank under the house? The pipe was probably so clogged the camera couldn’t get all the way to the septic tank. I voiced a theory of mine. “You have to look around and pick worst place for the septic tank to be.” Lucian grabbed the probe and tried a couple more unlikely places. He slammed it carelessly into the fire pit/trash pile in the front yard. “Thunk.” came the familiar sound of metal hitting concrete underground. This was probably the only time I have ever regretted being right. Lucian pushed the assortment of ashes, half burned trash and branches aside. Then he started to dig. The customer squinted and stood there puzzling. The fire pit had been there, “for as long as he could remember,” he informed us. We always just shrug, nod and keep working when customers voice their opinions. While he was speaking the shovel hit concrete. Lucian scrapped the dirt off the concrete slab, but there was no usual square outline where the lid should be. My job as the assistant is to watch and predict what tools will be need next. I got out the concrete saw. Lucian sawed open a hole in the concrete slab. When he pried up the block, sure enough, there was a pipe. It was a tank of some sort, filled with roots and black slime. Lucian jammed a hook into the pipe. Out came some more black slug. “Well, this tree has been getting a free lunch.” He explained to the gagging customer. The tank we had found wasn’t the septic tank but a drywell. The septic tank was still somewhere between the fire pit and the front door of the house.

Now, at least we had an open pipe to work with. We ran the camera through the pipe back towards the house and it finally stopped in the tank. No matter how bad things are they can always get worse. The real septic tank was, of course, under the deck! Look for the most inconvenient place and that’s where the tank will be. My theory regrettably was being proven true. Lucian marked the location of the septic tank on the deck with a crayon that was laying around with other random toddler toys. A curious neighbor came over to investigate the drama. The two men put their heads together and their hands to work. They also used the crayon and began to number the boards as they were removed. Then they unscrewed and moved them out of the way until there was a gaping hole in the deck. Collateral damage was not an issue in their minds. Lucian stepped into the hole and dug up the tank. Finally, we were really in business. Once again, I hauled over the different tools: Concrete saw, hoses, Crust Buster, fondly nicknamed “The Whipper,” a bucket of water and the tank suction hose. The tank was a surprisingly tiny 200-gallon drum. The end was in sight. Lucian and I tag teamed writing up info and pumped out the tank. Last of all the boards were screwed back in place. “Alright, I think we are done here.” Lucian gratefully concluded.

Both men smiled, wiped their sweaty brows and waived as we drove off. It was probably an adventure they both enjoyed and the next time his tank needs to be serviced, he and his neighbor will remember exactly where it is!

-Short Stories with Olivia W.

Pump That Septic, Cassopolis, MI

# Legislative Report for MSTA

## *Judy Augenstein, Legislative Consultant*

### **April 29 Report**

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce on Friday in backing a proposal loosening term limits in the state and requiring financial disclosure for public officials said the Legislature should consider holding hearings and sending it to the ballot.

As it stands, the coalition behind the proposal must collect 425,059 valid signatures by July 11 to put the constitutional amendment on the ballot. The Legislature could do that with a super-majority vote.

The proposed constitutional amendment would set a 12-year limit on total legislative service, meaning a person could serve a full 12 years in the House or Senate or some combination of the two equaling 12 years.

Current limits are three two-year terms in the House and two four-year terms in the Senate.

The proposal would also require members of the Legislature, along with the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state and attorney general to file annual financial disclosure reports and periodic transaction reports with the Department of State.

The Michigan Chamber has studied term limits over the years since the passage by voters in 1992 and has a been a long-time proponent of sensible reform, Jim Holcomb, president and CEO of the Chamber, said in a statement.

After thorough review and discussion by the Chamber Board, we believe this is a thoughtful, meaningful proposal to enhance the public policy process and discourse as well as improve transparency in government – both foundational to helping build a stronger Michigan for our families, communities and businesses. It also reflects the reality that voters strongly support the concept of term limits,” he said. “The Michigan Chamber also applauds and appreciates the bipartisan coalition assembled together.”

### **May 11 Report**

The Legislature voted this week to send significant changes to the state’s 30-year-old term limits law to the November ballot, but not before weakening the proposed financial disclosure requirements.

The measure was introduced Tuesday by House Speaker Jason Wentworth (R-Farwell) and was passed by a 76-28 vote in the House and then quickly passed by the Senate 26-6, giving the necessary two-thirds votes for sending the proposed constitutional amendment directly to the ballot.

House lawmakers are currently capped at three, two-year terms, but can go on to be elected to the Senate and serve for two, four-year terms for a total of 14 overall years of public service. That would be decreased to 12 years under this joint resolution, though a person could choose to serve all 12 years in a singular chamber.

In addition to the stipulations surrounding cumulative years served, the proposal also would require financial disclosures from officials for the first time. It specifies that by April 15, 2024, the Legislature, the governor, the lieutenant governor, the secretary of state and the attorney general must electronically file an annual financial disclosure report with the Department of State.

The disclosure would require a description of assets and sources of unearned income, sources of earned income, description of liabilities and positions currently held to include a position held as an officer, director, trustee or employee of any business enterprise, nonprofit, labor organization or institution other than the state itself. The positions required for disclosure would not apply to positions held in any religious, social, fraternal or political entity, or positions that are solely of an honorary nature.

Additional disclosure requirements would include:

- Agreements or arrangements with respect to future employment, a leave of absence while serving as a legislator or state officer, continuation or deferral of payments by a former or current employer other than the state or continuing participation in an employee welfare or benefit plan maintained by a former employer;
- Gifts received and required to be reported by a lobbyist or lobbyist agent, as prescribed by state law;

*(continued on page 21)*



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*(continued from page 18)*

- Travel payments and reimbursements received and required to be reported by a lobbyist or lobbyist agent as prescribed by state law; and
- Payments made by lobbyists or a lobbyist agent to a charity in lieu of honoraria.

Of significance, however, were the several changes to the proposed financial disclosure requirements contained in the coalition's proposal that were weakened prior to coming before the Legislature.

Language in the ballot group's proposal stating the financial disclosure rules must be at least as strict as those for Congress was removed. Also removed in the resolution was language referring to a requirement to disclose "purchases, sales or exchanges of a security or real property."

The coalition's language would have required the reporting of liabilities, income and assets. Under HJR R, that language instead requires a description of liabilities, assets and sources of income.

For reporting gifts and travel reimbursements, the proposal dictates that lawmakers must report all gifts and travel reimbursement. The resolution only requires what is currently required for lobbyists to report.

Asked why the House felt the need to move the joint resolution Tuesday, Mr. Wentworth was short in saying that the caucus has "been talking about this for weeks as a caucus and as a Legislature."

Speaker Wentworth said that aligning lawmaker reporting requirements with lobbyist reporting requirements would make it so both parties are playing by the same rulebook. Therefore, if a lobbyist doesn't report something that a lawmaker does, it would be easy to see where reports are falling through the cracks.

"I think it's absolutely a slam dunk," Mr. Wentworth said of reporting requirements. "Right now, under current law, it's on lobbyists to report, right? This would actually require the legislator to report as well so that checks and balances. If a lobbyist were not to report something, there's no (current) balance, there's no check on that."

He continued: "If a legislator then actually discloses, and the lobbyist doesn't, then there's a check and balance there. I think this is actually much stricter of an approach we need to make, to make sure that this is a focus."

Asked why the House didn't carve out terms within the joint resolution ahead of passing it out of the lower chamber, Mr. Wentworth said it was important that voters knew what they were voting on and that there was only "a certain amount of space you can do that with."

"To make sure that they know that these are the priorities of financial disclosure and term limit changes is key," he said. "Then the Legislature can enact the policy going forward."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey (R-Clarklake) did not make himself available to reporters following session, but in a statement praised the proposal as being a solid option for the voters to weigh in on the fall.

"By enabling lawmakers to serve out all their time in one chamber, even if for an overall shorter period of 12 years instead of the current 14, individuals would be free to focus on issues that are important to the communities they represent rather than on their next career move," Mr. Shirkey said. "Likewise, it is also important that we strike a reasonable balance when it comes to the financial information elected officials must disclose to help make government more transparent, and not further discourage good folks from running for office."

Patrick Anderson from the Term Limits Defense Fund slammed the Legislature's action as lacking any discussion. He said he was in the lobby in the Senate when the 26th vote went on the board and "the lobbyists around me quietly cheered.

"This was adopted with no notice to the voters. It was hastily passed it with no debate. They even suspended the rules so they could avoid reading it out loud," he said in a statement. "Whether you like term limits or not, this is a disgrace. These elected officials just reminded voters why they need to limit the power of incumbency. The stench of this ambush of the voters will last all the way to November."

*(continued on page 24)*





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## **May 11 Report**

Governor Gretchen Whitmer on Monday touted labor market information that shows a positive trend in job growth for small businesses in the state, while the leader of a business organization said there is much work to do still in raising labor force participation. Governor Whitmer in a release pointed to job growth of more than 170,000 jobs from small businesses over the first three quarters of 2021.

During 2021, it was pointed out that about 150,000 new small business applications were filed during 2021, an increase of 59 percent from 2019 levels. The statistics, the release stated, came from the Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives.

“Small businesses form the backbone of Michigan’s economy and are the anchors of communities across the state. Through tough times, they’ve shown grit and innovation to continue getting things done for their customers and employees,” Ms. Whitmer said in a statement. “While the numbers are encouraging, we must build on this momentum by making investments to retain and recruit more workers, expand operations, and attract additional investment. Together, let’s keep getting things done for Michigan’s booming small business community.”

Figures from March showed the state’s seasonally adjustment unemployment rate as being 4.4 percent, still above the national rate of 3.6 percent. Total employment in the state has risen by 62,000 in the last three months of reported data. Michigan payroll jobs were still about 122,400 below February 2020 levels just prior to the first reported cases of the coronavirus in the state.

Brian Calley, president and CEO of the Small Business Association of Michigan, said Monday that much work is still needed on many fronts to improve the state’s business climate and increase workforce participation. “It’s kind of a mixed bag,” Mr. Calley said of the state’s small business environment. He said some industries and regions have recovered well from the deepest depths of the pandemic, but other sectors and communities are still struggling.

Mr. Calley pointed to downtown Lansing, which relies heavily on foot traffic from state employees and others during the daytime hours. He said many of those businesses have suffered or gone under during the pandemic given that many employees have been working from home. By comparison, he said one could talk to business owners in suburban areas such as Birmingham or elsewhere and get an entirely different assessment of the strength of local businesses. “We’re in line for a really rough two to four quarters,” Mr. Calley said.

Top areas of concern from SBAM members have included levels of inflation being at their highest in decades along with supply chain constraints and workforce shortages. The former Lt. Governor said a normalization of monetary policy from the Federal Reserve and federal government in the short term is needed to help stabilize small businesses. On the state level, he said continuing to push programs and policies that can help expand the workforce would be critical to long-term growth.

The labor participation rate is around 60 percent in the state, he said, whereas pre-pandemic it was closer to 70 percent. With an aging population and workforce to go with a state population that is not growing very much, there are limits to improving workforce participation to fill positions and grow businesses. “We need to be retaining more college graduates,” Mr. Calley added.

He said programs to help get more people to enter the workforce are key to helping small businesses recover and thrive. This is why SBAM has been supportive of policies such as criminal justice reform, improving access to affordable child care, and more.

## **May 18 Report**

When Senator Ruth Johnson, R-Holly, served in the House, she moved legislation on behalf of MSTA through the Legislature, HB 4874 (Public Act 546 of 2014). The bill was dubbed “The Choice Bill”, which allowed septic haulers to dispose of septic waste at a wastewater treatment plan of their choosing as long as the septic hauler provided service within the service area of the respective treatment plant. It was a delight to work with such a diligent and thoughtful legislator and I am hoping she will agree to work with us to develop a “Statewide Sanitary Code”. Staff is setting a meeting day for us to discuss the issue.

Senator Curt VanderWall, R-Ludington is crafting a bill to include in the “Sellers Disclosure Form” the condition of a septic tank/drain field and last time pumped, if known. The Michigan Realtor’s Association do not support the language UNLESS the entire sellers disclosure form is revised. MRA is a very well funded trade association and has influence with both Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature. Senator VanderWall has agreed to the request by MRA and will be holding a “work group” meeting with all interests, including MSTA, to discuss the issue. Senator VanderWall suggests we first hold the work group and then set a separate meeting with MRA if needed. I am telling the Senator that it is better to hold the work group meeting, sooner than later....

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## **June 2 Report**

This week the Annual Detroit Regional Chamber of Conference has drawn key Michigan politicians and several out of state politicians to either listen or be heard. While speaking at the Conference, Governor Gretchen Whitmer said she hasn't yet had a conversation with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg regarding a suspension of the federal gas tax amid a consistent push from Michigan Republicans to see the state's fuel taxes suspended.

The move comes as an effort by the Legislature to offer people some reprieve at the gas pump amid rising fuel costs nationwide. It's a plan Governor Whitmer has panned as political theatre, even vetoing the last attempt made earlier this year to do just that Governor. Whitmer has called for a suspension of the federal fuel tax, however. She has also expressed support for pausing the state sales tax on fuel.

Still, when asked Wednesday during a media availability at the Detroit Regional Chamber's Mackinac Policy Conference if she had talks with Mr. Buttigieg on a federal suspension, Ms. Whitmer said, "I've not had that conversation today."

"But I've been very clear I do think that some sort of a gas tax holiday sales tax would, could, be helpful to people who are struggling," she said. "I've been very clear though – I'm not interested in theatre. I want to give people relief right now."

She continued in saying that the proposals that she has put on the table currently could "give people a little bit of relief who are struggling right now," adding: "Anyone who shares that goal, they're going to find an eager partner in me."

Last week, the Senate pushed through a bipartisan proposal for a three-month suspension of Michigan's tax on motor fuel, along with a proposed suspension of the sales tax on motor fuels. At that point, Whitmer said she was "encouraged" by the move in a statement through her communications director, noting that the administration would "monitor this legislation as it advances".

When asked Wednesday what she meant when she said she was encouraged, alongside defining what she viewed as a pause of the sales tax, Ms. Whitmer simply said that negotiations were continuing to happen between her team and the Legislature.

"Obviously, we've got incredible resources that none of us ever anticipated as a result of all the struggle that we've been through, good management (and) help from the federal government we're so grateful for," she said. "We've got an opportunity right now if we want to make some of those decisions to give people relief right now. I'm encouraged and eager to do that. Exactly what that's going to look like, that's going to be subject to part of the negotiation with the Legislature and that's ongoing."

I think that was a "political" answer, just saying.

## **June 14 Report**

Launch Michigan released its latest plan to address education and its shortcomings Thursday, focusing on three key areas that would mean more supports for students wishing to enter post-secondary or technical education.

The organization, formed in 2018, consists of business, education, labor and philanthropy leaders including Michigan Education Association President Paula Herbart, Brian Calley, former Lt. governor and president of the Small Business Association Michigan, and Jeff Donofrio, president and CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan.

"We want to be careful not to look backward or to point fingers. I think our system in many ways is doing what it is designed to do," Mr. Calley said of Michigan's education system. "It's not that it's stopped doing what it's designed to do. It's just what is required by the world has changed so much."

The framework touches on key three areas – reinvention, resources and responsibility – and the organization has coined it has a solid foundation to build upon. In its plan, the reinvention aspect focuses on aligning the Michigan with national and international standards. This includes adopting a new college and career readiness standard which would provide comprehensive information about how the schools are performing and offer students and educators a roadmap for improvements needed.

Students would have three years to demonstrate they have achieved the new standard before graduation, with tools developed each year starting in the 10th grade and would allow students to submit a portfolio of work if testing does not offer the best fit. Additionally, Launch MI believes measurement should occur at the start of kindergarten, 3rd grade and 8th grade.

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If students do not reach the standard by 12th grade, they can attend a 13th “opportunity year,” attending classes at a local community college for free and would be paid for by the state’s General Fund. This option would be available to eligible persons until they either meet graduation requirements or turn 26 years of age. The same holds true for those who need special education services.

Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate courses and at least one college credit-bearing pathway are also being advocated for, as well as career and technical pathways that combine classroom knowledge with hands-on opportunities. Special education students would also be encouraged to participate in the career or collegiate focused pathways.

As far as resources, Launch MI supports the recent findings from the bipartisan School Finance Research Collaborative that estimates \$10,421 per student is needed to educate each pupil, at a minimum. Launch MI is also recommending an additional annual investment of \$3.5 billion to \$3.8 billion.

Separate from the research collaborative, the framework adopted a supplemental cost model hoping to tackle the impact of concentrations of poverty.

“On an individual level, when a student is living in poverty or has a disability, but also students who may not be in poverty but they’re living in a community that has high rates of poverty...in those districts all of the evidence would tell us that there are more intensive resource needs in order to help kids achieve their full potential,” Mr. Calley said.

All current and future School Aid Fund money would be dedicated to Pre-K-12 purposes and any higher education money would come from the General Fund. New state tax revenues would be key for additional investment, but the framework also recommends restructuring the state’s school employee retirement system and reallocating federal funds.

The framework also would provide what it calls renewed support to state educators and would ensure salaries are brought to the level of jobs that have the same education requirements and reflect local living costs.

“Moving us more towards a system like you would see with physicians, where you have residency novice teachers that are moving up to become professional practitioners and eventually master educators who have a broader impact on the system,” Mr. Pratt said.

Mr. Pratt commented that student teachers are often not provided enough mentoring and support and the education system does not allow for educators to collaborate with each other. Doctors are always talking with each other and figuring it out, he said, we need to do the same thing for education.

The third and final aspect of the framework, responsibility, calls for the alignment of the governor, the Department of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction and local schools. In its report, Launch MI writes it is essential the Board of Education and MDE have strong collaborative relationships with the Legislature.

The framework recommends the board chair and the superintendent of public instruction be appointed by the governor, saying this will help reduce the number of conflicting education policy agendas, increase voter accountability for education outcomes and ensure solid leadership at MDE.

Educator evaluations would not use test scores and would include local assessments and observations by administrators and other educators such as mentors and coaches, replacing the current system with Professional Practice Reviews..



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