

Spring 2020



## Bill Gregory Distinguished Service Award

On November 28, 2016, the onsite industry in Michigan lost one of its foremost leaders. Bill Gregory went above and beyond, ceaselessly giving back to the onsite industry with his characteristic enthusiasm, contagious smile, and obvious love of profession. Not much happened in Michigan's onsite industry that Bill was not involved with in some way. He was the initial driving force behind the establishment of the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (MOWRA), affiliate of the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA). Bill was involved at both the state and national level, and served as Secretary and Treasurer of MOWRA up until his death. He was a longtime member of the Annual Wastewater Conference Planning Committee, contributed substantially to the development of the onsite training center in Novi, and was a leader in training events around the state. Bill was a friend to all who knew him and will be sorely missed.

In memory of Bill Gregory, the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference Committee has set up a conference award to recognize those who have contributed to the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference. This year, the "Bill Gregory Distinguished Service Award" in Recognition of Exceptional Service to the Onsite Wastewater Industry, was presented to Mark Scott of Scott's Excavating, Roscommon, MI. Mark has been dedicated to serving on the MOWC Committee for over 20 years. His volunteerism, positivity, and good-natured personality throughout his years of service to Michigan's largest onsite conference went hand-in-hand with Bill's enthusiasm for the same. Thank you, Mark!



*Bill Gregory's Family Pose with Mark Scott  
(L-R Wyatt Gregory, Nancy Gregory, Mark Scott, Susan Pominville, and Joe Laier)*



## MSTA Spring Board Meeting

Where: National Vacuum Equipment, Traverse City

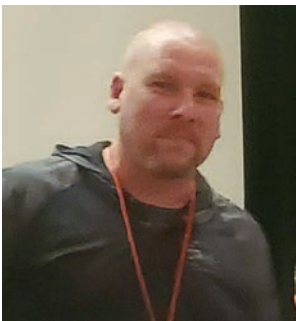
Date: April 25, 2020

Time: 9:00am – 3:00pm

Registration and agenda coming soon.

To register, go to: [www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz)

### FROM THE PRESIDENT:



As a New Year and decade begins, so does a term for a new MSTA President. First, I feel it imperative to thank Dave Snyder for all the time he has put in as President. For all the work and effort he has put forth for this great association. Now to introduce myself, my name is Rick Throop (pronounced Troop). I own and operate Woods-Utica Septic Service LLC in Washington Twp. I have been working in this industry for 21 years and still have much to learn. My wife, Heather runs my office and our two sons, Zakery, 13 and Gavin, 7 keep us busy with whatever few minutes we are not working.

It was great that many of you were able to attend the January Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference this year. It was once again a great conference with very informative classes. Thank you to Karlyn and everyone at the registration desk for making things run smoothly as usual. Hopefully, some of the attendees were able to fill out evaluation forms with any suggestions for next year.

The MSTA Banquet went great with a big thank you to Brian Bost from Walex for being our MC and auctioneer. There were tons of door prizes for attendees along with the donated items for auction. Thank you to all our vendors for their generous donations. Lastly, our sincere thanks to all the Senators and Representatives that were able to attend our banquet and social hour. It was a great opportunity to speak with them about thoughts and ideas for the future of our industry.

After the banquet many members attended the MSTA after party. There was a lot of good conversation and laughs. It was nice to have more room to gather together, unlike evenings in The State Room, where everyone is crammed in. MSTA is hoping to continue this event at future conferences.

As winter continues to try and hold on, we are looking to a future with warmer weather, longer hours of daylight and of course longer hours of work. Hopefully you can attend our spring meeting being held on April 25th which will be held at National Vacuum Equipment in Traverse City. They will host us at their beautiful venue. As usual, there will be free CEC's available to attendees and always a great lunch. I look forward to seeing and speaking too everyone there.

Lastly, I am looking forward to being president of this great association this year and continuing work with our board and members to better our industry. Please feel free to email me at any time with questions and/or concerns. Thank you for this opportunity and I will see some of you in April.

Rick Throop  
MSTA President





## **Meet your 2020 MSTA Board of Directors**

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### **MSTA Legislative Consultant**

Judy Augenstein

**MICHIGAN SEPTIC TANK ASSOCIATION  
PAC COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER  
February 2020**

Dear MSTA Members,

I hope that this note finds you well and you are all off to a good start for the year following the conference in East Lansing.

We wanted to remind everyone that we can only make our political efforts possible through the help of our membership donations to the MSTA PAC fund. With the help of Joe Hall's leadership in the past years we were able to successfully make several legislative changes that have strengthened our industry and organization. We hope to continue having a prominent voice in the capital by representing our member's ability to effectively conduct business in the State of Michigan.

With that being said, we would like to encourage engagement from our general members and provide transparency to the use of our PAC dollars. If any members have specific pain points they feel should be communicated, we are happy to review them at the PAC committee so we can properly plan how to address them with legislators. Additionally, any contributions are appreciated and begin to add up when considering the potential scale of our association. For example, if we have 150 of our members donate \$100, we have \$15,000 of fire power to move forward our initiatives and make sure our voice is heard in Lansing.

Please note that all PAC donations must come from personal checks and we can't accept checks written from business accounts.

Best regards,  
MSTA PAC Committee



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## FROM THE DESK OF THE OLD PRESIDENT:



I just wanted to thank all of you for the support you have given me over the years of my presidency within MSTA. I have one year left of my Director term, so I'm not disappearing yet. Please support our new President, Rick Throop, and congratulate him on his new leadership role. He has been around it a long time and should adjust with no problem.

I would also like to welcome our new Directors, Tom Schunk, Stephanie Powell and Randy Redmer. Thanks for stepping up and helping our association move forward into 2020. Joe Hall has stepped down from his position in MSTA as Alicia and Joe have sold their business and are looking forward to the retirement role in their life. Good luck my friends! Also, Mark Scott has reduced his role in the Association and we will all feel that change. Mark has dedicated a lot of time to MSTA and his shoes will be hard to fill. But he is always there to help when needed, you can count on that. I would like to say thank you Joe, Rick, Jason, Karlyn and Julie for this past year. I couldn't ask for a better group of folks to work with. I hope we all have a good 2020.

Sincerely,  
Dave W. Snyder

## 2020 MICHIGAN ONSITE WASTEWATER CONFERENCE



The 69th annual Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference, held January 14-16, 2020 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing (for the seventh year in a row), was a success. There were over 392 individuals registered for some part of the conference and 29 exhibitors rented booth space. It is the intent of these annual wastewater conferences, organized as a joint venture by the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (MOWRA), the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE), the Michigan Environmental Health Association (MEHA), our association (MSTA), along with Michigan State University (MSU) to educate people involved in our industry. Having all these groups together with an interest in onsite wastewater resulted in a strong conference with good networking opportunities.

The conference allowed participants the opportunity to acquire up to 17-1/2 hours of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) approved continuing septage education (CSE) credit hours toward their re-licensure.

A special thanks to Keynote speakers James Bell (Past President NOWRA/Retired Executive Vice-President Bio-Microbics), Liz Roxberry (Executive Director of Fenner Conservancy) and Larry Stephens, PE (President & Owner of Stephens Consulting Services, PC) who delivered excellent presentations. Mr. Bell delivered an informative session titled "2020 NOWRA (National Onsite Wastewater Association) Update" Ms. Roxberry and Mr. Stephens followed with sessions on the Fenner Nature Center an environmental educational facility located in Lansing just a short distance from the Kellogg Center. A BIG thanks to all the speakers and round table facilitators who contributed their time and travel to make this conference a success.

Former Michigan Onsite Wastewater Planning Committee Member (past Chairman and Treasurer) Bill Gregory, who passed away November 28th 2016, was honored again during lunch on Wednesday. This year, the "Bill Gregory

Distinguished Service Award” in Recognition of Exceptional Service to the Onsite Wastewater Industry, was presented to Mark Scott of Scott’s Excavating, Roscommon, MI Bill’s wife, 2-children and son-in-law were present for this special honor. Please see attached Bill Gregory Distinguished Service Award tribute (in this newsletter).

Thanks to Vendors whose exhibit fees help keep the cost of the conference more affordable to all. A warm thank you to Karlyn Wickham (MSTA Executive Officer), and all the others who helped at the registration area and as CSE volunteers.

The MSTA Banquet (Wednesday evening) was a huge success. A BIG THANKS to the volunteers who helped to make Banquet a fun time for all: Master of Ceremonies, MSTA President Dave Snyder with the help of auctioneer extraordinaire Brian Bost of Walex and several MSTA members. A special thank you to our many Guests of Honor: Several Michigan State Senators and Representatives. A GREAT BIG THANK YOU TO ALL THE VENDORS & MSTA MEMBERS WHO CONTRIBUTED DOOR PRIZE GIFTS TO THE BANQUET THIS YEAR.

We would like to extend a big thank you to the Kellogg Center staff for the excellent job they did in taking care of us. At the MSTA Annual Meeting, EMC Insurance Representative Ryan Adams (Underwriting Manager EMC Insurance Companies), Derek Bleil (Resident Vice President EMC) and Mick Natzel Jr., (Commercial Lines Agent - General Agency) presented a check for \$19,150.42 to the association for MSTA member participation in the excellent insurance program the General Agency organized for our membership.

Thank you to all the participants that made the 2020 Onsite Wastewater Conference a resounding success!! We had 203 enrollees in the continuing education program who earned over 2,000 MDEQ approved continuing septage education credit hours.

Thank you to the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference Committee for putting together an outstanding conference. 2020 Committee Members:

From EGLE: Greg Merricle, Dale Ladouceur, Dave Cotton & Regina Young

From MSU: Bindu Bhakta & Terry Gibb

From MEHA: Joel Kwiatkowski, R.S. (Committee Chair)

From MSTA: Karlyn Wickham (Secretary), Ralph Bailey, Jason Spangle & Mark Scott (Treasurer)

From MOWRA: Dan Milan & Larry Stephens (Exhibitor Masters)

From MALEHA: Randy Rapp

The planning committee will use the input from the conference evaluations to help formulate the conference content for next year and help address other difficulties that were noted. Several of this year’s out-of-state guests commented not only on the conference affordability, but the fact that meals were included in our registration cost. Mention was made that the Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference is better than many of the national conferences. ☺ Please contact a committee member and let them know what you would like to see at the 70th annual Michigan Onsite Wastewater Conference tentatively planned to be held January 12 - 14, 2021 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. There will be more on the 2021 Conference in upcoming newsletters.

Please find copies of many of the conference PowerPoint presentations on the MSTA website at ([www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz)) and clicking on Calendars at the top.

Submitted By: Mark N. Scott (Continuing Education Committee)



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## MI Onsite Wastewater Conference Presentations loaded to the MSTA Website

The following presentations from the 2020 MI Onsite WW Conference have been added to the MSTA Website. To view them, go to [www.msta.biz](http://www.msta.biz) and click on “Events” at the top of the page, then on “Presentations”

2020 NOWRA Update

DOT Critical Driver Compliance

EGLE Q & A

Federal and State Motor Carrier Regulations

Fenner Nature Center

Innovative Septic System Accessories

Integrity of the Septic Industry

Learn What Impacts the Value of a Septic Business

Portable Toilet Industry

USDA Rural Development Funding for Rural Sewer Systems







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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**

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 “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**

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 “Membership Information” tab
4. Click on “additional individuals attached to this membership”
5. Click on “add an additional member”
6. Fill out the information about this member
7. Do this for every person you would like to add to your membership





## Legislative Report for MSTA

Judy Augenstein, Legislative Consultant



### A decade in review

None of the biggest stories of the last 10 years in Michigan government will be confined to the second decade of the 21st century. They will continue, through court actions, political developments, new laws and in some cases the physical health of individuals the stories affected.

There are many aspects of the stories as well, as most are inter-connected through a variety of developments. So the Flint drinking water crisis is related to the Detroit bankruptcy in part because both were tied to a controversial law regarding local emergency managers. Or how Flint is related to PFAS contamination because of the underlying health effects, or how both stories could be tied as well to the Enbridge Line 5 story and the fears about protecting drinking water. A connection as well as the adoption of the Healthy Michigan Medicaid expansion and the ability to get health care.

All the stories also relate to the state's dramatic changes to taxes and budgetary policies that topped the early part of the decade, then brought in labor into the component, with adoption of Right to Work laws, as a way of helping restore the state's economy.

Underlying all the stories is the political structure of the state, how it has changed and surprised Michiganders, and how by the 2018 election Michiganders took steps to retake control of some political basics in the state.

There was good news during the decade, primarily, an improving economy that was a bonus to a state that had suffered a decade in economic decline. State policy and politics moves when the tides are rough, the winds high and the mood unsettled. So it was the conflicts and generally the bad news that forced state leaders to act.

Again, all these top stories did not see their completion from 2010 to 2019. Many were already issues well before 2010, and all will still be present in some form going into the third decade of the 21st century.

**10. PFAS:** In November 2017 Governor Rick Snyder issued an executive order creating an action team to look into contamination involving perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS. The chemicals had been used in a range of materials but may have been best known for their use in firefighting chemicals and cleaning supplies, but also showed up in products as varied as microwave popcorn bags. The potential health risks of the chemicals finally became known.

Governor Snyder convened a panel to guide the state on developing standards on PFAS. The state encouraged the federal Environmental Protection Agency to adopt standards on PFAS. The state began surveying all municipal water systems for exposure to PFAS. Governor Snyder ordered PFAS readiness and response efforts. A state survey showed at least 10 percent of municipal and school water systems had PFAS exposure.

Governor Gretchen Whitmer called on the state to set a PFAS action standard, and she also issued an order that all state workers who know of a threat to the public, including environmental contamination such as PFAS, make that threat known. The Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy committed to set standards PFAS thresholds in drinking water, which would make Michigan the first state to set such standards. The goal is for the state to complete the policy on the thresholds by April 2020.

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**9. LINE 5:** possibly could be one of the biggest environmental issue in the state that has not dealt with an actual environmental emergency and is an issue that is a major political focus. The issue actually started with an environmental disaster hundreds of miles away from the Line 5 oil and gas pipelines that cross the Mackinac Straits.

In July 2010 an oil spill from a pipeline owned by Enbridge Energy released some 840,000 gallons into the Kalamazoo River before the spill was discovered. Governor Jennifer Granholm declared a state of disaster for what was becoming the worst environmental disaster in recorded state history. Eventually the crisis sickened more than 300 people and cost Enbridge more than \$1 billion in cleanup and other costs.

That crisis became the basis of opposition to Line 5. The pipeline had been laid in the straits in the early 1950s (when the Mackinac Bridge was still just an idea) apparently to little public concern.

The nightmare scenario involving the pipeline is if there is a leak into the Great Lakes, particularly in winter when ice might cover the straits and a spill not recognized for some time. Line 5 has never leaked in the straits, it is regularly inspected, and it was built to last. But the age of the pipeline, now in its mid-60s, has been a major rebuttal for critics arguing that at some point something will happen simply because parts have worn out or are no longer able to tolerate certain stresses. Going into the 2020s, the issue remains a legal, political and environmental controversy.

**8. HEALTHY MICHIGAN:** The congressional 2010 passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act marked the biggest federal action dealing with health insurance since the adoption of the Medicaid and Medicare acts in the 1960s. Unlike those two acts, the ACA (called Obamacare, mostly by opponents, as it was signed by then-President Barack Obama) the act ignited a political firestorm that still burns nationally.

Republicans who had opposed the legislation were stunned in 2012 when Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the majority opinion upholding the ACA. But that decision ruled one section in the act – requiring states to expand Medicaid eligibility to people whose incomes was 133 percent of the national poverty rate – could only be elective since states still technically had the option of using Medicaid.

That ruling created a new fight at state levels before the ACA was scheduled to take effect in 2014. Most states under Democratic control did provide for Medicaid expansion. Only a few Republican-controlled states did, such as Arizona.

In February 2013 Michigan's Republican Governor Snyder called for the Legislature to also expand Medicaid. The move was backed by small businesses who struggled to provide health insurance on their own for workers and others. But it was going to prove to be an incredibly tough sell to the GOP-controlled Legislature and faced opposition in the House, which proposed a four-year limit on eligibility. A proposal passed the House and eventually passed the Senate.

The successful Michigan program began April 2014. People signed up for coverage in numbers far beyond what was anticipated. Initially the state expected some 470,000 total recipients. Today there are more than 650,000.

**7. POLITICAL TURMOIL:** As the calendar turns to 2020, with the upcoming presidential election, Michigan will govern much of the national focus.

The tea party dominated the 2010 Michigan election with one critical exception. Rick Snyder was easily elected governor and was not supported by the Tea Party. His unusual primary campaign strategy of ignoring debates between the more conservative Republicans running for governor and running a quiet campaign focusing on himself shocked the political establishment. After he won the nomination, Tea Party activists tried to block his selection of Brian Calley for lieutenant governor but failed.

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In 2012, the GOP had high hopes Michigan native, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee, would break the Democratic stranglehold on presidential elections. But then-President Obama still won the state, though not as easily as he did in 2008.

Rick Snyder won reelection in 2014, but not as easily as he won in 2010, as voters had soured on some of his policies. But in the Legislature and U.S. House Republicans ruled. In fact, in the Senate, the 27-11 GOP control over Democrats was the greatest that chamber had seen in decades. Democrats had essentially no power.

It was the 2016 election that clearly changed the political landscape. Hillary Clinton won the Democratic primary and Donald Trump won the Republican primary. Political pundits advocated a Hillary Clinton win, but Donald Trump surprised the nation and won the election.

Election night was a shock. Wayne County turnout was down dramatically compared to 2012. In fact, Democratic turnout was down in many counties across the state and many blue-collar Democrats turned instead to Mr. Trump. Turnout in Macomb County soared, and it all went Mr. Trump's way. He won Michigan by fewer than 11,000 votes, and along with unexpected victories in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania was elected.

The Democratic backlash to Mr. Trump's win started the day after the November election and held through 2018, driving the largest off-year election turnout in decades, and giving Gretchen Whitmer a comfortable victory for governor.

The Trump backlash, along with anger at the state's legislative and congressional district maps, also drove voters en masse to support a constitutional amendment, first proposed on Facebook by a young woman in the Grand Rapids area, to create a citizens commission to conduct redistricting. It also helped spur victory for a second set of amendments guaranteeing no-reason absentee voting, straight party voting and same-day voter registration.

The 2018 election results sets the stage for 2020 where Michigan will be key for whomever wins the presidency.

**6. BUDGET/TAX CHANGES:** 2010 came with Michigan still working its way out of a recession and with a new governor who had been elected promising major tax changes. It ended the decade with a relatively strong economy, though it still does not have as many people employed as there was in the 1990s.

The 2019 budget session also marked the first time since 2011 there had been any major struggle on the budget, even though the state was flush with revenues. During the eight years previously, with a Republican governor and Republican Legislature, there was little dispute over most budgetary issues. Governor Snyder, a former accountant, wanted the state's budget finished early, no later than the end of June, something the Legislature was happy to comply with.

In contrast, the 2019 budget featured a standoff between Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Republican Legislature. Republicans never gave any serious consideration to her call for a 45-cents per gallon gas tax increase for roads and basically ignored her on her other budget proposals. Governor Whitmer responded with a large series of budget vetoes as well as budget transfers through the State Administrative Board which led to a more than two-month standoff before a resolution was reached in December.

**5. DETROIT BANKRUPTCY:** Michigan's biggest city had been struggling for decades since the peak of its power politically and economically in the early 1950s. Its population had dropped, businesses had

*(continued on page 20)*



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left the city and every redevelopment effort, from the Renaissance Center to building casinos to trying to find some way of developing mass transit, had failed.

A controversial item passed in the early days of Governor Rick Snyder's administration was an expanded and very powerful emergency manager law. It ended up playing a huge role not only in Detroit but in the Flint.

It was unpopular, so unpopular Michigan voters threw it out in a referendum held on the law in the 2012 election. Immediately after, though, Mr. Snyder and the Legislature passed similar emergency manager legislation and made sure it was referendum-proof.

In March 2013, with a glum Detroit Mayor Dave Bing by his side, Mr. Snyder announced in a Detroit press conference an emergency manager was being appointed. Immediately, discussions began but went almost nowhere. Initial proposals on all retiree pensions and city services would be affected outraged city residents and employees.

Then it came out that discussions had been held on selling the collection at the Detroit Institute of Arts, one of the finest collections in the United States and worth billions of dollars. Enough money to come close to settling much of the city's debt. How seriously that was viewed was always a question, though it later was revealed that it was in fact a serious proposal.

No progress was made on discussions to resolve the city's finances so the city filed for a Chapter 9 bankruptcy, the largest metro area in the nation to ever file for bankruptcy. Eventually, the "Grand Bargain" was passed by the Republican led Legislature without support of some Detroit Democrats.

The bankruptcy has had a major role in the rebirth Detroit has seen in its downtown, New Center, Corktown and other areas. Freed from some financial obligations, city administrators have been able to focus on improving basic services such as streetlights, trash pickups and street repairs. Service companies and even industrial companies have relocated back into the city. Still, most neighborhoods are still struggling. The city's population still has not rebounded. Local tax collections remain somewhat stagnant and there are concerns if all areas of the city do not see greater improvements before the next recession it could stall the city's gains.

**4. RIGHT TO WORK:** It was arguably the most intense eight days in the history of Michigan government. On December 11, 2012, after the Capitol became an armed camp with State Police troopers surrounding the complex to hold an estimated 12,000 protestors at bay (and coming close on at least one moment of rushing the protestors) he signed legislation making Right to Work, which prohibit union contracts requiring union membership or non-union members to pay a fee to the union, law in the state. (I will always remember that day as I got slammed against the wall outside the House chamber by a protester.)

When the bills did pass, the focus became the Romney Building where Mr. Snyder's office was. Protestors surrounded as much of the building as they could, with the State Police blocking access to alleys and other side entrances. Local mounted police were told to move in, hoping to clear protestors but the protestors would not move.

Protestors kept creeping towards the building. There was a moment when it was clear the State Police had been radioed orders to prepare to push the crowd back. The troopers all in unison were tightening their grips on their clubs. The tension was suddenly broken when union officials walked in between the troopers and protestors carrying dozens of boxes of pizzas, passing them out to hungry individuals.

Early that evening, as the crowds slightly thinned, reporters were ushered into Mr. Snyder's press auditorium. He announced he had signed the bills into law. The bills did not take effect until March

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2013. When they did take effect, labor activists promised they would be temporary. But there has been no opportunity, even now with Governor Whitmer who opposes the law, to take an effort to repeal the proposals. There has been no attempt by labor to repeal the law via initiative petition. And often conservative organizations tout, almost gleefully, how union membership has declined.

**3. THE UNEMPLOYMENT SCANDAL:** It could almost read as the plot of a science fiction thriller: a flawed computer system charges that thousands of people committed fraud against the state, the state takes action to collect money it is not owed and years later those harmed people are still trying to get recompense. Except it really happened.

If it were not for the Flint drinking water crisis, the mammoth scandal involving the state's Unemployment Insurance Agency and its automated tracking system that wrongly determined some 37,000 unemployed workers had defrauded the state and were told to repay money they did not owe would have been the biggest stain on former Governor Rick Snyder's administration.

People were starting to get sued for repayment of their benefits, benefits they were legitimately entitled to, as well as penalties. Many had been ordered to repay tens of thousands of dollars.

A lawsuit was filed. When the state finally responded to the lawsuit, its claim was the system was actually working.

State officials may have believed that. But it was clear legislators, bombarded with complaints and concerns, did not believe it. Bills were introduced, with 80 co-sponsors in the House, to force changes to the system and find ways to help those wrongly accused. The Legislature formed a work group to look into the problems. The state's director of the Talent Investment Agency began looking into the merits of the system assessing 400 percent penalties.

Legislatively and administratively the state eventually conceded its failures, making personnel changes and watching legislation to fix the system move. By 2018, the UIA claimed 97 percent of those wrongly accused had been paid back.

However, the state did not give up its defense in court. Through the remaining days of the Snyder administration it continued to fight the lawsuits aggressively. It is still unclear how the state will respond. Governor Whitmer and Attorney General Dana Nessel have met several times on whether to continue the state's defense or find a settlement. Earlier in December, the Court of Appeals allowed a case against the state to proceed, but Governor Whitmer has not said what she will do.

**2. ROADS:** It is the only issue in which there is unanimity among the whole state. It is the issue that more than anything else got Governor Whitmer elected in 2018, yet it is the issue policymakers can never seem to agree on how to fix.

Not one person in Michigan thinks Michigan roads are any good. Ms. Whitmer's election call to "fix the damn roads" is agreed to by everyone. Except getting an agreement is an ongoing struggle.

Improving Michigan's roads has been an issue since the 1960s and faced many of the same fights and arguments all along the way. Fixing the roads will require more money, but enough people argue they shouldn't pay anymore that raising the money needed never happens.

In the 1990s, then-Governor John Engler got a gas tax increase passed after a furious struggle. He used much of the revenue to bond for enough funds to undertake a major road improvement project. The problem became, then, when those roads needed upgrading and repair much of the money raised by the tax was now going to repay the bonds.

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Under then-Governor Jennifer Granholm in the 2000s proposals were unveiled to boost financing for roads. They went nowhere.

Former Governor Rick Snyder wanted to turn Michigan into a major logistics hub for both national and international manufacturing and trade. That required more money for roads. He called for a plan that would raise more than \$1 billion, and proposals were floated but nothing passed.

The Legislature began taking General Fund monies to boost road funding, which infuriated officials who argued the state had amended the Constitution in 1978 to ensure there were adequate specific funds for roads without raiding the General Fund.

In 2014 it looked as if the Legislature might finally agree to a tax proposal to fix roads. But then-Speaker Jase Bolger maneuvered to instead put a ballot proposal before the public in 2015 that would raise funds if approved. The voters, unable to make any sense of the proposal, trashed it at the ballot box with 80 percent voting no. It was the most lopsided defeat for a constitutional amendment at the ballot box in almost 70 years.

Governor Snyder and lawmakers went back to negotiating and did finally win approval of a proposal that significantly raised the state's fuel taxes in stages, but also drew off more funds from the General Fund. The proposal helped, but it was nowhere near enough. And now the state's roads were degrading at a pace faster than the funding could keep up with. By 2018 it was estimated by several studies that Michigan needed annual expenditures of at least \$2 billion more to get its roads up to good standard and keep them there.

In the 2018 election, Governor Whitmer's Republican opponent then-Attorney General Bill Schuette charged if she were elected the gas tax would be raised by more than 20 cents a gallon. She shot back the claim was ridiculous.

When Ms. Whitmer outlined her first budget in March 2019, she stunned all by calling for a 45-cent increase in the gas tax. It was what was needed to fix the problem, she said, and making the request showed she was serious about tackling the problem. It was also an opening bid, intended to prompt a response at a counter plan, but failed to do so. No legislative Democrat introduced it in legislation and Republicans did not put up a proposal of their own.

Instead the Legislature passed a budget that called for one-time increases in funding. Governor Whitmer vetoed that, opening her to the political charge she turned her back on more money for roads. Governor Whitmer has begun the task of developing a new road funding proposal, but has not released details.

**1. FLINT:** It has been the subject of books, television specials, award-winning radio news programs. Its chief players have been the subject of criminal cases. Hollywood stars donated thousands of bottles of water to the city. A presidential campaign debate was held in the city to show solidarity with the residents. The state focused itself on relieving the crisis with an intensity matched only in times of war.

Still years later the residents of Flint, even after their water system has been largely repaired, don't trust it. The state is still waiting to determine the long-term effect of thousands of children potentially poisoned by excess exposure to lead.

Flint, once a thriving automotive production city where residents enjoyed the wealth the industry brought, is now known more as the city whose water was poisoned and whose residents were thus poisoned by political misjudgment. Flint had struggled financially for several decades.

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Former Governor Rick Snyder's administration enacted a strong emergency manager law which essentially was the genesis of the crisis. In 2011 Mr. Snyder named a Flint emergency manager. The hunt was on for ways to save the city money. One focus was on the city's water system.

For decades the city had used the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department for its drinking water. To save money the city moved to join a new water system being built, the Karegnondi Water Authority system, to draw water from Lake Huron. Even though the system was not completed until 2017, Flint signed a contract with KWA in 2013 and Detroit terminated its contract the same year. Detroit water continued to be used while city officials readied a temporary measure to provide water until the KWA system was completed. They would use the Flint River, not used as a water system since the early 20th century.

It meant restarting the city's water treatment plant, which took longer than anticipated. The switch from Detroit water to Flint River was planned for April 2014, even though emails later released showed engineers at the water plant warned it would not be ready.

On April 25 the water system was switched to Flint River water. Soon after problems began. Residents began to complain about the water, its color, its smell and taste. In August officials issued a boil advisory for parts of the city. A second advisory was issued in September. In October, General Motors ordered its plants to stop using the water because it was too corrosive.

In 2015, Flint City Council members voted to switch from Flint River water back to the Detroit water until the KWA is finished. But the new emergency manager refused.

At about the same time, the federal Environmental Protection Agency found lead levels exceedingly high in several homes. It later discovered needed chemicals to prevent the water from scaling lead off the old pipes into the drinking water had not been added.

Meanwhile, legislators were hearing complaints. City residents appeared at meetings with bottles of brown water drawn from their taps. The state argued the water meets safety standard, refuting the EPA.

In September 2015, researchers at Virginia Tech University who had been studying the water urged the state declare it is not safe for drinking or cooking and that there are elevated levels of lead in 40 percent of the homes. The state was skeptical of the study but acknowledged the system needed upgrades.

At the same time Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a Hurley Medical Center pediatrician, released a study indicating that more children had excess lead levels since the water switch occurred.

In October, Gov. Snyder signed legislation reconnecting the city to Detroit water. But the crisis was fully underway. The city declared a state of emergency in December. In January 2016, Mr. Snyder did the same, while Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant resigned. Then, Governor Snyder asked President Barack Obama to declare a state of emergency in Flint and Obama ordered \$5 million in aid. Congress began to hold hearings.

Governor Snyder dedicated most of his 2016 State of the State Address to the Flint situation. Meanwhile dozens of protestors marched outside the Capitol and union activists handed out bottles of Flint water, pleading with people not to drink it. Unions joined with the state on efforts to install filters in homes to abate the lead.

The crisis took on a new dimension as Governor Snyder announces increased cases of Legionnaire's disease, some that have led to deaths. How and what relationship of Legionnaires to the lead crisis is still undetermined, but it led to criminal charges later.

The state's National Guard was mobilized to distribute drinking water in Flint. Time Magazine put on its cover how a city was poisoned. Attorney General Bill Schuette hired a special investigative team to look into the Flint crisis. Governor Snyder ordered thousands of emails detailing state discussions on Flint be released, bypassing the need to file Freedom of Information Act requests.

The first criminal charges were filed against state and local officials in April 2016. More were to be issued that year. Even with the ongoing efforts to fix the water system and deal with the health effects, much of the focus now centered on the criminal investigations.

In 2017, Health and Human Services Director Nick Lyon and state chief medical executive Dr. Eden Wells were both charged with manslaughter and other felonies for their roles in the state's response to the crisis. That began a yearlong series of hearings as part of a preliminary examination that finally led to both being bound over for trial.

After Governor Whitmer took office in January 2019, she signed an executive directive ordering state workers to immediately report any potential threat to state safety and health. It was largely inspired by the Flint crisis.

Attorney General Dana Nessel announced in February a new investigative team into the Flint crisis. She later said millions of documents have been discovered related to Flint that had not been reviewed. Ironically, a division of her office files a court document saying they had been reviewed.

In June, Atty General Nessel's team announced it was dropping all the Flint criminal cases as it continues to conduct a new investigation. City residents are stunned, and state officials assured them they are not being ignored. Six years after the crisis began, despite government assurances, many Flint residents refuse to drink anything but bottled water because they simply don't trust what they are being told. Flint promises to be a major political and sociological issue for years to come.

### **A decade in review**

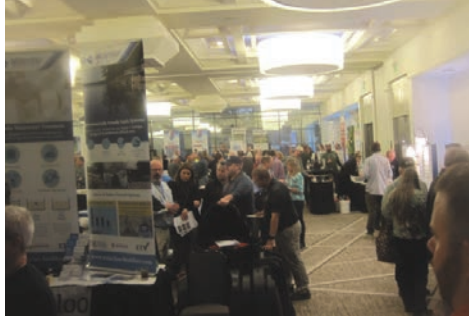
At times, the idea of going to the ballot for road funding has come up, but Governor Whitmer sounded pessimistic on that route. "I have not seen any seriousness around a ballot solution that I would be eager to support at this point," she said.

Ms. Whitmer opened the year targeting two crises afflicting the state – infrastructure and K-12 schools.

On school funding, there was an increase, but not the fundamental change K-12 schools and others wanted. Governor Whitmer said there was progress and praised greater funding concentrations for at-risk and special needs students, but stated more work/money is needed.

Continuing to loom over state government are two major pieces of litigation, hundreds involving the Flint water crisis involving 20,000 plaintiffs and the other involving the Unemployment Insurance Agency false fraud fiasco of 2013-15 that involves close to 40,000 people.

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