

# MSH UPDATES FROM THE CAPITAL

September 27 - October 10, 2025

M<sup>C</sup>CALL  
HAMILTON  
*Advocacy & Public Affairs*

## 35TH SENATE DISTRICT SPECIAL ELECTION UPDATE

Ten total individuals have declared to run for the vacant 35th Senate District seat prior to the September 30th filing deadline. Six Democrats and four Republicans will face off in their respective primaries set on February 3rd, 2026. The winners will then proceed to compete in the special general election held on May 5th, 2026. Representatives Bill Schuette (R-Midland) and Timmy Beson (R-Bay City) considered entering the race but ultimately chose to seek reelection to the House instead. Rep. Schuette was regarded as the best candidate for the Republicans to retake the seat in what is expected to be a tightly contested race.

Governor Whitmer recently called for the special election after receiving attacks from Republicans who were frustrated with the Governor for not calling the election sooner. The 35th Senate District includes parts of Bay, Midland, and Saginaw counties. With Democrats holding a 19-18 majority in the Senate, a Republican victory would create a 19-19 tie, requiring the lieutenant governor to cast tie-breaking votes. The winner of the special election will also have to defend the seat again just six months later in the regular election if they choose to run.

The list of the candidates for each part are as follows:

### DEMOCRATS

- Brandell Adams (Bridgeport Township) - Saginaw County Democratic Party Chair
- Martin Blank (Saginaw) - a surgeon and former Republican candidate
- Chedrick Greene (Saginaw) - former Marine and current Saginaw Fire Captain
- Dr. William Morrone (Bay City) - medical director of Recovery Pathways
- Pamela Pugh (Saginaw) - State Board of Education Chair
- Serenity Salak (Saginaw) - former Eligibility Specialist

### REPUBLICANS

- Jason Tunney (Saginaw) - attorney
- Chadwick Twillman (Saginaw) - businessperson
- Christian Velasquez (Midland) - former Dow executive
- Andrew Wendt (Saginaw) - former Saginaw City Commissioner

## IMPACTS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN ON MICHIGAN

The ongoing Federal Government shutdown is expected to affect many areas in Michiganders lives. Notable impacts include the following:

- Nearly 30,000 civilian federal employees will be either ordered to work without pay or furloughed until Congress reaches a deal. Those ordered to work will receive back pay after the shutdown is over
- All active-duty military personnel, including the National Guard, will carry out their duties without pay

- Short term funding has been made available to both food assistance programs SNAP and Women Infants Children (WIC). Each state has received contingency funds that have estimated to be sufficient for one week of operations, however states may have additional dollars to spend. In Michigan, we are expected to have funds to continue the program for a couple weeks.
- Michiganders on Medicare and Medicaid will continue to receive benefits, but communication delays from the agency are expected
- The Veterans Health Administration, which falls under the Department of Veterans Affairs and is also Michigan's largest employer, is expected to be 97% operational
- Retirement, disability, veterans, and health care benefits that are covered under federal programs will continue, but delays are expected due to reduced staffing
- The US Postal Service will remain open and mail is expected to arrive on time
- The Michigan Department of Education will also remain open. In a memo, State Superintendent Michael Rice explained that any issues the state needs to elevate to federal officials for guidance will likely be delayed until normal operations resume. He also noted that federal reimbursement-based funding to local schools will be delayed

## **SENATE FISCAL AGENCY ISSUES REPORT ON MICHIGAN'S MATERNITY DESERTS**

A recent brief issued by the Senate Fiscal Agency showed that 21.7% (or 18 out of the 83) Michigan counties are considered a maternity desert. This designation is assigned for counties that do not have a single hospital or birth center offering obstetric care and contain no obstetric providers. This number is up from 18% (15 out of 83 counties) in 2023.

Michigan's maternity desert counties include Keweenaw, Ontonagon, Baraga, Iron, Alger and Luce in the Upper Peninsula. Lower Peninsula counties include Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Antrim, Oscoda, Alcona, Missaukee, Lake, Gladwin Arenac, Ionia, Cass, and Sanilac. The three counties with the longest birth commutes—Luce, Schoolcraft, and Ontonagon—are all located within the Upper Peninsula.

Recently, Aspirus Health announced they were ending OBGYN services at their Ironwood location. The move was met with sharp criticism from Republican lawmakers who represent the Upper Peninsula. Sen. Ed McBroom (R-Vulcan), pointed out that despite the U.P. being bigger than six U.S. states, it only has six locations equipped to handle births.

Other data in the brief shows that the state was experiencing a steady birth rate beginning in the 1950's. That is until 2023 when, for the first time ever, the birth rate fell below 10 births per 1,000 people. The rate in 2024 was 9.65 births for every 1,000 people.

## **THREE GOP GUBERNATORIAL DEBATES SCHEDULED**

The Michigan Republican Party announced that three debates will be held for the GOP candidates seeking their party's nomination for the governorship. Michigan Republican Party Chair Sen. Jim Runestad (White Lake), announced the debates with hope they will give voters across Michigan a chance to hear the candidates' respective platforms directly from the candidates themselves. The debates will be held on October 29th in Sparta, November 4th in Roseville, and November 18th in Traverse City. The participants are as follows:

- U.S. Rep. John James
- State Senator Aric Nesbitt
- Former Speaker of the House Tom Leonard

- Former attorney general Mike Cox
- Pastor Ralph Rebandt
- AxMITax leader Karla Wagner
- Anthony Hudson

## **GOVERNOR WHITMER COOLS PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS**

Recently when asked about her 2028 presidential prospects, Governor Whitmer mentioned that she would definitely like to help the Democratic nominee but stated she didn't know if she was going to be the candidate running. Whitmer, who will be term-limited in 2026, has been frequently mentioned by political commentators and pundits alike as someone who might run for president in 2028. Despite outside influence, the Governor has stated she is committed to helping Michigan. For now, her focus has been on protecting Michigan's economy from federal tariff threats.

## **SPRUCE TREE FROM SAULT STE. MARIE SELECTED FOR CAPITOL CHRISTMAS TREE**

The wait is over! The 39th official state Christmas Tree has been selected by the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB). This year's winner is a 68-foot spruce tree from Sault Ste. Marie donated by Linda Reid in honor of her grandparents. The tree is set to be harvested on October 30th and arrive in Lansing on November 1st.

Once at the Capitol, local Boy Scouts troops will continue their tradition of untying the tree. Next, the City of Lansing's forestry team will prepare the tree for decorations and lighting developed by the Lansing Board of Water & Light and the Michigan Capitol Commission. After the long journey and preparation process, the tree lighting ceremony will take place at the 41st annual Silver Bells in the City ceremony where the thousands of decorative lights will be flipped on at approximately 7:30 PM.



