



PUBLIC POLICY **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2025





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Snapshot of 2025 Top Policy Priorities



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A sustainable state budget without tax hikes

Policymakers must prioritize how to spend taxpayers' scarce resources. Spending should be limited to public services and infrastructure that benefit us all. Selective tax breaks and subsidies for hand-picked corporations benefit only a few. There is no fiscal justification for raising taxes.

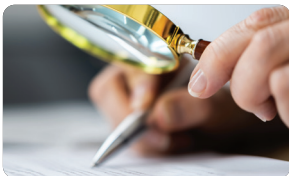


Photo by Adobe Stock

Make government more transparent

Michigan is still one of the only states in the country that exempts its Legislature and governor from public documents disclosure requirements. Public bodies seem to be getting worse at complying with public record requests in a timely and comprehensive manner. Policymakers from both parties have promised this reform for years — 2025 is the time to get it done.



Photo by Adobe Stock

Ensure reliable energy

Michigan policymakers' decision to transition to less reliable power sources increases electricity costs for businesses and families. It also puts our electrical grid under strain, and there's good reason to be concerned about its future reliability. Policymakers should ensure the system is robust enough to keep the lights on and meet the heating and cooling demands of our homes, schools, churches and businesses.



Photo by Adobe Stock

Increase the labor supply

The state's occupational licensing requirements put hurdles in the way of Michiganders trying to earn a living. Licensing restricts the supply of workers, which is especially troublesome in the face of labor shortages. Policymakers should reduce those burdens and promote a thorough review of other harmful regulations and administrative rules that unnecessarily make earning a living more difficult. The Legislature should also provide automatic and universal licensing reciprocity for people licensed in other states and who want to transfer their license so they can work in Michigan.



Photo by Pexels

Stop subsidizing hand-picked corporations

Lawmakers authorized \$4.6 billion in subsidies over the past two years, hand-picking a few businesses for large government payments. This is expensive to the state budget, unfair to the businesses that do not receive these subsidies, and there's no evidence it improves the state's economy.



Photo by Mackinac Center

Remove unnecessary regulatory barriers

Policymakers often point to population growth as a key metric of state progress. But state and local regulations make it more difficult and expensive to build new housing, find a job or start a business. Many of these regulations, such as local zoning ordinances and certificate-of-need mandates on medical facilities, do little more than artificially reduce supply and increase the cost of living and working in Michigan.



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Refuse selective business subsidies

Michigan operates the nation's most expensive and profligate business subsidy programs. Politically favored corporations receive hundreds of millions in cash every year. Lawmakers should just say "no" to economic development programs.

[🔗 mackinac.org/32005](https://mackinac.org/32005)

Pass a Sustainable Michigan Budget

Lawmakers spent a lot more than normal over the past few years from Michigan's growing revenue. For fiscal stability, legislators should pass a Sustainable Michigan Budget, where spending does not increase by more than the annual growth rate of the state population plus the inflation rate. This prevents waste and protects taxpayers.

[🔗 mackinac.org/30609](https://mackinac.org/30609)

Favor tax cuts over tax increases

Lawmakers will feel pressure to raise taxes as state revenue growth slows. Michigan already spends too much, and lawmakers ought to reject plans to collect even more in taxes from residents.

[🔗 mackinac.org/32526](https://mackinac.org/32526)



Expand school choice options

The number of Michigan families who rely on school choice for their children has grown significantly over the last three decades. About a quarter of all students now enroll in a public school of their own choosing. Policymakers should empower more parents to enroll their children in the school that works best for them. This upholds Michigan law: “It is the natural, fundamental right of parents and legal guardians to determine and direct the care, teaching, and education of their children.”

[🔗 mackinac.org/29949](https://mackinac.org/29949)

Create meaningful school accountability

Providing educational services to students and ensuring their success is no easy task. Myriad factors make it difficult for public schools to succeed with every student. But as tax-funded entities, public schools must be held accountable. The state should set rigorous financial and academic standards for schools. These must be meaningfully and transparently enforced to incentivize schools to improve. Schools that repeatedly fail these standards should no longer be allowed to serve Michigan students and taxpayers.

[🔗 mackinac.org/26230](https://mackinac.org/26230)

Ensure equal treatment of public schools

Michigan’s public schools are too often carved into niches, such as rural and urban, district-run and charter, brick-and-mortar and online. Differentiating schools may be useful at times, but for funding purposes, the state should treat public schools equally. They all provide educational services to Michigan students and should receive the same funding and be held to the same standards.

[🔗 mackinac.org/28647](https://mackinac.org/28647)

Enhance curriculum transparency

Increased parental concern about the content taught in classrooms calls for schools to operate with even more accountability and transparency. School curricula, course syllabi and staff training materials should be made publicly available on a district’s website. State law grants parents the right to “[r]eview the curriculum, textbooks, and teaching materials of the school in ... a reasonable time and place and in a reasonable manner.” Schools must make good on that right.

[🔗 mackinac.org/29762](https://mackinac.org/29762)



Generate affordable electricity

Michigan’s monopoly utilities are required to provide “safe, reliable, and accessible energy services at reasonable rates.” Yet, residents pay the highest rates in the Midwest for electricity services that rank worst in the region for the number and length of power outages. Since electricity competition was restricted in 2008, residential rates in Michigan have increased by 75%. Despite the expense we pay for these poor services, energy legislation that was passed in December 2023 mandates a 400% increase in the so-called renewable energy standard by 2035 and 100% “clean” energy sources by 2040. But our modeling shows that supplying 100% of the state’s electricity with wind, solar, and batteries would increase residential electricity prices by as much as \$230 per month by 2050. Policymakers, regulators and utilities need to abandon these dangerous and expensive net zero fantasies and reorient their focus to ensuring Michiganders have access to affordable electricity.

[🔗 mackinac.org/31486](https://mackinac.org/31486)

Maintain reliable electricity

In December 2023, Michigan passed legislation that mandates the state meet net-zero carbon emissions and 100% “clean energy” requirements by 2040. Our modeling shows this plan will have almost no impact on global climate, but it will make electricity in Michigan far less reliable. Grid managers and operators across the continent are warning that the rush to “decarbonize” the grid and build more expensive and unreliable wind and solar is causing instability and blackouts. Policymakers, regulators and utilities need to reorient their focus to ensuring Michiganders have access to reliable electricity.

[🔗 mackinac.org/s2024-04](https://mackinac.org/s2024-04)

Keep Line 5 open and build the Line 5 Tunnel

In December 2023, the Michigan Public Service Commission approved the state permits needed to build the Line 5 tunnel project. In its ruling, the commission recognized that Michigan needs the products transported by the Line 5 pipeline. Both the pipeline and the tunnel project, which would relocate the pipeline to a concrete-lined tunnel 100 feet below the bed of the Great Lakes, have been actively supported by an international and bipartisan mix of elected officials, business interests and unions from across the Great Lakes region. But the Whitmer administration has carried out a consistent campaign to shut down the pipeline, and their actions have delayed construction of the tunnel. State policymakers should encourage federal regulators to approve the final permits for this essential upgrade to Michigan’s energy infrastructure.

[🔗 mackinac.org/30362](https://mackinac.org/30362)

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Let consumers choose the car they drive

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's net-zero energy plans also impact transportation. Whitmer favors lavishing excessive subsidies on the manufacture, purchase, operation and charging of battery-powered vehicles. Government regulators should limit their involvement in automobile markets to setting basic regulatory targets that are possible to achieve with existing technologies. From there, private industry and markets can find the best ways to meet those targets, and customers can support the technologies they want to use.

[🔗 mackinac.org/32587](https://mackinac.org/32587)

Empower private conservation

Government is often thought of as the only viable means of conserving the natural environment. But private initiative, free markets and collaborative efforts offer another option. As a means of promoting both the conservation of Michigan's natural environment and improving our economy, the Legislature should promote — or, at the very least, not hinder — privately led efforts at conserving land.

[🔗 mackinac.org/S2020-04](https://mackinac.org/S2020-04)

Regulation



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Increase housing supply

Policymakers should speed up the rate of processing construction permits at the state and local level. They should eliminate or significantly reduce the many licensing requirements for builders and workers that are required for residential construction. The Legislature should pass statewide zoning reform that would prevent local laws from unnecessarily limiting construction, such as requiring minimum home sizes, mandatory parking lots, needless setback limits and aesthetic requirements. Policymakers should encourage locals to allow more multifamily housing, to offer preapproved building plans and to cut down on regulatory costs, inspections and approval times.

[🔗 mackinac.org/32599](https://mackinac.org/32599)

Reduce occupational licensing burdens

Occupational licensure requires people to get permission from the government to work legally. It often requires hours of education and training, fees and testing. Michigan mandates a license to work for about 180 occupations, about 20% of the total workforce. The state has made good, bipartisan reforms on this issue in the last decade, but there's more to do.

To ensure that licensure properly balances protecting the public without unnecessary obstacles for people trying to find work, Michigan should: 1) Join the five other states that regularly review all licensing rules to ensure they still make sense. 2) Fully reciprocate with other states, making it easy for people with licenses from other states to move and immediately begin working in Michigan. 3) Only prevent those with a criminal background from being able to get properly licensed if they were convicted of a felony and the crime is directly related to the occupation for which they seek a license to work.

[🔗 mackinac.org/licensure](https://mackinac.org/licensure)

Use legislative oversight to rein in the administrative state

Michigan's regulatory regime is large, complex and powerful. State statute even empowers regulators to define criminal activity — making ordinary citizens criminally liable to the whims of unelected bureaucrats. Michigan needs to rein in the power of the administrative state, and the best place to start is a thorough review of the state's administrative code, to modify or remove regulatory rules that place too much power in the hands of bureaucrats.

[🔗 mackinac.org/32087](https://mackinac.org/32087)

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Reform Certificate of Need

Certificate of Need laws require health care providers to seek permission from a government board before opening or expanding their practices and adding new services and technology to address needs in their communities. Decades of research have found that CON laws are associated with reduced access to care, decreased health care quality and higher costs. Michigan legislators should repeal CON requirements for imaging services and for increasing hospital and nursing home bed counts.

mackinac.org/27168

Expand scope of practice for health professionals

Michigan faces a widespread shortage of primary care providers, and state rules on mid-level health care providers make the problem worse. Specifically, scope-of-practice restrictions prohibit licensed health care professionals — including nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, nurse anesthetists and pharmacists — from practicing to the full extent of their education and training. Lawmakers should lessen these restrictions to increase access and reduce the costs of essential health care services. Removing these unnecessary licensing and scope of practice restrictions will relieve stress on the overall system by creating a larger pool of health professionals to treat ailing Michigan residents.

mackinac.org/27899

Elections



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Defend Michigan's votes in presidential elections

Since the American founding, the Electoral College has guaranteed Michigan's votes in a presidential election count regardless of how other states administer their elections. A new movement has arisen, however, to encourage states to nullify this part of the U.S. Constitution through an interstate compact. Sixteen states and the District of Columbia have already joined this compact, effectively handing over 205 presidential electors to the whims of California with its lax election safeguards. Michigan lawmakers should reject any effort to join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact and instead clarify in the state constitution that the state will award its presidential electors only based on votes cast by Michigan residents.

mackinac.org/28515

Government Transparency



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Fix FOIA

Michigan consistently ranks as one of the worst states for government transparency. Citizens attempting to obtain public records regularly encounter excessive delays, fees and redactions. The state is also one of only a few where the governor and Legislature are exempt from FOIA. Lawmakers should amend FOIA to open all of government to transparency and accountability.

[🔗 mackinac.org/31368](https://mackinac.org/31368)

Require economic development transparency

Michigan used to disclose exactly how much the state was spending on corporate welfare subsidies. Every company, how much it received in incentives and what it pledged to do with the money was detailed. This is no longer the case, and the state is spending hundreds of millions of dollars, the details of which are kept secret from the public. Adding to the problem is the fact that lawmakers and other public officials often sign nondisclosure agreements. These agreements prevent lawmakers from discussing deals being considered for corporate welfare, often resulting in those deals being approved with little or no notice to the public. Michigan should not be spending taxpayer dollars to subsidize corporations, but if it chooses to do so, lawmakers should change the law to ensure that these deals are fully transparent to taxpayers footing the bill.

[🔗 mackinac.org/25443](https://mackinac.org/25443)

Make transparency the default

Michigan's Freedom of Information Act requires people seeking information about how their government operates to submit a request for public records. This makes FOIA reactive, burdening requestors filing a request, paying a fee and waiting weeks for the records. While this can be reasonable for documents that are not created in the ordinary course of business, certain information that is regularly generated and used by governments should be disclosed by default, without the need for a request. Lawmakers should amend FOIA to require some documents like meeting minutes, financial reports and vendor contracts to be published within 30 days of their creation.

[🔗 mackinac.org/transparency](https://mackinac.org/transparency)



Smart on crime, but not soft on crime

Reforms to criminal justice policies should be reviewed based on three criteria. First, and most importantly, policies must improve public safety. Any policy that fails to make Michigan communities safer should be rejected regardless of any peripheral benefits claimed. Secondly, policies should save taxpayer money — either in the short or long term. Lastly, policies that enhance the ability of ex-offenders to earn their own success through meaningful employment should be prioritized.

[🔗 mackinac.org/26244](https://mackinac.org/26244)

Eliminate civil asset forfeiture

Forfeiture enables the government to take ownership of property that law enforcement believes was used in a crime or resulted from criminal activity. For years, this practice was abused, with some police departments padding their budgets by seizing property from people, many of whom were never convicted of a crime. The state has made reforms in this area, but these do not fully protect Michiganders from forfeiture abuse. Policymakers should eliminate civil forfeiture altogether and only allow someone's property to be forfeited after they've been convicted in court of a crime.

[🔗 mackinac.org/s2023-02](https://mackinac.org/s2023-02)

Prioritize education and workforce training in prisons

Research published by the Mackinac Center last year showed that inmates who participate in education and workforce training during their incarceration have lower rates of recidivism, higher rates of employment and higher earnings than nonparticipants. This research also found that workforce training had the highest return-on-investment per state dollars spent, while college education had the highest ROI per participant. Policymakers should expand the availability of education and workforce training in Michigan prisons, while adult basic education and GED programming within the Michigan Department of Corrections should be structured as feeders for postsecondary options. The Michigan Legislature should also authorize “earned time” productivity credits as an incentive for MDOC inmates to participate in and complete these programs that are proven to reduce their likelihood to reoffend.

[🔗 mackinac.org/s2023-01](https://mackinac.org/s2023-01)



Restore essential worker protections

In 2024, lawmakers passed several policies that will hurt workers and Michigan's economy. With Michigan's popular right-to-work law now repealed, many employees are confused about their rights and will need guidance in order to fully understand and exercise them. Additionally, expanded subjects of bargaining, additional prevailing wage requirements, and new workplace rules will make Michigan less competitive and weaken the economy. Michigan lawmakers should adopt policies that will ensure not only that workers understand their rights, but also provides them a meaningful opportunity to choose whether unionization best represents their interests.

[🔗 mackinac.org/30490](https://mackinac.org/30490)

Janus implementation

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Janus v. AFSCME* found that public employees have First Amendment rights to determine whether to pay a union, and that payment to a union cannot be mandated as a condition of employment. Michigan lawmakers should ensure that state and local agencies are complying with this ruling by only withholding dues from paychecks if they have proof of clear and affirmative consent from employees who have been advised of their rights.

[🔗 mackinac.org/janus](https://mackinac.org/janus)

Require collective bargaining transparency

Collective bargaining between government employers and unions determines how taxpayer money will be spent. Therefore, contract negotiations between public sector unions and government entities should be subject to open meetings and freedom of information laws so that these decisions are fully transparent to the public. In addition, workers who have opted out of union membership should have the same access to tentative bargaining agreements, as they are still bound by the terms of these contracts.

[🔗 mackinac.org/8301](https://mackinac.org/8301)



If you have any questions or seek further clarification about these policy recommendations, please contact the experts at their email addresses listed previously. To see an online version, please visit:

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