



Dear Friends,

On May 5, 2015, Michigan citizens throughout the State sent a very compelling message to the Governor and to the State Legislature. Regarding Proposal One, a \$1.8 billion per year tax increase to fix our roads, the citizens, by a margin of 80% to 20%, said no thank you. Here in Macomb County, the citizens said no to the tune of 87%. Michigan has 83 counties, and every one of them said no. The message was very clear: No more tax increases; make do with what you already have, which we, the taxpayers, have already given you!

If I may, I want to go off topic just a bit and talk about taxation, which I often refer to as confiscation. Taxation of citizens' earnings and the amount of government spending, which has dramatically increased through time, is a debate that has raged on for years and years. Sadly for some, the only way they know how to fix a problem is to increase taxes. They just cannot understand that the citizens are maxed out when it comes to paying taxes. Good people are literally screaming at those serving in elective positions and saying: Live within your means, like we have to! Bottom line, common sense is the order of the day. The answer is not more taxation. The answer is less spending. We already have an \$18 trillion national debt. Debts do not occur because we are taxing too little, they occur because we are spending too much! Want to know who said that last sentence? His name was Ronald Reagan.

That being said, let's get back to business. I fully agree and understand that we need better roads in Michigan. However, let's remember that the worst roads are in our urban areas. We have all the population, trucks, cars and industry. Our annual State Budget for this year is in excess of \$53 billion. The funding for our roads must be found within that \$53 billion. I will not vote for any type of tax increase to repair our roads. I am very confident that the funding can be found inside our current budget. In all candor, for me, finding the funding is not a problem; finding the votes is another matter altogether.

Since the failure of Proposal One last May 5, both the State House and the State Senate have passed their own Legislative plans to fix the roads. Regarding the plan that came out of the State Senate, I voted no. The plan calls for a tax increase of fifteen cents a gallon for regular and diesel fuel to be phased in over the next 2 ½ years, amounting to a \$700 million tax increase per year for the next 15 years. The State House plan is more acceptable to me as far as finding general fund dollars, but it also has tax increases. Both of these plans will probably end up in what is known as a conference committee, where details are negotiated between members of the House and the Senate. There is no guarantee that the differences can be worked out.

As I stated above, our roads in the urban areas are in pretty rough shape. Obviously, something needs to be done, but just throwing money at the problem is not the answer. I want to take this opportunity to talk with you about what I and other Conservatives are advocating regarding our road problem.

Continued on back

***"I AM WORKING FOR YOU!"***

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First and foremost, it is time to re-prioritize our spending. For far too long, too many other programs, projects and government entities were put at the head of the line before road repair. Now is the time to put road funding at the top of the list. All the other entities that have been fully funded through the years now will have to step back and let roads get their fair share for the next 7 to 10 years. Some departments and people will not like this, but far tougher things have happened to people in life.

Second, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Michigan Road Builders (MRB) have sold a lot of people in government on the idea that we need an additional (new money) \$1.2 billion per year for at least 10 years to get our roads back in shape. Coincidentally, MDOT and MRB have the most to gain from that additional funding. However, in the last two years, they have failed to say what type of roads would be built and where all this money is going to be spent. Frankly, being a businessman myself, they have done a poor job in presenting their case.

Third, this is a little known fact, but up until four years ago, none of the 6% sales tax revenue generated at the gas pumps was ever used for road repair. This revenue from the sales tax on gas all went to our general fund, public education and local governments. Michigan was one of only eight states not to use sales tax revenue from gas to repair its roads. Even now this money has to be appropriated for road repair on an annual basis, and the percentage can vary. I believe this revenue should be a permanent funding mechanism for our roads, in the full amount.

Fourth, Representative Pete Lucido from Shelby Township has come up with an interesting idea which I support. The Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association (MCCA) has a \$20 billion balance. Representative Lucido's legislation calls for the interest from that \$20 billion to be used for road repair. The principal amount would not be touched, only the interest. If you figure an average of 3% annually, that is a \$600 million new revenue stream that we could use for roads, with no additional cost to the taxpayers.

In closing, these are just four suggestions, but when combined, they really bring in quite a bit of funding on a yearly basis at no extra cost to the taxpayers. I am open to all suggestions except one: I will not vote for a tax increase. On December 18, 2014, I voted no to put Proposal One on the ballot, and then the voters sent a very emphatic message on May 5, 2015. I have never, in my entire life, seen anything beaten as badly as was Proposal One. As always, it is my pleasure and my honor to serve as your State Senator.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jack Brandenburg  
State Senator - District 8