



OPINIONS FROM YOUR STATE SENATOR

Dear Friends,

It is always the top priority of mine to keep the people I serve in the State Senate informed of what I am thinking, what is happening in the Legislature and what kind of decisions I am making on your behalf. I form my opinions and make my decisions from a conservative standpoint. I have always felt that conservatism best represents common sense, and that is the way I approach my job. I am very proud that I was the number one ranked conservative vote in the State Senate in 2011 out of 38 members. Listed below are some subjects that will be taken up in the Legislature in the near future.

The City of Detroit: I want to mention that I realize that some of my constituents were born and raised in Detroit. I totally respect that. Detroit used to be a great city. It was a national model for commerce and business in general.

In 1951, Detroit had a population of 1.8 million and was the fourth largest City in America. Today, the City has 713,000 residents and that number is shrinking. Detroit has to be dealt with immediately to turn the City around. Professional sports teams and casinos are not nearly enough to get the City back on track.

The short-term problem Detroit faces is that the City is pinned between a rock and a very hard spot. Detroit is already one of the highest taxed cities in the U.S. On the other hand, over the last ten years, 287,000 residents (taxpaying residents), have moved to the suburbs. Of the 713,000 residents left, literally thousands live below poverty level – which means no tax revenue for the city. Blend all of this together and what you have is a rapid erosion of the City's tax base. This is fatal to any municipality.

The long-term problem is this: Detroit has 12,500 City employees and 20,000 retired City employees who have overly generous benefits. Ideally, these figures should be flipped. The current number of employees cannot support the number of retirees the City has. The debt being incurred year by year is now nearly unsustainable. Frankly, it was an understatement when I used the term "overly generous". I have reviewed some of these legacy costs and they are borderline outrageous. Therefore, I am calling for the immediate installation of an emergency financial manager (E.F.M.). The E.F.M. will have the power to hire and fire. The E.F.M. can dissolve any contract the City has and can sell any asset the City has. The E.F.M. will have complete autonomy. This process is not pretty, but it sticks and it works. In my financial opinion, this is the only way for Detroit to survive and be the prosperous City it once was.

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"I AM WORKING FOR YOU!"

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The Newly Proposed Regional Rapid Transit System and Authority: The Michigan Department of Transportation and our Governor are proposing a rapid transportation system and an Authority that would fund it. The proposed system would be 110 miles long, centered in Detroit with three main lines and a fourth line that would run from Detroit out to Metro Airport. The first line would run from Detroit out Gratiot Ave. to Mt. Clemens. The second would run from Detroit out Woodward Ave. to Pontiac and the third would run from Detroit to Ann Arbor.

The whole proposal is problematic for me. First, during Committee when I asked about the price, I was told by an MDOT official that it would be approximately \$490 million. Approximately? It sounds to me like they do not know the cost. Frankly, I do not trust government math and when someone tells me approximately, I just add 20%. The total cost: \$600 million. Second, they want to give the counties involved the power to levy a tax, with voter approval, to pay for it. Third, I really do not think the residents of Macomb County would use the system. Fourth, I do not want to enter into any type of regional agreement with Wayne County. Fifth, a recent review of public mass transit systems since 1990 to the present in the U.S. found that not a single system was self-sustaining. I will not support this proposal for the reasons stated above, plus I feel there are better ways of using \$600 million.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act (Universal Health Care) and the Michigan Health Care Exchange: One of the many mandates that have come with Universal Health Care (I believe a universal disaster) is that each state establish an Exchange for its residents or lose Federal funds for failing to do so. Many in State Government feel we should move on this now. I have voted no on this legislation. What is the rush? The claim that Michigan will lose millions in Federal funds rings hollow with me. I believe that every dollar from the Federal Government comes with strings attached. Rushing to grab Federal funds only makes us more reliant on the Federal Government and that is exactly what was intended. If we do indeed need a health care exchange, I much prefer that we design a program that is tailor made for the residents of Michigan. We do not need the Federal Government telling us what to do.

There are so many hidden taxes in this Universal Health Care Act: A 2.3% tax on all medical devices sold in the U.S.; taxes on small businesses that purchase health insurance for their employees; a tax known as the “medicine cabinet tax”, which is basically a new tax on any type of health retirement plan that allows consumers to pay for their medical needs with pre-tax dollars. People, in all levels of government, must work to have all of this undone and repealed. I hope you agree: It really is a “national disaster”.

In closing, if you have any comments about this letter, by all means, please contact me. I like to know what my constituents are thinking. 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 and written in a cursive-like font.

Jack Brandenburg
State Senator - District 11