



Dear Friends,

During the last four months we have had some very interesting and controversial issues come before us in the State Legislature. As always, I want to keep all of my constituents fully aware of where I stand and how I am voting. More than ever, elected officials need to keep their constituents fully informed because these issues have long lasting ramifications.

Obamacare and the State Partnership Exchange. On a personal note, I have always thought that compulsory health care would be a disaster. The so-called Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is not about protection, affordability or even care. It is about control, Federal control, and as a conservative Republican I could never support compulsory health care or the Federal Health Exchange. This is a huge Federal mandate and take-over of the rights of individuals in Michigan.

Article 4, Section 51 of our Michigan Constitution clearly states that it is the State Legislature that is responsible for passing suitable laws for the protection and promotion of public health. In February of this year, the State House passed House Bill 4111 to create the State Partnership Exchange, which would be the first step toward implementing Obamacare. With all due respect, I see this as being a white flag of surrender. My opinion: this fight is not over!

After passage in the State House, HB 4111 was sent to the Michigan State Senate for consideration and that is where it stayed. As the Senate Majority Whip, I am in charge of keeping track of who supports or opposes any legislation. The opposition in the State Senate to this so called “legislation” was overwhelming. Senate Republicans stood tall and tough and I am very proud to be a part of this caucus.

Obamacare was supposed to be up and running effective January 1st, 2014. On April 2nd of this year, Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, had to announce that there would be no services offered for at least a year. This significant delay in the start-up date reflects a large degree of ineptitude within the structure of the plan. In promoting the plan, President Obama on numerous occasions said that it would save a family of four \$2500 per year. Since then, it has been established that insurance plans in Michigan would increase by 28% and by 32% nationwide. Interestingly, in the Obamacare plan, the word “require” appears over 800 times and the word “must” almost 600 times. The State of Oklahoma has a very serious case in Federal court regarding Obamacare’s mandates and tax increases. If they succeed, Congress will be forced to rewrite a good part of the Affordable Care Act. As I said, this fight is not over. Republicans should just stand back and wait for the whole thing to cave in due to the weight of its ineptitude.

I am very much aware that we do need to lower health care costs, improve coverage, and protect consumer choice. However, Obamacare does not accomplish this. Obamacare is nothing but hidden tax increases and miles and miles of regulations that will increase health care costs dramatically. I am a big believer in individual liberties and our free market system. Let us create more competition, which would drive prices down and improve quality at the same time. I do not want the Federal government dictating to me or anyone else what kind of health care we can or cannot receive.

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“I AM WORKING FOR YOU!”

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Our Roads and Infrastructure. Recently, there has been a huge push by the Governor and the Michigan Department of Transportation to do a major overhaul of our roads. I will be the first to say that where there is severe damage, something needs to be done. However, I would like to pose the following question: Just how bad are our roads? Which areas of the state need the most repairs? What types of surfaces can we expect? How long will they last? What is the cost? What are we, as taxpayers, willing to pay? Is rebuilding our road system a big priority for the 311,000 residents that I represent? As a side note, since I took office in 2011, I have not received many complaints about the condition of our roads.

The Governor and MDOT propose to fund the rebuilding of our roads with an open-ended solution that will cost \$1.2 billion per year. Their proposal is to fund the plan by increasing vehicle registration fees by 60%, increasing the 19 cents per gallon gas tax to 33 cents per gallon, and giving individual counties the ability to levy for additional mills for road repairs via a vote of the people. This is not the way to address this problem and I will not support this proposal.

Not many people know this, but last year Michigan only spent seven-tenths of one percent on roads from our General Fund. This represented only \$23 million of our budget, which is a very, very small amount when compared to \$12 to \$15 billion projected over the next ten to twelve years, which would require outside revenue from the taxpayers.

My position is to say that if our roads are as bad as some people (MDOT) say, then by all means, let us make this issue a priority. However, let's pay for it with funds that we already have inside our budget instead of asking taxpayers for more. Now this means cutting funding from other places in our budget, which will cause controversy and major push back. I do not have a problem doing this if it is made clear to me that rebuilding our road system is a necessary priority in the next five to ten years.

The road funding formula that we have used to fund our roads for the last 60 years has become antiquated. Road expenditures are divided into three categories: State, County, and Local. Only 2% of state money will come to Macomb County. For County projects, Macomb County receives \$43 per person as opposed to \$461 per person in Keweenaw County, \$223 per person in Luce County, and \$246 per person in Oscoda County, just to name a few. These three counties contain 2% of the population that Macomb has. I think you can see what I am saying.

I would like to ask for your opinion. How bad do you think our roads really are? Do you favor the Governor's proposal? Currently, MDOT in its Asset Management Plan, states that 68% of our roads are fair to good, but by 2023, 65% of our roads will be in very poor condition. Their rationale is do we spend now or spend much more later? Would you favor a 1% (one cent) increase in our sales tax, which would generate \$1.36 billion per year, if this revenue was solely designated to road repair or replacement? Once again, the real question is whether roads should be a top priority.

In closing, your opinion is very, very important to me. If you have something to contribute, by all means, please contact me. 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 11