

SAGINAW CHAMBER

October-December 2022

BUSINESS ADVOCATE



***What Businesses
Should Expect in
the New Term***

 SAGINAW COUNTY
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

A publication of the Saginaw
County Chamber of Commerce
www.saginawchamber.org

Record Turnout in Michigan Midterms

BALANCE OF STATE GOVERNMENT SHIFTS



What Should Saginaw Businesses Expect in New Term?

Michigan voters took to the polls on November 8th in record-breaking numbers. Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson announced that 4.49 million Michiganders voted in the midterm election, breaking the previous record, set in 2018, of 4.34 million. In Saginaw County, 82,239 ballots were cast.

At the polls, voters shifted the balance of the state legislature. For the first time since 1984, the Michigan Senate, House of Representatives and Governor's office will all be held by Democrats. The Secretary of State and Attorney General races were won by Democratic incumbents, and all three statewide ballot proposals passed.

Economic Development Opportunities

How should the Saginaw business community interpret the results of the elections? Representative Amos O'Neal (D, 94th district) finds much to look forward to in the new term. "To be honest, what am I not excited for?" he says. "This upcoming year, Michiganders will see many robust actions taken to promote a healthy economy across the state. This was not only ensured with the passage of the 2022-23 budget, but can also be seen in the many new investments sprouting around the state, bringing many new jobs with them." In particular, he notes the higher demand for electric vehicles as a strong opportunity for the state's economy, predicting that "Michigan will see a rise in good-paying manufacturing jobs."

Senator Ken Horn (R, 32nd district) agrees that economic development, especially in the manufacturing sector, is on the horizon for Michigan. "There are so many opportunities up ahead for us in Saginaw and across the state," he says. "Those opportunities are in electrification of cars, autonomous mobility like driverless cars and drones, in aerospace and in copper manufacturing for the satellite industry as we build 5 and 6G networks."

Developing the Workforce Through Education

Representative O'Neal points to funds he worked to secure for the Saginaw region in the past term as a hint of the types of projects and investments the region can look for in the upcoming term, such as a \$1 million dollar investment in the Bridge the Gap Foundation, a training program that teaches welding skills, and a \$22 million dollar funding package for Saginaw Valley State University to renovate Brown Hall. Each of these investments will help to develop the workforce by improving education opportunities.

Senator Horn also sees building the workforce through education as a significant focus of Michigan's future. "We need to invest in universities and colleges to train people for Michigan jobs. We need to incentivize kids to stay in the state when they graduate; we need to attract people here, and we need universities and colleges to train these people for jobs right here in the state," he says.



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Senator Horn sees education as something that needs to be woven through all workforce development projects. "I'm advocating a plan called Project 1MP to bring one million people to Michigan to drive manufacturing growth, but we need our education system to support that as well; we need people to be trained to join manufacturing industries because that's where we have real growth opportunities," he says.

Representative O'Neal similarly sees the new legislature as an opportunity to grow the workforce. "I'm a strong advocate for the Michigan Talent Pipeline," he says, "and with this year's budget investments into teacher recruitment and career and technical training, small businesses should see a growth in skilled trade workers."

John Kaczynski, executive director of government and community affairs at Saginaw Valley State University, also predicts a focus on education. "This new generation needs to be properly trained," he says. "I project funds going to tuition-free pathways into trade schools, technical vocational programs, and teaching and engineering programs."

Potential Pitfalls

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce sees potential recession as a chief concern, and hopes legislators pay close attention to the issue. "As the economy tightens and a recession looms—and historic inflation, workforce shortages, and supply chain issues continue—public policy issues that affect Michigan's job providers are more important than ever," says Jim Holcomb, chamber president.

Both Senator Horn and Representative O'Neal see national inflation rates as a concern, but neither thinks inflation should be the driving force in how businesses make decisions because lawmakers are aware of the challenge and are working to shift the trend. "We will continue to support hard-working families to blunt the effects of inflation," Rep. O'Neal says. "We'll work together to make meaningful changes for everyone in our state."

"For business, steady as she goes," Senator Horn advises. "Inflation and rising interest rates are things to watch for, but you shouldn't let them stop you from moving forward."

"We will continue to support hard-working families to blunt the effects of inflation... We'll work together to make meaningful changes for everyone in our state."

Representative O'Neal

Working Together to Drive Saginaw Growth

Senator Horn sees something special about the political landscape in Saginaw. "There's something different about our community in Saginaw," he explains. "We have strong relationships between our legislators. We get along and work together well; we're bipartisan in our area. We are well positioned to make positive changes in the coming year because we work together and there's a lot of opportunity ahead."

Kaczynski also notes opportunities on the horizon. "A lot of items on the Democrats' agenda might be in businesses' interests," he explains. "Making transit more affordable will help to increase the workforce. More money into childcare will help parents get to work. Addressing the big workforce housing shortage in the state will help. Education and talent development will benefit our business community."

The Michigan Chamber echoes Senator Horn's bipartisan focus. "Politics has become far too divisive," says Holcomb. "We must embrace the opportunity before us to reset the landscape by improving civility in public debates and focusing on impactful policies." His advice to both the business community and the new legislature is to be committed to civility. "More bipartisanship, civility, and pragmatic problem solving can make an important difference. We're stronger together."

Representative O'Neal agrees. "I want a thriving Saginaw community," he says. "We are all in this together."

"More bipartisanship, civility, and pragmatic problem solving can make an important difference. We're stronger together."

Jim Holcomb, Michigan Chamber of Commerce president



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Saginaw Chamber Local Update



The Great Lakes Bay Region seems to be on a positive trajectory. Companies are investing and hiring. There is a renewed sense of gratitude for being able to gather face to face again, even while individual businesses work through a changing employee landscape of in-person and off-site work schedules.

These challenges mirror those in communities across the nation. Simply put, Saginaw County and the region need to grow population. There is a need for a keen focus on talent attraction and retention, making it a top priority for the Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with Saginaw Future, the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce and Bay Future.

Diversity is another critical factor leading to a successful community. The Chamber has diversified its board of directors, staff, and membership to engage more

of our community. It's important to have everyone at the table to thrive and excel in Michigan.

With the mid-term elections behind us, the Chamber will work with the candidates who were successful to educate them on community priorities. This is really important work, especially in this environment of term limits and redistricting. We now have three Senators and four State Representatives representing different parts of Saginaw County, as well as several new County Commissioners and a new Saginaw City Council Member. They all play a part in creating and moving legislation that will create a vibrant economy for Saginaw County.

Those meetings have already begun and will continue into the new year. The Chamber looks forward to an ongoing relationship with each of these legislators and values your input to accomplish our ongoing goal of elevating our community through business.

Saginaw County MIDTERM ELECTION RESULTS



CONGRESS REPRESENTATIVE

**Representative in Congress
8th District**
Daniel T. Kildee

STATE SENATOR

State Senator 26th District
Kevin Daley
State Senator 34th District
Roger Hauck
State Senator 35th District
Kristin McDonald Rivet

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

State Representative 71st District
Brian BeGole
State Representative 93rd District
Graham Filler
State Representative 94th District
Amos O'Neal
State Representative 97th District
Matthew Bierlein

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City of Saginaw Council Members
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County Commissioner District 2
Jack Tany
County Commissioner District 3
Rich Spitzer
County Commissioner District 4
Sheldon Matthews
County Commissioner District 5
Tracey Slodowski
County Commissioner District 6
Denny Harris
County Commissioner District 7
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