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Governor: Michigan is ‘getting it right, getting it done’ as reinvention continues

State of the State spotlights progress, unfinished business

LANSING, Mich. – Michigan’s economy is moving in the right direction and 2012 must be devoted to continuing the state’s reinvention by taking care of unfinished business, addressing other critical challenges and emphasizing good government, Gov. Rick Snyder said in his second State of the State address.

The governor presented an optimistic but realistic assessment of Michigan’s condition. While numerous indicators underscore Michigan’s economic progress, the state clearly has more work to do on various fronts.

“We made large strides to make Michigan great again,” Snyder said. “Michiganders came together and worked with relentless positive action to deliver the meaningful change that is getting our state back on its feet. Thanks to the leadership of our legislative partners, we’ve taken bold but thoughtful action to do what’s right for Michigan. We’re getting it right and getting it done. But this is no time to let up. Job One is still jobs. Ensuring bright, prosperous futures for working families and their children demands a steadfast commitment to Michigan’s reinvention.”

The foundation for economic success was laid by getting the state’s fiscal house in order and through policy reforms such as the elimination of the job-killing Michigan Business Tax.

As promised in last year’s address, Snyder reviewed key measures of the Michigan Dashboard at www.michigan.gov/MiDashboard.

Michigan’s unemployment rate fell from 11.1 percent in December 2010 to 9.3 percent in December 2011, bringing it to the lowest rate since October 2008. Michigan also added nearly 80,000 private-sector jobs last year and these jobs are higher paying than the national average.

However, Snyder pointed out that the unemployment rate is still too high and that too many families are hurting. He added that challenges with crime, college readiness among students and obesity still remain.

The governor also said that continued support for education, our local communities as well as key industries such as automotive, agriculture, tourism, mining and timber is essential to Michigan’s future.

The governor outlined several issues that he would like to tackle this year with the cooperation of the Legislature, including:

- **Government accountability:** The governor will work with lawmakers to promote greater accountability and transparency in government by enacting overdue reforms to Michigan's campaign finance, lobby and ethics laws. For example, the governor is seeking changes that prohibit a person who has decision-making authority over a contract from working for the company to which they let a contract. He also advocates increasing the frequency of campaign finance disclosures from all sources such as political action committees, ballot question committees and candidate committees.
- **Crime:** The cities of Saginaw, Flint, Detroit and Pontiac are among the nation's top 10 in violent crime, which Snyder called unacceptable. In March he will deliver a special message to the Legislature on public safety that focuses on increasing law enforcement, improving the operation of our criminal justice system and ensuring the availability of jobs.
- **Health care:** The governor announced Pure Michigan Fit, a collaborative pilot program with Gerber Products, the Michigan Grocers Association and the Michigan Health and Hospital Association. Under the initiative, parents and caregivers will get the nutritional information they need to raise healthy, happy children. In addition, Snyder renewed his call for legislative approval of the MiHealth Marketplace program, an online, market-based program that will help Michiganders make more informed decisions when selecting high-quality, affordable health care. Snyder cautioned that the alternative is a federally mandated program designed by people who don't live or work in Michigan.
- **Autism:** There now are medically proven treatments available for autism. Without treatment, the average lifetime cost to Michigan for a person suffering autism is \$3.7 million. Snyder said Michigan should join the 27 other states that require insurers to cover evidence-based therapies for autism.
- **Energy and environment:** This fall Snyder will deliver a special message to the Legislature on energy and the environment. Michigan must be more strategic by focusing on the intersection of job creation, affordability, science and sustainability.
- **Taxes:** The governor will work with local governments and industry leaders to reform the personal property tax on industrial assets, while preserving funding for communities. The current tax structure hampers long-term job growth.
- **Infrastructure:** Snyder is urging lawmakers to conduct hearings on bills that will create a system of roads and bridges for the 21st century. Studies show that Michigan is underinvesting in its transportation infrastructure by \$1.4 billion. He also urged support for a bus rapid transit system to serve Southeastern Michigan.
- **New International Trade Crossing:** Snyder urged action on the proposed NITC because it is vital to Michigan's economic future. The NITC will be built without Michigan taxpayer dollars.
- **Global talent:** Snyder welcomed the support of Michigan universities and the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights, the Operating Engineers Union, and the Teamsters to encourage immigration changes at the federal level so that immigrants with

advanced degrees or who are entrepreneurs can create jobs for Michigan families.

- **Communities:** Snyder is recommending additional funding for the successful Economic Vitality Incentive Program, which builds stronger communities and promotes regional cooperation.

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Editor's note: Attached is an outline of Gov. Snyder's State of the State address and the Michigan Dashboard.