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Rebecca “Becky” Lawson is a small business owner, former township trustee, Army Reserve veteran, and lifelong Michigander running as a Republican for Michigan’s 111th House District. Raised in a working-class family on the west side of Grand Rapids, Lawson built a successful logistics consulting company after graduating from Michigan State University. She and her husband, Daniel, a firefighter and paramedic, are raising three children near Grand Rapids. Lawson’s campaign focuses on economic affordability, tax relief, public safety, educational opportunity, parental rights, and government accountability. Her message is rooted in faith, family, hard work, and her belief in “Keeping Michigan Working.”

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Renewing Michigan’s Greatness | LAWSON

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FAITH. FAMILY.
FREEDOM. OPPORTUNITY.
A STRONGER MICHIGAN.

RENEWING MICHIGAN’S GREATNESS

A Conservative Blueprint for Lower Taxes, Strong Families, Safe Communities, and a Brighter Future

BY

REBECCA “BECKY” LAWSON

KEEP MICHIGAN WORKING

Renewing Michigan's Greatness

Rebecca "Becky" Lawson

HB Publications, LLC

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Introduction

I want to start with something I believe most politicians will never say out loud: I did not set out to run for office.

For most of my life, the idea of standing in front of a crowd and asking people to vote for me would have seemed almost laughable. I am not a polished insider. I never carried a party donor's briefcase, never spent my evenings trading favors over cocktails at a Lansing fundraiser. I am a small business owner, a military veteran, a mom, a churchgoer, and a neighbor. I am someone who spent years watching the people who run this state make decisions that seemed completely disconnected from the lives of the people I know and love — and eventually decided that I had had enough of waiting for someone else to fix it.

This book is not a typical campaign book. I am not going to spend over a hundred pages pretending my life has

been a smooth, triumphant march toward public service. It has not been. There were years when I struggled to find my footing — spiritually, personally, professionally. There were losses that broke me open in ways I am still putting back together. There were mornings when getting my kids to school and keeping the lights on at my company felt like the only victories available to me, and I grabbed them gratefully with both hands.

What I am going to do in these pages is tell you the truth about where I come from, what I believe, and what I think Michigan needs to do to reclaim the future it deserves. And I am going to ask you — honestly and directly — to trust me with the privilege of fighting for you.

I grew up on the west side of Grand Rapids, in a neighborhood where nobody had much, but most people still showed up for each other. My father worked in advanced manufacturing for more than thirty years. My mother was a school secretary who volunteered at our church food pantry on weekends, because that is simply what you did when someone needed help and you had something to give. They were not wealthy people. They were not politically connected people. They were the kind of people this state was built by and still runs on — quiet, hardworking,

proud, and increasingly worried that the world their children are inheriting is not the one they sacrificed to build.

Some of my earliest memories of understanding what hard work really means come from my grandparents' farm near Potawatomi Lake — forty-three acres of Michigan earth where the lesson was planted in me young and deep: anything worth having takes genuine effort. You do not wait for someone to hand it to you. You do not complain your way to a harvest. You put in the work, you take responsibility for your corner of the world, and when things go sideways — and they always do eventually — you figure out how to get back up.

That farm shaped me more than I realized for most of my life. It is where I first understood that the decisions made in faraway offices have real consequences in real places — on real fields, in real family budgets, at real kitchen tables. It is also where I first began to understand that the people making those decisions often have no idea what those consequences feel like.

My path from that farm to this campaign ran through some territory I did not expect and would not have chosen. I was a little wild in college — I will confess that freely and without embarrassment, because honesty is the only cur-

rency I have to offer you. I made some poor choices. I did not apply myself the way I should have. And then, right around the time I was beginning to pull myself together, I lost my sister.

Lara was three years older than me. She was the person who looked out for me, who made me feel like someone always had my back. She was in a car accident her freshman year in college, and what followed was a nightmare that too many Michigan families know by heart: prescription painkillers, dependency, failed rehabilitation, addiction, and finally a death from an overdose at twenty-five years old. She was twenty-five years old. She had her whole life in front of her.

Losing Lara changed everything. It cracked me wide open and left space for something new to grow — my faith, first and foremost. My Christian faith is not a political prop. It is the foundation on which every other part of my life is built. It gave me the purpose and the discipline to stop drifting and start building. It also gave me a conviction that has never left me: that what happened to Lara should not happen to anyone else's sister, anyone else's daughter. The failures that contributed to her death — in healthcare, in addiction treatment, in the systems that

were supposed to catch people before they fell all the way down — are failures that government has a responsibility to address. Not by expanding bureaucracy. By actually solving problems.

After college, I entered the Army Reserve through ROTC. I served as a Captain and deployed to Iraq in 2007, at the height of the conflict. My unit handled the delivery of ordnance to forward operating areas. It was not a combat role in the traditional sense, but it was not safe, either. The threats were constant. And in 2007, I lost three of my soldiers to an IED.

I insisted on being the one to call their families. That was my responsibility. They were my people. Making those calls was one of the hardest things I have ever done in my life, and I would do it again without hesitation, because leadership means you do not hand off the painful parts.

What the military gave me — beyond the skills in logistics and operations that I would later build a business around — was a bone-deep understanding of what accountability actually looks like. In the Army, when something goes wrong, you find out why, you own it, and you fix it. You do not blame the previous administration. You do not form a committee to study the problem for eigh-

teen months. You act. I have often thought that if Lansing operated the way a well-run military unit operates, Michigan would look very different from the way it does today.

I came home from Iraq and eventually started my own company. Lawson Logistics — L Squared, as we call it — grew out of a cousin's single-truck operation into a regional employer with more than forty people on the payroll. I built it by applying the same principles I learned on the farm and reinforced in uniform: precision, accountability, and a genuine commitment to delivering on what you promise.

Running a business in Michigan taught me things that no policy briefing ever could. I learned what it feels like to make payroll during a rough quarter and wonder whether next month will be better. I learned what it costs — in money and in energy and in sheer determination — to navigate the regulatory environment this state puts in front of its small business owners. I watched talented people leave Michigan for states where the economic climate is less punishing and the opportunity feels more real. I watched families struggle under cost pressures that have only gotten worse, even as Lansing seemed perpetually surprised by the consequences of its own policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a turning point for me politically, if I am being honest. I had always followed state politics closely, and I had always been frustrated. But watching the decisions that were made during those years — the arbitrary mandates, the small business closures, the bureaucratic inconsistency, the profound disconnect between the policymakers giving orders and the business owners and families absorbing the impact — pushed me from frustration into conviction. Someone had to say something. Someone had to do something. I decided it might as well be me.

My first step into public service was as a township trustee. It was not glamorous work. It was budget meetings and fire department negotiations and emergency preparedness planning and dozens of hours spent trying to make sure that every dollar of taxpayer money was being used the way taxpayers actually expected it to be used. I loved it. Not because it was exciting, but because it was real. Real problems, real solutions, real consequences.

Those years as a trustee reinforced something I had already suspected: most of the problems the government fails to solve are not actually complicated. They are just inconvenient. Fixing them requires saying no to things

that are comfortable and easy. It requires prioritizing the long-term interests of the people you serve over the short-term interests of the people who fund your next election. It requires a willingness to make decisions that are not always popular — because good governance is not a popularity contest.

This book is organized around the two things I believe matter most in a political leader: character and clarity. Character — who you are, where you came from, what you have been through, what you genuinely believe — shapes every decision you make when the cameras are off, and the pressure is on. Clarity is about what needs to change, and why, and how. Clarity is what separates a politician from a public servant.

In the pages that follow, I am going to walk you through both. I will share the story of my family, my faith, my service, and my business, not because I think my life is more interesting than yours, but because I believe you deserve to know the person who is asking for your trust. And I will lay out, as specifically and honestly as I can, what I think Michigan needs to do to secure its future: on taxes, on energy, on education, on healthcare, on the regulations that are strangling the people who make this state work.

Michigan is a great state. That is not a slogan. It is a fact that sometimes gets buried under the weight of decades of missed opportunities and political complacency. Our greatness has waned, but we can renew it. We have the talent, the work ethic, the natural resources, the manufacturing heritage, and the communities to be one of the strongest states in the nation. What we have lacked, for too long, is leadership that actually sees the people being left behind and refuses to accept that as inevitable.

I see them. I am one of them. And I am ready to get to work.

— Rebecca "Becky" Lawson

Chapter 1
Lessons from the Family Farm

There is a moment every spring, usually in late April, when the ground has finally thawed and the air still carries that particular chill that makes you believe winter might come back just to spite you, when I walk the fence line of our property near Potawatomi Lake and feel something I can only describe as inheritance. Not the legal kind — the kind you carry in your bones. The kind that does not show up in a deed or an estate filing but that shapes every decision you make and every value you hold.

The farm is forty-three acres. It does not sound like much, and by the standards of commercial agriculture, it isn't. But to me it has always been the whole world, or at least the part of the world that matters most. My grandparents worked this land for decades. My husband Daniel and I live here now with our four children, and I like

to think we are continuing something that stretches back more than a century — a chain of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the most quiet, unannounced way possible.

When Dan and I first moved back to the property, it was in rough shape. My grandparents had aged out of the physical demands of working the land, and the years showed. Fences sagged. The old equipment barn needed new siding and a roof that did not leak. The fields had gone partially to weeds. We spent the better part of three years bringing it back — not just the structures and the soil, but the sense of purpose that belongs to a working place. Today we raise corn on those forty-three acres, and we keep horses for the children. It is not a large operation by any measure. But it is ours, and it is alive, and every single thing it produces came from work that we did with our own hands on ground that our family has tended for generations.

That is not a small thing to me. That is everything.

Anything Worth Having Takes Work

I did not always appreciate the farm the way I do now. When I was a child spending summers there with my

grandparents, it was simply the backdrop of life — the smell of dirt and horses and diesel, the heat rising off the fields in the afternoon, the particular ache in your shoulders and arms at the end of a long day outside. You do not appreciate the lessons while you are learning them. You only understand them later, when you need them.

The summer I was ten years old, my grandfather put me to work detasseling corn. If you have never done it, let me describe it for you precisely, because I want you to feel it: you are walking down row after row of corn that stands well above your head, so that you can see almost nothing except the stalk directly in front of you and the narrow strip of sky above. It is July. The temperature is in the upper eighties, sometimes the low nineties, and the humidity in Michigan in July will make you feel like you are breathing through a wet towel. Your job is to reach up — arms fully extended above your head — and pull the tassel from the top of each stalk before the pollen drops. You do this hour after hour, row after row, for days at a stretch.

Your arms start to cramp after the first hour. By the second hour, you are not thinking about anything except the end of the row. By the third hour, you have stopped

thinking entirely and entered some other state of consciousness that is somewhere between determination and pure stubbornness.

I complained about it, of course. I was ten. My grandfather listened patiently to my complaints exactly once, and then he said something I have never forgotten: "You're not going to remember the complaining. You're going to remember the corn."

He was right. When the harvest came in at the end of that season — when I watched the corn that my hands had helped tend move from field to crib to table — I felt something I had never felt before. Not just satisfaction, but a kind of ownership that had nothing to do with money or title. I had earned the right to that harvest. I had paid for it in sweat and cramped arms and blazing July afternoons. It was mine in the deepest possible sense of the word.

That is the lesson I took from those summers, and it is the lesson I have tried to pass on to my own children as they grow up on this same land: things that come without effort are not truly yours. You are just holding them. But things you work for — things you sacrifice for — become a part of you in a way that cannot be taken away. The work

is not the obstacle between you and what you want. The work is the point.

I believe this as a matter of personal conviction, and I also believe it as a matter of public policy. One of the things that concerns me most about some of the directions government has drifted in recent years is the creeping assumption that the answer to difficulty is always relief from difficulty — that struggle is a problem to be eliminated rather than an experience to be respected.

There is a difference between a safety net that catches people when they fall and a system that tells people falling is not something they need to worry about. The first is compassion. The second does something subtle and damaging to the human spirit. My grandfather understood this. He never made the work easier than it needed to be, because he knew that the difficulty was not incidental to the lesson — it was the lesson.

Taking Responsibility

There is a specific evening I return to often in my memory, not because it is a happy one, but because it taught me something I have tried to live by every day since.

I was eight years old. It was a warm evening in late summer, and I had been helping my grandfather with the horses — feeding them, checking their water, walking the fence line with him the way I loved to do. Somewhere in the course of that evening, I failed to properly latch the gate to the paddock. I did not notice. I went inside for dinner and thought nothing of it.

My grandfather noticed that night. One of the horses — a big bay gelding named Harold, whom my grandfather had owned for nearly fifteen years — had pushed through the unlatched gate and wandered off into the neighboring fields and woodlands. It took my grandfather and my uncle most of the night to find him, following tracks in the soft ground by flashlight, checking the neighboring fence lines, calling and listening in the dark for the sound of hooves or breath.

No one knew, in the moment, that I was the one who had left the gate unlatched. I had not been the last person my grandfather saw near the paddock. I could have said nothing. I was eight years old, and eight-year-olds have a highly developed instinct for self-preservation. The thought of saying nothing crossed my mind. I will not pretend otherwise.

But something else crossed my mind too — something I would later, much later, understand as the beginning of a moral conscience taking shape. I knew what I had done. I was the only one who knew. And I understood, at eight years old, that knowing something and saying nothing was its own kind of dishonesty.

The next morning I told my grandfather. He looked at me for a long moment without saying anything. When he spoke, his voice was level. He told me that leaving the gate unlatched was careless and that carelessness had consequences. He told me that he had been exhausted and worried and that it was not a good night. He was not gentle about it. He was honest with me, because he respected me enough to be honest, and I knew I deserved every word.

And then he said something else. He said he was proud of me for telling the truth. He said it was harder to tell the truth when you did not have to, and that the people who did that — who held themselves accountable even when no one else was watching — were the people the world could actually count on.

I have thought about that moment more times than I can count. I have thought about it when running my business and facing a customer whose delivery was late

because of a mistake my team made, and I had to call them and own it. I have thought about it in the Army, where accountability was not optional but was built into every structure and expectation. I have thought about it in my years as a township trustee, when it would have been easier on more than one occasion to avoid a difficult conversation with a fellow board member or a department head and I had to choose between the easy path and the right one.

Personal accountability is not a popular concept in contemporary politics. It is far easier to explain failures by pointing outward — at circumstances, at systems, at the people who came before you. I understand the appeal. I even understand that sometimes circumstances and systems genuinely are part of the problem. But a life built on accountability — on the willingness to look clearly at your own role in what goes wrong and own it without flinching — is a life that earns the trust of the people around you. And trust, I have come to believe, is the currency that every durable institution runs on, whether that institution is a family, a business, or a government.

Things Don't Always Go Right

The summer I was fourteen, a once-in-a-generation storm came through the county in early May that took out nearly everything that had germinated in our fields. I remember the morning after: walking out to the field with my grandfather and watching him crouch down and turn over the ruined seedlings in his hands, one by one, not speaking. The ground was torn up. The sky was clear and calm, as though nothing had happened, which felt like a particular insult.

We had to replant by hand. The soil was too saturated from the storm for the tractor to go through without compacting the ground and making things worse, so we did it the old way — working our way across the field in the cool mornings and the long evenings, pushing seeds into the earth one by one and praying, in the literal sense of the word, that the season had not already slipped beyond saving.

It was the hardest physical work I had done in my life up to that point. My back ached in ways that a fourteen-year-old back is not supposed to ache. My hands blistered and calloused and blistered again. Some evenings I was too tired to eat dinner properly and fell asleep at the

table, which my grandmother permitted without comment.

But the crop came in. Not as strong as it might have been in a normal year — we had lost some growing weeks that we could not fully recover — but it came in. And that harvest felt different from any other. It had been earned twice over, first in the normal way and then again after the storm had taken the first effort and demanded that we start over.

The lesson I took from that summer was not simply that hard work pays off, though it does. It was something more specific: that the willingness to start over, without self-pity and without the luxury of blaming the storm for more than it actually cost you, is what separates the people who endure from the people who don't. The storm was real. The damage was real. But the storm did not replant the field. We did. And the choice to replant — to refuse to accept the damage as the final word — was the only thing in that whole season that we actually controlled.

I think about that replanting season when I look at what Michigan has been through economically over the past two decades. We have had our storms. The collapse of the auto industry in 2008. The pandemic years. The inflation

that followed. Real damage, real loss, real hardship for real families. I do not minimize any of it. But the question Michigan faces now is not whether the storms happened — they did — but whether we are willing to get back into the field and replant. Whether we are going to make the choices that are within our control, knowing that nothing is guaranteed but that doing nothing guarantees failure.

I believe we are. I believe Michigan has that in us. But we need leaders who understand what replanting actually looks like — who are willing to do the backbreaking work of real reform rather than the comfortable work of blaming the storm.

People Are Struggling

One thing that is easy to miss, if you did not grow up around it, is the quiet poverty of Michigan's farm country. It is not the visible poverty of urban neighborhoods, where the difficulty is concentrated and impossible to ignore. Rural poverty hides itself better. It looks like a house that needs painting but will not get painted this year. It looks like a truck with a cracked windshield that the owner is driving anyway because replacing it is not in the budget. It looks like a family that skips church in February because

the gas is low and they are not sure when the next check is coming.

I saw this every spring at the farm. Early spring in agricultural Michigan is a particular kind of hard. The crops are not yet in the ground, and even if they were they would not generate income for months. The money from last season's harvest is getting thin. There is not much to do but wait for the ground to warm and the calendar to turn and hope that this year the math works out in your favor.

The families I saw struggling in those years were not lazy people. They were not looking for a handout. They were working people in a difficult industry doing everything right and still getting squeezed by forces — commodity prices, weather, energy costs, the thousand variables that farming involves — that no amount of personal virtue fully controls.

What they needed was not charity and not a government program that told them how to run their operations. What they needed was a fair shake from an economic environment that was not stacked against them. Reasonable property taxes. Energy costs they could plan around. Markets they could access. A state government that understood their situation and was working in their interest rather

than in the interest of whoever was writing the biggest check to the most powerful lobby.

Watching those families — neighbors and friends of my grandparents, people who brought food when someone was sick and showed up to help with equipment when something broke down — watching them strain under that kind of economic pressure was one of the things that first made me think seriously about public service. Not in a vague, inspirational way, but in a specific, practical way: these people are struggling because of decisions being made in Lansing and Washington, and those decisions could be different, and someone needs to go make them different.

They Did It Themselves

My great-great-grandparents came to this land in 1890. I want you to hold that year in your mind for a moment and think about what it meant. No electricity. No running water. No farm subsidy programs, no rural development grants, no government extension agents offering advice and assistance. Just land, and weather, and the labor of their own hands, and whatever they could figure out by

trial and error and the accumulated wisdom of neighbors in similar situations.

They were not extraordinary people in any dramatic sense. They were ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, which is a different thing — and in some ways more impressive. There was no safety net below them. There was no program to apply to if the crops failed and the money ran out. There were the neighbors, who might be able to help if they were not in the same situation themselves, and there was whatever resourcefulness you could muster from your own mind and your own hands.

My great-great-grandfather learned to repair farm equipment to supplement the income from the crops. In the years when farming was lean, he became the person neighbors called when their machinery broke down. My great-great-grandmother took in laundry from families in town. She did not consider it beneath her dignity. It needed to be done, she could do it, and so she did it. That is the full extent of the moral reasoning involved.

I tell this story not to romanticize hardship or to suggest that the answer to every challenge is simply to endure it without assistance. I am not running for office to dismantle every program that helps struggling families.

Some of what government does in that space is genuinely important and genuinely works. I have seen enough of life to know that the line between a family that makes it and a family that doesn't is sometimes a single piece of bad timing, and that a well-designed safety net can be the difference between a temporary setback and a permanent catastrophe.

But I also believe — and this belief is rooted in watching my great-great-grandparents' legacy, in the farm they built and the children they raised and the values they passed down through four generations to me — that there is something irreplaceable in the disposition that says: I am going to figure this out. I am not going to wait to be rescued. I am going to do what needs to be done.

That disposition is not a political slogan. It is not a talking point. It is a way of meeting the world that was forged in necessity and refined over generations, and it produced people of uncommon strength and uncommon integrity. The best thing government can do for families like the ones my great-great-grandparents built — and like the ones being built right now, all across Michigan — is to get out of the way of their ambition, stop taxing away their

margin for error, and trust them to do what their families have always done: the work.

I still walk the fence line every spring. Harold the horse has been gone for twenty years, but we have horses of our own now, and my children have learned to latch the gate. The corn comes up every summer, and every summer it requires everything we have to give it, and every fall it feeds us and pays us back.

That is the deal. That has always been the deal. Work in, harvest out. No guarantees, no shortcuts, and satisfaction at the end of it that cannot be bought or handed to you.

That is what this farm taught me. That is what I am carrying to Lansing.

Chapter 2
Family

I have a photograph on the wall of our farmhouse kitchen that I look at almost every morning while the coffee brews. It is a black-and-white picture of my great-grandmother, Addie Mae Schmidt, standing in the field with her arms crossed and a look on her face that I can only describe as determined defiance. This was a woman who was not afraid to get her hands dirty. There is something in her expression that communicates a very clear message to the world: I am still here, and I have done the work, and I would like to see you try to tell me otherwise.

I never met her. What I have of her is mostly stories filtered through my grandmother and my mother, and the occasional photograph like this one. But I feel her presence in that kitchen, and in the fields outside, and in the particular set of values that traveled through four generations of this family and landed, somewhat improbably, in

a forty-two-year-old woman who is now asking the people of the 111th District to send her to Lansing.

Family is where you come from. It is also, if you are paying attention, the first and most essential school you will ever attend.

The West Side

I grew up on the west side of Grand Rapids, in a neighborhood that would not appear in any travel guide and does not need to. It was a working-class neighborhood in the most literal sense — a place where the people around you worked, and where you were expected to work, and where the connection between effort and outcome was not an abstract principle but the visible reality of every household on the block.

My father spent more than three decades in advanced manufacturing. He knew that factory — the smells of it, the sounds of it, the rhythms of the shifts — the way some people know a piece of music they have played a thousand times. He was proud of the work, and he was good at it, and he built a life around it that was not extravagant but was solid and honest and his.

And then, in the early 1990s, he was laid off.

I want to be careful here, because I am not interested in using my father's hardship as a political talking point. He was a real person, and what he went through was real, and he deserves more than to be reduced to an anecdote. But the truth is that watching what happened to him after that layoff shaped my understanding of economic policy more than anything I learned in four years of economics in college, and I would be telling you less than the whole story if I left it out.

The job he lost was the kind of job that defined a life. Good wages, reliable hours, a skill set he had developed over decades and took genuine pride in. The jobs that followed were not that. They paid less. They demanded less — which sounds like a relief but is actually a particular kind of indignity for a man who had always given everything he had to his work. The depression that followed the layoff was quiet and slow and stubborn in the way that quiet things sometimes are.

I watched my father diminish in ways that had nothing to do with his character or his effort or his worth as a human being. He did everything right. The system failed him. And the thing that has always stayed with me — the thing that drives a real part of my interest in econom-

ic policy — is the conviction that it did not have to be that way. Better workforce training programs, earlier and more accessible pathways into in-demand skilled trades, economic incentives that kept manufacturing investment in Michigan rather than chasing it to other states or other countries — these are not abstract policy preferences for me. I grew up watching what happens to a family when those things are absent.

My father's story is not unique. It is the story of thousands of Michigan families in that era, and if we are not careful, it will be the story of thousands more in the next one. The best thing government can do for the next generation of workers is not to build a system that catches them after they fall, but to build an economy that does not drop them in the first place — through real vocational education starting in high school, real support for the industries that employ working people, and a tax and regulatory environment that makes Michigan a place businesses want to stay and grow.

The Rule on Our Street

There is one other thing I absorbed growing up on the west side that I want to be honest about, because I think it matters to who I am.

The rule in my neighborhood — spoken and unspoken, enforced by proximity and social expectation — was that you did not back down from a fight. Not a physical fight necessarily, though frankly, that too. The deeper principle was about confrontation more broadly: you did not look away from difficulty. You did not quietly absorb mistreatment and pretend it was not happening. You stood your ground.

I know that sounds like it could be romanticized into something it wasn't. But I mean it practically. The kids I grew up with who were respected were not the toughest or the loudest — they were the ones who were consistent, who kept their word, who did not flinch when things got hard. Backing down was understood as a signal about your character, and character mattered in ways that were immediate and social and very real.

I took that lesson into the Army, where standing your ground looks like maintaining your unit's standards even when shortcuts are available. I took it into business, where

it means having hard conversations with employees or clients rather than hoping problems resolve themselves. I took it into my years on the township board, where it meant voting against a budget line item that everyone else wanted to approve because I genuinely believed it was not in the taxpayers' interest, and dealing with the discomfort that followed.

It is the quality I hope I am passing on to my own children, in a less gritty and more intentional way than I received it. I want them to understand that the willingness to stand for something — clearly, consistently, without apology — is not aggression. It is integrity.

The Women Who Made Me

My grandmother, Louisa Schmidt, was a force of nature in the most understated possible way. She did not announce herself. She did not require an audience. She simply moved through the world with a kind of purposeful competence that got things done and left people better than she found them, and she did this every single day for as long as I knew her.

She was the one who taught me to cook, which I am still grateful for. She was also the one who, when I was about

twelve and complaining at length about something a girl at school had done to me, waited until I had completely exhausted myself and then said, very calmly: "Now, what's your part in it?" It was the most annoying thing anyone had ever said to me, and also one of the most important.

My great-grandfather, Gerhard Schmidt, was a quiet man who had worked the land his whole life and carried a kind of earned serenity that I have always associated with people who have been genuinely tested. He did not say much, but when he spoke, the people around him listened — not out of obligation but out of recognition that the words were worth hearing. He had a way of framing problems that stripped away the drama and got to the actual question, which I have tried to emulate with mixed success for most of my adult life.

My mother, Alicia Lawson, is still alive, and she still gives me unsolicited advice, which I accept with the patience I have developed over four decades of practice. She was a public school secretary for most of my childhood, which meant she knew every family in our district and was the first person most of them called when they needed help navigating a system that could feel impersonal and intimidating. She was a connector. She understood that being

useful to people was its own form of community building, and she did it without any expectation of recognition.

She also volunteered at the church food pantry every week, without fail, for years. She did not talk about it much. She just did it, the way people of her generation did things that needed doing — not for credit, but because someone had to and she was someone. I think about her when I hear the argument that community problems should be solved entirely by government programs rather than by the people and institutions that are actually embedded in those communities. My mother's food pantry did not have a line item in anyone's budget. It ran on donated food and donated time and the genuine care of people who knew their neighbors by name. There is something in that model that no government program has ever fully replicated, and I do not think it ever will.

Daniel

I met my husband, Daniel, at a moment in my life when I was still figuring out who I was and what I was for. He was not what I expected, which is probably why it worked.

Dan is a firefighter and a paramedic. He has spent his career running toward the things that everyone else runs

away from, which tells you most of what you need to know about his character. He is calm in the way that people who have managed genuine emergencies are calm — not unfeeling, but disciplined, capable of processing chaos without being consumed by it.

He is also the person who keeps our household running when I am consumed by work or campaigning or the hundred other demands that seem to expand to fill whatever space is available. He does this without complaint and without keeping score, which is a kind of grace I am still learning to fully appreciate.

Marrying Daniel was the best decision I have ever made, and I say that with the full awareness that I have made some genuinely good decisions in my life. He is my partner in every meaningful sense of the word — in the work of raising our children, in the work of running the farm, in the work of building a life that reflects the values we both believe in.

Our Children

Our four children are growing up on the same forty-three acres where I spent my summers learning to work and learning to be accountable and learning that the

world does not owe you a harvest — you have to earn it. I do not know yet what they will make of those lessons, and I am wise enough to understand that children make their own meaning out of their own experiences. But I hope the land teaches them what it taught me.

I hope they learn that responsibility is not a burden but a privilege — that being trusted with something real, whether it is a gate latch or an acre of corn or the safety of the people around you, is one of the best things that can happen to you. I hope they learn that their word is the most durable asset they will ever possess, and that protecting it is worth more than any short-term convenience. And I hope they learn, as I eventually learned, that the family you are born into and the family you build are both gifts — imperfect, demanding, irreplaceable gifts that shape you in ways you will spend your whole life discovering.

Family is what Michigan is made of. Not the abstract political version of family that gets invoked at rallies and promptly forgotten when the policy decisions happen. Real families — working families, farming families, families where someone is sick or someone lost their job or someone is struggling in ways that do not fit neatly into

a policy category. Those are the families I come from, and those are the families I intend to represent.

That is not a campaign promise. That is a description of who I am.

Chapter 3
Faith

I want to be honest with you about something before I say anything else in this chapter.

My faith is not a campaign strategy. It is not a box I check to signal membership in a particular political tribe. It is not something I discovered conveniently in the months before filing my candidacy paperwork. It is the most real and most foundational thing about me, which is exactly why it is also the hardest thing to write about — because the things that matter most resist the kind of clean, confident narration that political books tend to favor.

What I can tell you is where my faith came from, what it cost, and what it changed. The rest — the theology, the doctrine, the denominational particulars — I will leave between me and God, where it belongs.

Running Wild

I arrived at Michigan State in the fall of 2001 with a decent work ethic, a vague sense that I was supposed to make something of myself, and absolutely no idea what I actually wanted. I was enrolled in Army ROTC, without which I could not have afforded to attend. But, I didn't take the program very seriously at first. What I did know was that I was eighteen years old and away from home for the first time, and the world felt enormous and permissive in a way that was intoxicating before it became a problem.

I will be direct: I got a little wild. Some drinking, some running around, some choices that the version of me who grew up going to church on Sundays and working summers on the farm would have been embarrassed by. I was not catastrophically reckless — I want to be clear about that, because I am not interested in performing a more dramatic version of this story than actually happened. But I drifted, and I drifted in ways that cost me. My grades in the first two years of college were not what they should have been. I was present enough to get through, but not engaged enough to get anything real out of it. I was going through the motions of building a life without yet understanding what building a life actually required.

Somewhere in my junior year, I started to pull myself back together. I cannot point to a single dramatic moment of reckoning. It was more gradual than that — a growing unease, a sense that the way I was living was not who I actually was or who I actually wanted to be. I got more serious about my coursework. I cut back on the socializing that was not doing me any good. I got more disciplined in ROTC, a program that was, if I can be honest, about to cut me loose. I finally connected with the structure and purpose that came with it. The experience was clarifying in ways I had not expected.

By my senior year I was finally, genuinely trying. Not performing effort, but actually applying myself — to my studies, to ROTC, to the project of figuring out what I believed and what I was for.

And that is when Lara died.

Losing Lara

My sister Lara was three years older than me, which meant that for most of my childhood, she occupied that particular position of being simultaneously my closest companion and the person who seemed to already know everything I was still trying to figure out. She looked out

for me. She was the one I called when something went wrong, the one whose opinion I wanted before I made any decision that actually mattered. There is a particular kind of trust that exists between sisters who are close in age, and ours was that kind.

She went off to college when I was still in high school, and she was in a car accident her freshman year — a bad one, bad enough to require surgery and a long recovery and the prescription painkillers that came with it. This was the late 1990s. The full extent of what we now understand about opioid dependency was not yet common knowledge, not in hospitals and certainly not in family living rooms.

The pills were prescribed by a doctor. They managed her pain. Nobody, including Lara, understood at first what was happening when she found that she needed them not just for the pain but for the feeling of normalcy they had started to produce — and then needed them more, and then could not function without them.

She went to rehab. It did not hold. She went again. The second time held for a while, and we let ourselves believe — the way families do, because what is the alternative — that

it was going to be different. That she had turned a corner. That the worst was behind us.

She died of an overdose when she was twenty-five years old. I was twenty-two. I had just finally gotten my footing, finally started to build something solid out of the drift of my college years, and the ground disappeared.

I am not going to tell you that grief has a clean arc, because it does not. I am not going to tell you I processed it well, because I did not, at least not at first. What I will tell you is that losing Lara broke something open in me that has never fully closed — and that what grew in that opening, slowly and not without struggle, was the beginning of a faith that I did not have before.

I also want to say this plainly, as a policy matter and not just a personal one: what happened to Lara was not simply a family tragedy. It was a systemic failure. A failure in how we prescribed and monitored opioid medications. A failure in how we fund and structure addiction treatment. A failure in the social safety nets that were supposed to catch people before they fell all the way down. My sister was not weak. She was not a cautionary tale about personal irresponsibility. She was a person who was let down, re-

peatedly, by systems that should have worked better and did not.

That vow I made after she died — that I would do whatever I could to make sure other families did not go through what ours went through — is part of what eventually brought me to public service. I have never forgotten it, and I will carry it to Lansing with me.

Finding Christ

Faith did not arrive for me in a single conversion moment, though I understand why some people experience it that way. For me, it was more like learning to hear something that had always been there, faintly, underneath everything else — and then, gradually, turning up the volume.

I had grown up in a church-going family. Faith was part of the furniture of my childhood home, present and respected but not, if I am being honest, deeply engaged with. I said the prayers and attended the services and absorbed the basic moral framework that Christianity provides, and then I went to college and put most of that on the shelf while I figured out who I was.

After Lara died, I found myself picking it back up, not because I was looking for comfort in the way people sometimes reach for faith in moments of loss, though comfort was not unwelcome. I reached for it because I was looking for meaning. For some framework that could hold what had happened to my sister without either explaining it away or collapsing under the weight of it.

I started reading the Bible seriously for the first time in my adult life. Not devotionally, at first, but the way I would read anything I was trying to understand — carefully, with questions in mind, paying attention to what the text was actually saying rather than what I expected it to say. What I found surprised me. Not the words themselves, which I had heard most of my life, but my own reception of them. They were speaking to something I had not known was waiting to be spoken to.

The passage that stopped me — that I have returned to more times than I can count — is from Jeremiah 29:11. "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" I had heard this verse before. I had certainly heard it after Lara died, at the funeral, offered up with the best intentions by people who wanted to say

something true and could not find other words. At the time it had felt hollow to me. How could there be a plan that included this, that included my sister dying at twenty-five?

But reading it again, later, in the stillness of my own searching, I understood it differently. The promise is not that nothing will go wrong. The Scriptures are not a contract guaranteeing a smooth ride. What they offer is something different and, I have come to believe, something deeper: the assurance that there is a purpose to your life even when you cannot see it, even when the circumstances make it impossible to imagine. The assurance that you are not simply floating through a random universe, accumulating experiences until you stop.

I needed that. More than I knew.

Accepting Christ as my Savior was not, for me, a dramatic public moment. It happened in the same quiet, gradual way that most of my real growth has happened: through sustained attention, through honest struggle, through the slow accumulation of conviction that comes from genuinely wrestling with something rather than simply deciding to believe it. By the time I came home from Iraq, the faith I had was different in kind from anything I

had grown up with. It was mine, built from the materials of my own experience, tested in loss and fear and the long silence of a very dark period, and it held.

What Faith Is and Is Not

I want to be clear about one more thing before I move on.

My faith is the foundation of my values and my character and, yes, my politics — in the sense that it shapes who I am and therefore shapes everything I do. But I do not believe that my job as a state representative, if the people of this district choose to send me to Lansing, is to legislate my theology. The people I would represent include Christians of every denomination and also people of other faiths and no faith at all, and every one of them is entitled to representation that serves their interests, not my religious convictions.

What faith gives me as a public servant is not a set of policy mandates. It is a set of dispositions: a commitment to honesty even when it costs something, a belief that every person has inherent dignity that deserves to be respected in how policy is designed and delivered, a conviction that I am accountable for how I use whatever power or influence

I am given, not just to the voters who elected me but to something larger and more demanding than any election cycle.

It also gives me the ability to hold the weight of this work without being crushed by it. Public service, done seriously, carries a significant moral burden. The decisions made in state legislatures affect real people in real and sometimes irreversible ways. I cannot carry that alone, and I do not try to.

I also think of Lara when I think about what my faith requires of me in this work. She did not get the help she needed when she needed it. The systems that should have been there were not adequate to what she faced. I believe, in a way that is both personal and political, that we owe it to the people who fell through the cracks — and to the people who are right now standing at the edge of them — to build something better. That is not a policy position I arrived at from a party platform. It is a conviction that was written into me by grief, and reinforced by faith, and that I intend to carry with me every day I serve.

Lara's name is on a wall in our farmhouse, in a frame with a photograph taken the summer she turned eighteen.

She is laughing at something off camera, caught in the kind of unguarded joy that photographs almost never capture.

I look at it every morning, right next to my great-grandmother's picture in the kitchen.

Some mornings, it breaks my heart. Some mornings it sets me to work.

Most mornings, it does both.

Chapter 4
Serving My Country

I enrolled in Army ROTC in college for reasons that were, at the time, not especially noble. I needed help with tuition. I needed structure. I needed something that would impose discipline on the drift I had allowed my first couple of years to become. I needed, if I am being honest, to be somewhere that someone expected something of me — clearly, consistently, without ambiguity.

What I found was all of that, and considerably more.

ROTC gave me the first experience I had ever had of belonging to something with stakes genuinely higher than my own comfort or convenience. The organization had standards, and those standards existed not to make life difficult but because the work the organization prepared you for actually required them. You were not being challenged arbitrarily. You were being built into someone capable of carrying real responsibility — for equipment, for missions,

for the lives of other people. The seriousness of that purpose had a clarifying effect on everything around it.

The 9/11 attack occurred during my first month as a freshman in ROTC. This shocking violation of American sovereignty, a cowardly act of depraved violence against civilians, would not go unanswered. My cohort of officers was going to be a part of the response. We knew this in our hearts. I wish I could say I took the challenge more seriously at the beginning of the training. But I had some growing up to do. But, the message was clear. Our country was calling us to serve, and we were preparing to answer that call.

By the time I graduated and accepted my commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve, I understood something about myself that I had not fully known before: I was capable of considerably more than I had previously demanded of myself. That knowledge has never left me.

Iraq

I deployed to Iraq in 2007, by which point the conflict had reached what most analysts would describe as its most difficult and dangerous phase. The surge was underway.

Violence was at levels that made every convoy and every movement outside the wire a calculation of acceptable risk. The country was not a stable environment by any measure, and everyone serving there understood that in the most immediate and physical way possible.

My unit's mission was the delivery of ordnance to forward operating areas — ammunition and related materiel to the units that needed it, moving through terrain and along routes that the enemy understood as well as we did. It was not a combat role in the traditional sense. I was not in a rifle company clearing buildings or conducting raids. But I want to be clear about what "not a combat role" actually meant in Iraq in 2007: it meant that our convoys moved through the same roads, under the same threats, past the same buried devices and prepared ambush positions as everyone else. The distinction between combat and support units matters for military classification purposes. On the ground, in a vehicle moving through hostile territory, it mattered rather less.

We managed our risk through preparation, precision, and the kind of rigorous attention to detail that I had learned, in a different context, from years of watching my grandfather run a farm. You cannot eliminate danger in a

war zone. What you can do is reduce it through discipline and procedure — through the systematic application of what you know, executed consistently, without shortcuts.

I also want to say something about the soldiers I served with, because they deserve more than a footnote in someone else's story. They were young men and women, most of them, doing something genuinely hard in the service of something genuinely important. They were away from their families. They were operating under conditions of sustained stress that most people will never experience. And the vast majority of them did it with a professionalism and a commitment that I found humbling on a daily basis.

Leading them was the greatest professional privilege of my life up to that point, and also the most sobering responsibility I had ever carried.

The Hardest Day

There is a day I do not talk about easily, and I am going to tell you about it here because I believe you deserve the full picture of who I am and what has shaped me.

We lost three soldiers to an IED. I am not going to give you the tactical details, because those belong to the men who died and to their families and not to this book. What

I will tell you is that the loss was sudden and complete in the way that these things are. One moment, the world is one thing, and the next moment it is permanently and irreversibly different.

Our commanding officer was to make the notification calls to the families. That is protocol. There is a reason for the protocol — the calls are made by senior officers because the weight of them requires a particular kind of authority and gravity, and because the families deserve to hear the news from someone with the standing to deliver it properly.

I asked to make the calls myself. I told my CO that these were my soldiers and that calling their families was my responsibility. He could have said no. He didn't.

I made three calls that afternoon. I do not remember all of the words. I have read somewhere that the mind protects itself from certain kinds of memory by blurring the details, but I remember the silences on the other end of each call, the particular quality of the pause that exists in the moment between when you have said what you called to say and when the person on the other end of the line has understood it. That pause is one of the heaviest things I have ever carried.

I am telling you this not because I want credit for it. Making those calls was not above and beyond. It was simply what the moment required, and I did it because it was mine to do. I am telling you because it is the most concentrated experience I have ever had of what accountability actually costs. Accountability is easy when the stakes are low. It is something else entirely when it means looking directly at the worst thing that has happened and refusing to look away from your own role in it — not your fault, in this case, but your responsibility. Your burden to carry forward.

My grandfather once told me, after the episode with the horse and the unlatched gate, that the people who could be counted on were the ones who held themselves accountable even when no one was watching. In Iraq, I understood for the first time the full weight of what he meant.

What the Military Gave Me

I came home from Iraq different from the way I had left, as everyone who has served in a combat zone does. I was not broken. I want to say that clearly, because the

narrative of the damaged veteran is both too common and too reductive. I was changed. There is a difference.

What the military gave me that I carry most consciously into public life is an understanding of what functional organizations actually require. Not inspiration (though inspiration matters) but systems. Clear chains of accountability. Standards that are communicated, enforced, and applied consistently regardless of rank or relationship. A culture in which the mission takes priority over individual comfort, and in which the people responsible for executing the mission are given the training, the resources, and the authority to do it.

I have thought many times about the contrast between how a well-run military unit operates and how state government too often operates. In a well-run unit, when something goes wrong, you find out why and you fix it. You do not form a study committee. You do not commission a report that will sit on a shelf. You identify the failure point, you own it at the appropriate level of command, and you implement a correction. Then you test the correction to make sure it worked.

I am not suggesting that government should be run like the military in every respect. The contexts are genuinely

different, and democratic governance has its own necessary processes and procedures that a military command structure does not. But the basic principle — that accountability needs to be real, that problems need to be identified honestly and addressed practically, that the people responsible for outcomes need to be genuinely responsible and not just nominally so — applies as clearly in a legislature as it does in a forward operating base.

Michigan government has not always operated by those principles. Too often, the response to failure has been to expand the program that failed, or to add a layer of oversight that nobody is actually accountable for, or to wait for the next election cycle in the hope that someone else will inherit the problem. That is not governance. That is management of appearances. The people of this state deserve better, and they know it.

I left the Army Reserve with a captain's rank, a logistics specialty that would later form the foundation of my business, and an understanding of service that I had not come in with.

Service is not sacrifice in the dramatic, self-annihilating sense that the word sometimes implies. It is simply the decision to put something beyond yourself at the center of

your effort — to organize your energy around a purpose that is larger than your own comfort or advancement. I learned that in uniform. I have tried to practice it in everything I have done since.

When I ask the people of the 111th District to trust me with their representation in Lansing, I am asking them to believe that I understand what service means — not as an abstraction, but as a lived reality with real costs and real demands. I do understand it.

And I am ready to show up for it again.

Chapter 5
Starting My Business

The call from my cousin Rick came on a Tuesday morning in the spring of 2012. His wife had passed away a few months earlier after a long illness, and the grief had hollowed him out in the way that losing a life partner does, not just emotionally but practically, structurally. He had built his small trucking operation around a life that no longer existed in the form he had built it for. He was done. He was going to Florida. And he wanted to know if I wanted the truck.

One truck. A 2007 Peterbilt with decent miles and a client list thin enough to fit on half a page. Not exactly the foundation of a regional logistics company. But I had spent the previous four years working in supply chain management for an automotive parts manufacturer, I had a business degree I had not yet fully used, and I had been

back from Iraq long enough to understand that the skills I had developed managing ordnance convoys through hostile territory had a civilian application that most people had not yet figured out how to monetize.

I said yes.

What Iraq Taught Me About Logistics

People sometimes assume that military logistics, the moving of supplies through a war zone, is a brute-force operation, all muscle and urgency and improvisation. The reality is almost exactly the opposite. The reason military logistics works, when it works, is precision. Every movement is planned. Every variable that can be anticipated is anticipated. Contingencies are mapped and rehearsed, not because planners believe every contingency will occur, but because the cost of being unprepared when one does is measured in lives rather than dollars.

I brought that mindset home with me from Iraq, and I applied it to one truck and a half-page client list. The first thing I did was build a system: a set of documented procedures for dispatch, routing, vehicle maintenance, client communication, and performance tracking that was far more rigorous than anything Rick's small operation

had ever required. My first driver thought I was slightly unhinged. He came around when he realized that the system worked, that it reduced the small failures and miscommunications that cost time and money. He also saw that clients noticed the difference.

The core insight I had borrowed from my military experience was this: reliability is a product you can sell. In the logistics industry, a lot of operators were competing on price, which is a race to the bottom that nobody wins. I decided to compete on certainty. Not cheaper, but more dependable. Our clients would pay a modest premium because they would know, with a confidence they could not get elsewhere, that what they needed would be where they needed it when they needed it.

That became the foundation of what we eventually formalized as our signature service contract: guaranteed just-in-time delivery of automotive parts to any location in Michigan within the committed window. If we missed, we paid a penalty in real money, not a vague apology. The guarantee was credible because the system behind it was rigorous, and the system was rigorous because I had learned what rigorous actually looked like in an environment where the alternative to rigorous was catastrophe.

Building L Squared

In the early years, the business was essentially me and a very short list of people I trusted. I ran operations out of a home office that doubled as a dining room, which meant that family dinners occasionally had a logistical flavor. I handled dispatch, client relations, billing, and the kind of continuous equipment monitoring that keeps a small fleet running. I drove the truck myself when I had to.

Dan was patient about this in a way that I did not fully appreciate at the time and appreciate enormously in retrospect. He was working long shifts as a firefighter and paramedic, coming home to a house that was also a business, with a wife who was frequently on the phone at odd hours managing something that had gone sideways somewhere in the state. He never complained. He understood, I think, that I needed to build this — not just financially but personally, as a way of applying everything I had accumulated and tested and paid for over the preceding decade.

We grew carefully and deliberately, which is the only way to grow a business that promises reliability as its core product. You cannot guarantee on-time delivery with a fleet that is undercapitalized and a team that is under-

trained. Every truck we added was fully funded before it rolled. Every driver we hired was vetted and trained to our standards before they carried our name on a load. We went from one truck to five in the first three years, and from five to ten by the time we moved out of the home office and into an actual facility.

By 2017, we had over forty employees and a client base that extended across the Lower Peninsula. L Squared — the nickname came from a driver who thought Lawson Logistics needed something shorter to say on the radio, and it stuck — had become a real company, the kind that employed real people in real Michigan communities and contributed something tangible to the regional economy.

I will not pretend that building it was easy, because it was not. There were quarters where making payroll required a level of financial creativity that I would rather not revisit. There were regulatory headaches — state and federal compliance requirements that seemed designed by people who had never actually operated a vehicle for commercial purposes — that consumed time and money I could not afford. There were periods, particularly during the economic turbulence of the mid-2010s, when contracts dried up faster than I could replace them, and I had

to make hard choices about staffing and investment that kept me awake at night in ways I had not experienced since Iraq.

But the business survived, and grew, and the survival and growth were the direct result of the same principles that had gotten me through everything else: preparation, accountability, and the refusal to take shortcuts that feel convenient in the short term and fail you when it matters.

What Running a Business Taught Me About Government

I want to be direct about something, because it is important to what I am asking you to trust me with.

Running a business in Michigan made me a better analyst of government policy than any course I took at Michigan State, any briefing I attended as a trustee, or any position paper I have read since deciding to run for office. Not because business experience is the only valid credential for public service — it is not — but because operating in the actual economy that government policy creates gives you an immediate, practical, unavoidable education in the consequences of the decisions that get made in Lansing.

I watched talented people leave Michigan for states with lower costs and better business climates, and I understood in a way that is very hard to communicate from the outside that the decision was not about loyalty. It was about math. When the math does not work in Michigan, people go somewhere the math works. Every young person who leaves this state and builds their career somewhere else is a cost that does not show up on any budget line but is absolutely real.

I navigated compliance requirements that were duplicative, outdated, and apparently designed without any input from the people who were actually subject to them. I paid taxes that made every hire and every expansion marginally more difficult than they needed to be. I watched the state offer incentive packages to large corporations that would have been genuinely transformative if applied to the thousands of small businesses that collectively employ far more Michiganders than any single large employer ever will.

None of this made me anti-government. I want to be clear about that. I believe in government that works — that does the things it is supposed to do efficiently and accountably and in the genuine interest of the people it serves. What I am against is government that substitutes

complexity for competence, that layers regulation on regulation without ever asking whether the regulation is actually producing the outcome it was designed for, and that treats the people who create jobs and pay taxes as problems to be managed rather than as partners to be supported.

Michigan has enormous economic potential. We have the workforce, the infrastructure, the industrial heritage, and the geographic advantages to be one of the most competitive states in the nation for manufacturing, logistics, technology, and the skilled trades that support all of them. What we have lacked, too often, is a policy environment that gets out of the way of people who are trying to build something.

I built L Squared on one truck and a system borrowed from a war zone. I know what Michigan entrepreneurs are capable of when the conditions are even halfway favorable. My job, if you send me to Lansing, is to make those conditions more than halfway favorable — to fight for the tax relief, the regulatory reform, and the workforce investment that gives the next Becky Lawson a better starting position than the one I had.

That is not a talking point. That is the lesson of the last decade of my life, paid for in full.

Chapter 6
Effecting Change as a Township Trustee

I want to tell you something about local government that most people do not fully appreciate until they are sitting inside it: it is where almost everything that actually affects your daily life gets decided.

Not Lansing. Not Washington. Your township board, your county commission, your local school board — these are the bodies that determine whether your roads get plowed, whether your fire department has functioning equipment, whether your property tax assessment is calculated fairly, and whether the emergency services that Dan and so many people like him provide have the resources to actually do their jobs. The decisions made at this level are immediate and concrete in a way that state and federal policy rarely is, and the people making them are, in most cases, your neighbors — people with day jobs and

families and no particular training in governance, doing their best with the information and resources available to them.

I ran for township trustee because I was one of those neighbors, and I had started to feel, with increasing intensity, that the people making the decisions in our community were not always applying the same rigor to public money that anyone running a household or a business would apply to their own. Not corruption — I want to be clear about that. The people I served alongside were decent and well-intentioned. But good intentions and sound fiscal management are not the same thing, and the gap between them, in local government as in any organization, tends to be filled by inertia and habit and the path of least resistance.

I was not content to watch that happen. I filed for the seat, made my case to the voters, and won. And then I went to work.

Making Millages Fair

The first issue I dug into as a trustee was the millage structure that governed property tax assessments in our township. A millage, for anyone unfamiliar with the term,

is the rate at which property is taxed. One mill equals one dollar per thousand dollars of assessed value. The specific rates, what they fund, and how they are calculated and applied have enormous practical consequences for homeowners and small property owners, particularly in communities where property values have fluctuated significantly over time.

What I found when I started reviewing our township's millage framework was a structure that had not been comprehensively examined in years. Some of the rates in place had been set under conditions that no longer existed. Some of the formulas being used to calculate assessments had quirks that consistently disadvantaged certain categories of property owners, particularly long-term residents whose properties had appreciated, in ways that were not obviously intentional but were clearly unfair.

I am not a tax attorney, and I did not pretend to be one. What I did was ask questions — systematic, persistent, sometimes inconvenient questions — until I understood the structure well enough to identify where it was producing outcomes that could not be justified on the merits. Then, I worked with our township attorney and assessor

to develop adjustments that brought the framework into better alignment with what was actually equitable.

The process was not fast. It was not without friction. There were colleagues on the board who were skeptical of the need for change, and there were constituents who were worried about what change might mean for their own assessments. Working through those concerns required patience and the willingness to explain, repeatedly and in detail, what I had found and why the adjustments I was proposing were fair and appropriate.

But the changes went through. And the result was a millage structure that was more transparent, more equitable, and more defensible to the taxpayers who were subject to it. That is not a glamorous accomplishment. It does not make headlines. But it is exactly the kind of work that makes local government function the way it is supposed to — in the genuine interest of the people it serves.

The Fire Engine

The fire engine dispute is the story I tell most often when people ask me what my time as a trustee was actually like, because it captures something essential about what good governance requires and how rarely it is practiced.

Our township fire department came to the board with a capital request for a new fire engine. (Luckily for me, my husband is with the Fire Department in another town, so we didn't have to have this debate every night.) The request was presented as urgent — the existing engine was aging, maintenance costs were rising, and the department's leadership was understandably concerned about reliability. The price tag for a new engine was well over half a million dollars, and the ask was for the township to fund it essentially in full.

I have enormous respect for firefighters. My husband is one, after all. I understand what they do and what they need, and I have exactly zero interest in playing politics with public safety. But respecting firefighters and approving every capital request they bring to the board are not the same thing. My job as a trustee was to evaluate the request on its merits, which meant asking questions that were not comfortable but that I believed were necessary.

I requested the full maintenance history of the existing engine. I asked for documentation of the specific mechanical concerns that were driving the replacement request. I consulted with an independent equipment specialist — not someone with a stake in the outcome — who reviewed

the records and provided an assessment of the engine's actual remaining service life.

The conclusion was that the existing engine, with a targeted maintenance investment and a documented inspection schedule, had a reasonable expected service life of at least five additional years. The department's concerns were legitimate but addressable through maintenance rather than replacement. A new engine was not urgently necessary.

I brought this analysis to the board and made the case for deferring the capital purchase in favor of the maintenance investment. The fire chief was not happy with me. Several of my colleagues on the board were uncomfortable with what felt to some of them like a confrontation with the department. It would have been considerably easier to simply vote yes and move on.

But easy and right are not always the same thing, and I had been elected to make sound decisions with taxpayer money, not to take the path of least resistance. The board ultimately accepted the recommendation to defer. The maintenance investment was made. The engine continued to serve the township.

The money that was not spent on a premature capital purchase stayed in the township's budget, where it was available for other genuine needs. That is fiscal stewardship. It is not dramatic, it is not the kind of thing that generates gratitude in the short term, and it is absolutely what responsible local governance looks like.

Building Emergency Preparedness from the Ground Up

The third project I am most proud of from my time as a trustee was the development and implementation of a comprehensive emergency preparedness program for our township.

When I first raised the topic at a board meeting, the response was polite but unenthusiastic. Emergency preparedness was one of those categories of governance that everyone agrees is important in the abstract and very few people want to actually fund and build, because the return on investment is invisible when things go well — which is, by definition, most of the time. You only see the value of a preparedness program when something goes wrong, and by then it is too late to build one.

I understood this dynamic, and I did not fight it directly. Instead, I did what I had learned to do in the Army and in my business: I came prepared. I drafted a detailed program outline that covered the specific scenarios our township was realistically vulnerable to, e.g., severe weather events, infrastructure failures, and public health emergencies. I then identified the response capabilities we currently had and the gaps between those capabilities and what a reasonable response to each scenario would require. I put dollar figures on the gaps, and I identified funding mechanisms that would not require a millage increase.

I also made the political case, which was different from the technical case. The technical case was about capabilities and costs. The political case was about accountability, about what it would mean for the township board if a predictable emergency occurred and the community discovered that we had had the opportunity to prepare and had chosen not to. Framed that way, the question was not whether we could afford to build a preparedness program. It was whether we could afford not to.

The program was funded, built, and tested. That last part was, in my view, the most important. A preparedness plan that has never been tested is a document, not

a capability. We ran tabletop exercises. We identified the gaps that only became visible in the testing. We fixed them. By the time I left the board, our township had a genuine, functional emergency preparedness capability that had not existed before.

My years as a township trustee taught me that good governance is not complicated. It requires diligence, honesty, the willingness to ask inconvenient questions, and the discipline to act on the answers even when the answers are not what people expected or wanted to hear. It requires treating public money with the same seriousness you would apply to your own, and holding the systems you are responsible for to the standard of actually working rather than simply existing.

These are not radical principles. They are not partisan principles. They are the basic requirements of the job, and they are not always practiced.

I practiced them as a trustee, and I intend to practice them in Lansing. The scale will be larger and the stakes will be higher, but the principles are the same. Do the work. Ask the questions. Follow the money. Tell the truth.

That is what the people of the 111th District are going to get from me.

Chapter 7
Michigan Priorities – Property Tax Relief

Now, let's get real about the priorities that the Michigan legislature needs to address in its next session, where I hope to represent the 111th District. We can start with property tax relief, a perennial favorite, and with good reason.

Every spring, when the assessment notices go out across Michigan, I get a version of the same conversation. A neighbor, a business contact, someone after church, someone at a youth baseball game, pulls me aside and shows me the number on the paper, and the look on their face is not anger exactly. It is something more tired than anger. It is the look of someone who has been doing everything right, who has been working and saving and main-

taining their home and paying their bills, and who cannot figure out how the math is supposed to keep working.

Property taxes in Michigan are not an abstraction. They are the bill that arrives whether or not you had a good year. They are the reason a retired schoolteacher on a fixed income lies awake wondering whether she can afford to stay in the house where she raised her children. They are the reason a young family that scrimped and sacrificed to make a down payment discovers, within a few years of moving in, that the cost of ownership is increasing faster than their income. They are the reason small business owners — people who took the risk, hired the employees, and invested in their communities — find themselves operating on margins that government is steadily eroding from below.

The Republican Party's core conviction on taxation is simple and correct: government should take no more from citizens than is necessary to fund its essential functions, and every dollar of tax burden represents a decision by government to limit the freedom and opportunity of the people who earned it. Property taxes, in particular, represent a continuous claim on wealth that was already taxed when it was earned and taxed again when the property was purchased. The current trajectory of property taxation in

Michigan is incompatible with that principle, and it needs to change.

The Conservative Case for Fundamental Reform

As a Republican, I believe that property rights are foundational to a free society. The right to own property — to hold it, use it, improve it, pass it to your children — is not a privilege granted by government. It is a natural right that the government exists to protect. A property tax system that steadily erodes the real value of ownership, that makes it increasingly expensive to hold property you have already paid for, is in fundamental tension with that principle.

The pop-up tax, which is the dramatic assessment reset that occurs when a property transfers to a new owner, is a particular affront to property rights and free markets. It creates artificial barriers to mobility, discourages transactions that would otherwise occur in a free market, and imposes a penalty on new buyers that has no principled justification. The House Republican package that would end assessment resets upon sale — keeping values capped even after a transfer — is exactly the kind of structural reform that reflects genuine conservative principles rather than tinkering at the margins.

I support this reform fully and without reservation. The principle that your tax burden on a piece of property should not be determined by when you bought it is basic fairness. It is also basic free market logic: artificial price distortions created by tax policy produce exactly the inefficiencies and inequities that conservatives have always argued government intervention creates. Ending the pop-up tax removes one of those distortions and lets the market work the way it should.

Cutting the Tax Burden at Its Root

The House Republican $5 billion tax relief package, which encompasses the elimination of the 6-mill State Education Tax, the state real estate transfer tax, and the personal property tax on business equipment, represents the most ambitious and principled conservative tax reform proposal Michigan has seen in years. I support it in its entirety, and I want to explain why each component matters.

The State Education Tax is a 6-mill levy that appears on every property tax bill in Michigan and funnels revenue to the School Aid Fund. Eliminating it would provide immediate, tangible relief to every property owner in the state. The Republican position (and mine) is that edu-

cation should be funded through the general revenues of a limited, efficient government, not through a dedicated property tax that places the burden specifically and disproportionately on property owners. Education is a shared public good, and its funding structure should reflect the broad base of the economy rather than targeting those who happen to own real estate.

The real estate transfer tax is a direct penalty on property transactions. It's a government toll collected at the moment of sale that makes every purchase more expensive and every sale less productive. From a free market perspective, transaction taxes are among the most economically damaging forms of taxation because they directly suppress the voluntary exchanges that make markets function. Eliminating it would make Michigan more competitive for homebuyers, business acquisitions, and investment that currently flows to states without this drag.

The personal property tax on business equipment has been identified by every serious conservative economist and business advocacy organization as one of the most significant impediments to manufacturing investment in Michigan. It taxes the tools of production annually — the machinery, equipment, and assets that businesses use to

create value and employ people. This is capital formation punitively taxed, and the result is exactly what conservatives would predict: manufacturers locate equipment in states that do not tax it, Michigan loses jobs, and working people bear the cost. Elimination of this tax is not a giveaway to corporations. It is the removal of a government penalty on the productive activity that creates the wages, jobs, and wealth that fund everything else.

Relief for Seniors: A Conservative Obligation

Property tax relief for senior citizens is not simply a compassionate policy. It is a conservative obligation rooted in a fundamental principle: government should not be in the business of forcing people out of homes they have already paid for.

A senior homeowner who purchased their home decades ago, paid off the mortgage, paid their taxes faithfully, and now lives on Social Security and a modest pension has fulfilled every obligation they made when they entered into the social compact of property ownership. The continuing and increasing property tax demand that arrives every year, regardless of their income, is, in its essence, a claim that they never fully own the property

they thought they purchased. That is antithetical to the conservative understanding of property rights.

Targeted senior relief through expanded Homestead Property Tax Credit provisions is a meaningful near-term step, and I support it. But it is a band-aid on a structural wound. The real relief for seniors comes from the broader reforms I have described. These include lower assessments, eliminated levies, and a fundamentally reduced overall property tax burden. When the total bill is smaller, seniors benefit proportionately with everyone else.

The Education Exemption: Carrying Conservative Logic to Its Conclusion

The proposal to phase out school-based property taxes for property owners who do not have dependents enrolled in public K-12 schools reflects a sound conservative instinct: that taxation should be connected to the services it funds, and that taxing people for services they are not using is difficult to justify on principled grounds.

I am sympathetic to this argument, and I believe it deserves serious consideration in Lansing. Property owners who have no children in the public school system, such as retirees, empty nesters, single adults, couples who have

chosen not to have children, are paying a tax specifically dedicated to funding an institution they are not using. The argument that they benefit indirectly from an educated workforce is real but diffuse, and it does not necessarily justify the current level of mandatory contribution.

At a minimum, I believe the legislature should examine whether the current distribution of educational funding burdens is fair to property owners across different life stages, and whether alternative funding structures that spread the obligation more broadly across the economy might better serve both taxpayers and schools. This is a debate worth having, honestly, and I will bring it to Lansing.

What I Will Fight For

My property tax agenda is built on the conservative foundation that government should take less, not more — that the default position of any tax system should be to minimize the burden on citizens and return resources to the productive private economy.

I will fight to end the pop-up assessment reset that penalizes new buyers and distorts the housing market. I will fight for the full House Republican tax package — eliminating the State Education Tax, the transfer tax, and

the personal property tax on equipment. I will fight for expanded, meaningful senior relief that allows older Michiganders to stay in their homes with dignity. And I will continue to press the fundamental question that should guide every tax debate in Lansing: Does the government actually need this money, or is it simply accustomed to taking it?

The people of Michigan work too hard and sacrifice too much to have an ever-increasing share of what they build taken by a government that has not earned that level of claim on their lives. I will fight to change that.

Chapter 8
Michigan Priorities – Energy Reliability

There is a conversation I have had more times than I can count over the past several years, and it goes roughly like this: someone tells me about a power outage, a long one, not the two-hour kind but the kind that lasts two or three days in the middle of a Michigan winter, and what it cost them. Not just the inconvenience, though the inconvenience is real. The food they lost. The pipes they nearly lost. The elderly parent they had to relocate temporarily. The small business that had to close for two days and absorb the loss.

And then they ask me, with a tone that is somewhere between frustration and resignation, why a state with the resources and the industrial history of Michigan cannot keep the lights on reliably.

The answer begins with an honest assessment of what has gone wrong: Michigan has allowed an ideologically driven energy agenda to override the engineering requirements of grid reliability and the economic reality of what Michigan families and businesses can afford to pay. The result is exactly what sound conservative energy policy would predict when government mandates displace market forces and common sense.

The Green Mandate Problem — Speaking Plainly

Republicans believe in an all-of-the-above energy strategy that prioritizes reliability, affordability, and security. We believe that energy policy should be driven by the needs of ratepayers and the requirements of the grid — not by political timelines, federal virtue-signaling, or the preferences of environmental advocacy groups that do not pay utility bills.

Michigan's current energy policy direction, driven by aggressive renewable mandates passed under Democratic majorities, has prioritized the rapid phase-out of reliable baseload generation — coal, natural gas, and nuclear — in favor of intermittent wind and solar sources that cannot

provide power on demand. This is not a conservative caricature of the policy. It is the policy, stated plainly.

The consequences are what any honest engineer or economist would predict. When you retire dispatchable baseload generation, i.e., power plants that produce electricity when you need it, in the amounts you need it, before you have adequate replacement capacity to cover the gaps, your grid becomes less reliable. The margin between supply and demand narrows. When demand spikes in a polar vortex or a heat wave, or when the wind stops blowing, and the sun goes down, the grid has less cushion. Outages become more likely. Prices spike. And the families and businesses that depend on reliable, affordable electricity absorb the cost.

I will be direct in a way that most politicians on this issue are not: Michigan's renewable energy mandates should be reviewed, revised, and in some cases rolled back. The legislature should not be locked into timelines and percentage targets that were set without adequate analysis of the grid reliability implications, and that the market and the engineering have already demonstrated are not achievable on the proposed schedule without unacceptable costs and risks.

This is not opposition to clean energy as a concept. Republicans support technological innovation in energy, including nuclear power, which produces zero carbon emissions and is one of the most reliable baseload sources available, and which Democrats have inexplicably excluded from their clean energy frameworks. A genuinely sensible energy policy would be aggressively pro-nuclear, support the continued operation of existing natural gas capacity as a bridge fuel, and allow renewable deployment at the pace that the market and the grid can accommodate — not the pace that legislative mandates demand.

Defending Affordable Energy for Michigan Families

Michigan utility bills have increased substantially, and the trajectory points in one direction — up — as long as the current policy direction continues. Utilities are investing billions of dollars in renewable infrastructure, grid upgrades, and the retirement and replacement of existing generation. Ratepayers are paying for all of it through their monthly bills.

The Republican position is that ratepayers should not be asked to subsidize an energy transformation that the

government has mandated, but that the market has not chosen. When utilities are required by law to retire reliable, low-cost generation and replace it with more expensive alternatives, the cost difference is a hidden tax on everyone who uses electricity. That hidden tax falls hardest on the people who can least afford it: fixed-income seniors, working families, and small businesses operating on tight margins.

I support legislation that requires the Michigan Public Service Commission to conduct explicit cost-impact analysis before approving any utility plan that accelerates the retirement of existing baseload generation or mandates new renewable investment. Ratepayers should know what the green energy transition is going to cost them — specifically, annually, per household — before it is approved. The current process obscures those costs in technical rate proceedings that most people cannot navigate. That opacity is not an accident. It is how transformative and expensive policies get implemented without the public consent that democracy requires.

Performance Accountability for Utilities

While I oppose the ideologically driven mandate agenda, I am equally committed to holding utilities accountable for the basic service they are paid to provide. DTE Electric and Consumers Energy have historically underperformed on reliability metrics, and the current regulatory structure has not adequately incentivized improvement.

The conservative argument for performance-based regulation is not that government should micromanage utility operations. It is that the regulated monopoly structure under which these utilities operate creates a relationship of enforced dependency that justifies genuine accountability. When you are legally required to buy your electricity from a single provider, that provider has an obligation to deliver reliable service, and the regulatory system that grants them their monopoly has an obligation to enforce that standard.

Real performance-based regulation, with meaningful financial penalties for utilities that consistently fail to meet reliability benchmarks, is not government overreach. It is the minimum accountability that a regulated monopoly structure requires. I support it, and I will push for it in Lansing.

The Underground Grid and Infrastructure Investment

The proposal to move overhead lines underground in storm-prone areas deserves consideration as part of a broader infrastructure reliability strategy, but it must be approached with the fiscal discipline that Republicans bring to every spending question.

Underground installation is dramatically more expensive than overhead infrastructure, and the cost ultimately falls on ratepayers. Before any significant underground conversion program is approved, there must be a rigorous, transparent cost-benefit analysis that demonstrates the reliability improvement justifies the ratepayer investment. I needs to be done on a project-by-project basis, not as a blanket statewide mandate.

I support targeted underground investment in specific high-failure corridors where the reliability case is clear, and the cost-effectiveness has been demonstrated. I oppose broad mandates that would impose substantial costs on ratepayers across the state without adequate justification. The default should always be the most cost-effective solution, not the most technologically ambitious one.

The Path Forward: All-of-the-Above

Michigan's energy future should be built on a foundation of reliability first, affordability always, and honest accounting of what every policy choice costs the families and businesses who pay for it.

Republicans support an all-of-the-above energy strategy that keeps every proven, cost-effective generation source on the table. This means nuclear, natural gas, and coal where it remains economical, and renewables deployed at the pace the market and grid can support. We oppose the artificial elimination of reliable generation sources on politically determined timelines. We support the technological development that will eventually make clean energy more reliable and more affordable, without forcing today's ratepayers to subsidize tomorrow's aspirations.

I will fight in Lansing for the rollback of mandates that are driving up costs and threatening reliability, for genuine performance accountability that protects ratepayers, and for an honest energy debate that puts the needs of Michigan families and businesses first.

That is the conservative energy agenda, and it is what Michigan needs.

Chapter 9
Michigan Priorities – Election Integrity

Of all the issues I discuss on the campaign trail, election integrity generates the most immediate response from voters, and for good reason. The right to vote is the foundational right of democratic self-governance. It is worth nothing if the system that administers it is not secure, accurate, and trusted by the people it is supposed to serve.

Republicans have been clear and consistent on this point: election integrity is not a talking point. It is a governing responsibility. Free and fair elections require that every vote cast is a legal vote, that the rolls contain only eligible voters, and that the processes of registration, voting, and counting are administered with transparency and accuracy. These are not partisan demands. They are the minimum requirements of democratic legitimacy.

Why Election Integrity Matters — The Republican Framework

The Republican Party's position on election integrity flows from a set of principles that I hold without apology.

First, voting is a right of American citizens. It is not a right of permanent residents, visa holders, refugees, or others who are lawfully present in the United States but have not obtained citizenship. The distinction between citizen and non-citizen is not arbitrary — it is the foundational distinction of political membership in a self-governing republic. The integrity of democratic elections depends on ensuring that this distinction is maintained in practice, not merely on paper.

Second, confidence in elections is not optional. A democracy in which a significant portion of the electorate does not trust the integrity of the electoral process is a democracy in serious trouble. The response to that erosion of confidence is not to dismiss the concerns as illegitimate or to accuse those who raise them of bad faith. It is to build electoral systems that are genuinely secure — secure enough that the evidence of their integrity is visible and verifiable, not simply asserted.

Third, the burden of proof in election security belongs to the system, not the citizen. When someone raises a concern about the accuracy of voter rolls, the security of ballot handling, or the verification of voter eligibility, the appropriate response from election administrators and legislators is to demonstrate that the concern has been addressed, not to demand that the citizen prove a negative.

Proof of Citizenship: The Right Policy

The election integrity legislation advancing through the Michigan legislature, which requires voters to provide proof of United States citizenship when registering, is the right policy, and I support it completely.

The case is simple. Voting is a right of citizens. If a right belongs exclusively to citizens, then the process of accessing that right should include verification of citizenship. We do not accept self-attestation as sufficient verification for driver's licenses, professional licenses, passports, or dozens of other government benefits and privileges. The argument that self-attestation is sufficient for something as important as voting is not a principled position. Rather, it is an argument for convenience over security.

Current federal law requires voter registration applicants to attest, under penalty of perjury, that they are United States citizens. But attestation without verification is a weak security measure. The penalty for false attestation is meaningful only if false attestations are detected, and the current system's ability to detect them is limited. Documentary proof of citizenship — a passport, a birth certificate, a certificate of naturalization — provides an independent verification that does not rely on the honor system.

Responding to Democratic Opposition

Democratic colleagues in the legislature have raised objections to proof of citizenship requirements that deserve a direct response.

The objection that noncitizen voting is rare does not justify the absence of verification. Security measures are not evaluated solely by the frequency of the violations they prevent. No, they are evaluated by the severity of the breach and the importance of the system being protected. Elections determine who governs the country. The security standard applied to that determination should be higher, not lower, than the standard applied to ordinary

transactions. The rarity argument, taken to its logical conclusion, would justify eliminating virtually every election security measure — since each individual violation, taken in isolation, is statistically rare.

The objection that documentary requirements burden low-income or minority voters assumes, condescendingly, that these voters are uniquely unable to obtain documentation that the vast majority of Americans already possess. Republicans support making citizenship documentation accessible and free to all eligible citizens who need assistance obtaining it. A proof of citizenship requirement paired with a funded, accessible documentation assistance program is both secure and fair. What it is not is an instrument of suppression. That accusation is a political charge, not a factual one.

The objection that the requirement is motivated by partisan interest is, frankly, a political argument dressed up as a principled one. Republicans support election security measures because we believe in election security, for the same reason we believe in border security, government accountability, and the rule of law. The suggestion that any measure that makes elections more secure must be motivated by a desire to suppress votes is an argument

that no election security measure could ever be legitimate, which is an absurd position.

Cleaning the Voter Rolls

Proof of citizenship at registration is one component of a broader election integrity agenda that Republicans have long championed.

Michigan's voter rolls have historically carried significant accuracy problems, such as records for voters who have died, moved out of state, or otherwise become ineligible but were not removed in a timely fashion. The federal National Voter Registration Act requires states to maintain accurate rolls while establishing procedural guardrails around list maintenance. Within those guardrails, Michigan should be conducting systematic, regular, and rigorous voter roll maintenance to ensure that the rolls reflect only current eligible voters.

This is good governance, not voter suppression. A voter roll that contains outdated or inaccurate records is not a neutral status quo. It is a security vulnerability. An inaccurate record is a potential pathway for fraudulent voting, whether or not that pathway is frequently used. Closing it is the responsible thing to do.

I will support legislation that requires more frequent and more systematic voter roll maintenance, including regular cross-referencing against death records, change-of-address data, and citizenship records. The goal is simple: every person on the rolls should be a currently eligible voter, and every currently eligible voter should be on the rolls. Both sides of that equation matter.

Absentee Voting Security

Michigan voters passed no-reason absentee voting in 2018, and Republicans respect the outcome of that vote. Expanded absentee voting access is now part of Michigan's electoral landscape, and the security measures surrounding it must be robust enough to ensure that the expansion of access does not come at the expense of electoral integrity.

Republicans support strong signature verification requirements for absentee ballots, i.e., real verification by trained personnel, with clear standards and an accessible cure process for voters whose signatures do not initially match. We support secure chain-of-custody procedures for absentee ballots from the moment they are issued through the moment they are counted. We support prohi-

bitions on ballot harvesting, which is the practice of third parties collecting and submitting ballots on behalf of voters. Ballot harvesting introduces an unacceptable potential for fraud and coercion. And we support the timely processing and counting of absentee ballots under conditions of full public transparency and meaningful bipartisan observation.

Post-Election Auditing

Republicans strongly support robust post-election auditing as a standard, non-negotiable component of Michigan's electoral process. Risk-limiting audits, hand-count verification of a statistically significant sample of ballots, and the public availability of cast vote records allow independent verification of electronic counting results and provide the evidence base that public confidence in elections requires.

The argument against rigorous post-election auditing — that it is unnecessary because elections are already secure — proves too much. We audit financial accounts not because we assume fraud in every case, but because verification is the standard of accountability in any system that matters. Elections matter more than financial accounts,

which means the auditing standard should be higher, not lower.

Building Trust Through Security

I will close this chapter with a commitment that I make without qualification: I will never stop fighting for the security and integrity of Michigan's elections, and I will never accept the argument that security and access are in fundamental tension.

Republicans believe that elections should be easy to participate in for every eligible citizen and impossible to manipulate for those who are not. Both of those goals are achievable. Both of them are necessary. And the willingness to fight for both, against opposition that would sacrifice security for political convenience, is part of what I am asking the people of the 111th District to send me to Lansing to do.

Michigan's elections should be above reproach. I will work every day to make them so.

Chapter 10
Michigan Priorities – Education and Parental Rights

My grandmother taught high school in Grand Rapids for forty years. She believed with her whole heart in the power of education to change the course of a life, and she was right. What she taught in those classrooms, the rigor, the knowledge, the habits of mind that genuine education produces, was real and lasting and good.

But, my grandmother also believed something else, something that has become increasingly controversial in Michigan's current education debate: that what happened in her classroom was ultimately accountable to the parents of the children sitting in it. That she was serving families, not supplanting them. That her professional authority

over instruction did not translate into institutional authority over children's values, identities, or moral formation.

That understanding — the understanding that educators serve families rather than replace them — is under serious and sustained challenge in Michigan's public schools today. Republicans are fighting to restore it, and I intend to be part of that fight.

The Academic Crisis: Honesty First

Before addressing the values and parental rights dimensions of the education debate, I want to be honest about the academic dimension, because no amount of curriculum debate matters if students are not learning to read and do math.

Michigan's academic outcomes are a genuine crisis. Reading proficiency rates, particularly among lower-income students, are deeply inadequate. Math outcomes have declined. The percentage of Michigan students graduating genuinely prepared for college, skilled trades training, or competitive employment is far below what a state with Michigan's resources and heritage should accept.

Republicans believe in high academic standards, rigorous curriculum, meaningful assessment, and honest accountability for results. We believe that the inflation of grades and the lowering of standards — the feel-good approach to educational accountability that prioritizes the appearance of success over its reality — is a betrayal of the students it purports to help. A student who is told they are proficient when they are not is being set up for failure in the world beyond the classroom, and the people most harmed by that dishonesty are the students who have the fewest alternative resources.

I support Michigan's third-grade reading guarantee and its rigorous implementation. I support a return to explicit phonics instruction. The evidence-based approach to reading has consistently shown to be superior to the whole-language methods that have dominated Michigan classrooms for too long. I support a rigorous math curriculum that emphasizes computational fluency and genuine problem-solving, not the conceptual mush that has replaced direct instruction in too many districts.

I further support honest assessment. This means testing that tells parents and taxpayers the truth about whether

students are learning, not tests calibrated to produce acceptable-looking results.

The Skilled Trades: A Republican Priority

Republicans have long understood something that the educational establishment has been slow to accept: the four-year college path is not right for every student, and the cultural insistence that it is has done enormous damage — to individual students saddled with debt and mismatched credentials, and to the Michigan economy that desperately needs skilled tradespeople.

Electricians, plumbers, welders, machinists, HVAC technicians — these are not consolation prizes for students who couldn't make it to college. They are skilled, demanding, well-compensated careers in fields where Michigan faces severe workforce shortages. The manufacturer who cannot find a qualified machinist, the homebuilder who cannot find an electrician, the hospital system that cannot find enough skilled technicians — these are not abstract economic statistics. They are the real-world consequences of an educational system that systematically steered a generation of capable young people away from the trades.

I will fight in Lansing for the expansion of vocational and technical education. I mean real vocational education, with industry-standard equipment, credentialed instructors, and genuine pathways to apprenticeship and certification, beginning in middle school and continuing through high school. I will fight for the funding, the curriculum, and the cultural shift that elevates skilled trades to their proper status alongside academic pathways. And I will fight against the credentialist bias that has hollowed out Michigan's vocational education infrastructure in favor of a college-prep model that does not serve the majority of students.

Parental Rights: The Republican Foundation

Republicans believe that parents are the primary authorities over their children's education, upbringing, and moral formation. This is not a position we arrived at recently or adopted for political purposes. It is the foundational conservative understanding of the family as the basic unit of society.

When government schools act as though they have co-equal or superior authority to parents over the values and formation of children, they are overstepping their

proper role in a way that is not only politically objectionable to conservatives but philosophically wrong. Schools serve families. They do not replace them. That principle should govern every policy decision in Michigan's educational system.

Michigan law already recognizes parents' fundamental right to review instructional materials and observe classroom activities. The problem is that this right, in too many districts, exists on paper while being practically undermined by institutional culture, bureaucratic complexity, and an educational establishment that views parental engagement as a complication rather than an obligation.

Republicans are fighting to make parental rights real — not just legally recognized, but practically exercised. That means that the curriculum is posted publicly and accessibly, not buried in administrative archives. It means proactive advance notice of sensitive content, not after-the-fact disclosure when parents complain. It means an institutional culture that genuinely welcomes parental involvement rather than managing it at arm's length.

I will support legislation that strengthens parental notification requirements, expands curriculum transparency,

and creates enforceable remedies when school districts fail to meet their obligations to the families they serve.

Opposing the Ideological Agenda in Michigan Classrooms

Republicans have been direct about a concern that polls show is widely shared by Michigan parents across racial and political lines: that Michigan's public schools have, in too many cases, allowed an ideological agenda to crowd out the academic mission that parents and taxpayers are paying for.

This takes multiple forms. The intrusion of racially divisive frameworks, e.g., the teaching that American history is fundamentally and irredeemably a story of racial oppression, that students should understand themselves primarily through the lens of racial identity, and that the appropriate response to past discrimination is present-day discrimination in the opposite direction. With all due respect to issues of racial injustice that demand our attention, this is an ideological project, not an educational one. It divides students from one another, instills guilt and resentment rather than knowledge and civic pride, and

displaces the rigorous academic content that students actually need.

I oppose the teaching of these frameworks in Michigan public schools. I support legislation that prohibits public schools from instructing students that any individual bears personal responsibility for the actions of members of their racial group, or that any individual's moral worth is determined by their race. This is not a restriction on honest historical education. Students should absolutely learn accurate American history, including the history of slavery, segregation, and ongoing racial inequities. What they should not be taught is a politicized interpretive framework that assigns collective guilt and divides them by race.

Gender Identity and Parental Notification: The Republican Position

The debate over gender identity policies in Michigan schools is one where Republicans have been clear, consistent, and correct. I will not soften my position to accommodate the pressure that has been brought to bear on this issue.

When a student requests a social gender transition in the school setting, e.g., asking to be addressed by a dif-

ferent name or pronouns, requesting accommodation in bathrooms or locker rooms, parents have an absolute right to be notified. Not because parents are enemies of their children. Not because the student's experience is unimportant. But because parents are the primary authorities over their children's upbringing, and a school that actively withholds information about significant aspects of a child's social experience from that child's parents is inserting government between families in a way that is both legally suspect and morally wrong.

The argument that parental notification policies put children at risk — that some children's home environments are unsafe and that schools must therefore maintain secrecy from parents — is an argument for removing children from those homes through the established child protective services process, not an argument for establishing a routine policy of parental non-disclosure across the board. The rare and difficult circumstances that genuinely involve an unsafe home environment should be handled through child protection authorities, with the full engagement of law enforcement and social services. They should not be used to justify a general policy of keeping parents in the dark about their children's experiences at school.

I will support legislation requiring parental notification when a student requests a name or pronoun change in the school setting. I will support legislation prohibiting schools from maintaining policies of deliberate parental non-disclosure on gender identity matters. And I will oppose any policy that treats parents as a threat to be managed rather than as the primary authorities over their children's lives.

School Choice: Empowering Families

Republicans believe that parents should have the power to choose the educational environment that best serves their children, not just the children of families wealthy enough to afford private schools or fortunate enough to live in districts with high-performing public schools. School choice is a matter of educational justice and parental freedom simultaneously.

I support the expansion of Michigan's school choice options. These include charter schools, Education Savings Accounts, inter-district open enrollment, and homeschooling support, which serve as mechanisms that put educational authority where it belongs: with families. Competition for students creates incentives for schools

to improve. Parental choice creates accountability that no regulatory structure can replicate. And the ability to exit a school that is failing your child is a right that no family should have to petition the government to exercise.

What I Will Fight For

My education agenda is grounded in the Republican principles of academic excellence, parental authority, and genuine accountability.

I will fight for rigorous academic standards honestly assessed, with a particular focus on early literacy and the skilled trades pathways that Michigan's economy desperately needs. I will fight for the practical implementation of parental rights — curriculum transparency, proactive notification, and an institutional culture that serves families rather than circumvents them. I will fight against the ideological agenda that has invaded Michigan classrooms and displaced the academic mission that students and taxpayers deserve. And I will fight for school choice policies that put power where it belongs — in the hands of Michigan's families.

My grandmother spent forty years building something real in her classroom. She would recognize what has gone

wrong in too many of Michigan's schools today, and she would not accept it. Neither will I.

Chapter 11
Michigan Priorities – Regulatory & Government Reform

When I started Lawson Logistics in 2012, one of the first things I discovered was that the state of Michigan had a remarkable talent for making simple things complicated. Opening a business means obtaining the necessary licenses, navigating the permitting process, and understanding my obligations under a dozen overlapping regulatory frameworks. None of it was impossible, but all of it was harder than it needed to be. And harder than it needed to be means more expensive than it needed to be, which means fewer jobs created, fewer risks taken, and fewer people served.

I was not unique in that experience. Every small business owner I know in Michigan has a version of the same story.

The regulations are not all wrong individually. Some of them exist for legitimate reasons and reflect genuine public interests. But the accumulation of them, layer upon layer built over decades without any systematic review of whether they still make sense or still achieve their intended purposes, has created a regulatory environment that functions as a slow tax on ambition.

Republicans believe that the proper role of government regulation is to protect the public from genuine harms — fraud, dangerous products, environmental damage, workplace injury — not to serve as a barrier to entry that protects established interests from competition or that justifies the existence of regulatory bureaucracies. Every regulation should be able to answer the question: what specific harm does this prevent, and is the cost of compliance proportionate to that benefit? If it cannot answer that question, it should not exist.

The Permitting and Licensing Problem

Michigan's permitting and licensing system is a monument to institutional inertia. Licenses that were created for reasons that made sense in a different era have accumulated without any systematic review of whether they

remain necessary. The result is a state where the barrier to entering certain occupations has nothing to do with the actual skill or risk involved and everything to do with the lobbying power of established practitioners who benefit from limiting competition.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy has documented extensively that Michigan's occupational licensing requirements are among the more burdensome in the nation for a range of low- and middle-income occupations — fields where the licensing requirements impose real costs on aspiring workers without demonstrable public safety benefits. Interior designers, cosmetologists, and certain categories of contractors — the list of licensed occupations in Michigan includes many where the primary function of the license is to limit supply and protect incumbents, not to protect consumers.

Republicans support a zero-based review of Michigan's occupational licensing requirements — not a study, not a report, but a systematic legislative review that requires every occupational license to justify its continued existence based on current evidence. Licenses that protect public safety should be maintained and properly administered. Licenses that exist primarily to limit competition should

be eliminated. The people who are currently blocked from entering a trade or profession by licensing requirements that serve no legitimate safety purpose should be free to work.

The business permitting process deserves the same scrutiny. Michigan should be competing with other states for business investment, and the speed and cost of the permitting process are real factors in that competition. Businesses that can get through a permitting process in six weeks in Indiana or Ohio and six months in Michigan will not wait for Michigan. They will take their investment, their jobs, and their tax revenue to the state that actually wants them.

I support streamlined, time-limited permitting processes with automatic approval provisions when agencies fail to act within the required period. Government agencies that cannot meet reasonable processing timelines should not be able to hold applicants hostage indefinitely. Certainty and speed in the permitting process are not administrative luxuries — they are economic necessities.

Housing, Land Use, and the Supply Crisis

Michigan has a housing supply problem, and the evidence is visible in rising rents, declining homeownership rates among younger residents, and the steady exodus of working-age Michiganders to states where housing is more affordable.

Republicans understand that housing affordability is fundamentally a supply problem, and that supply problems are fundamentally regulatory problems. The reason new housing is not being built at the rate Michigan needs is not a lack of willing builders or buyers — it is the accumulation of local mandates, zoning restrictions, minimum lot size requirements, site plan approval processes, and other regulatory barriers that make new construction slow, expensive, and uncertain.

The House Regulatory Reform Committee's consideration of legislation to limit local mandates on minimum lot sizes, parcel requirements, and site plan approvals is the right direction. Local governments have legitimate interests in land use planning, and I am not arguing for the elimination of all local zoning authority. But when local regulatory requirements are systematically preventing the construction of housing that Michiganders need and can

afford, the state legislature has both the authority and the responsibility to set minimum standards that prevent local restrictions from becoming effective bans on new housing.

The regulatory cost of new construction, inclusive of permits, impact fees, compliance requirements, delay costs, represents a significant percentage of the total cost of a new home. Every dollar of regulatory cost that can be eliminated without sacrificing genuine public interest is a dollar that makes housing more affordable for Michigan families. That is a direct, practical benefit to real people, and it is why regulatory reform is not just a business agenda. It is a family agenda.

Labor Mandates and the Cost of Hiring

Michigan's recent expansion of paid sick leave requirements and other labor mandates has imposed real and measurable costs on the small businesses and restaurants that are already operating on thin margins in a challenging economic environment.

I want to be clear about my position on this, because I think it is sometimes mischaracterized: Republicans do not oppose workers having paid sick leave or other benefits. We oppose government mandates that require em-

ployers to provide specific benefits regardless of their financial capacity to do so. The difference is important.

A large corporation with substantial profit margins can absorb a mandated benefit increase with a relatively minor impact on its operations. A restaurant with fifteen employees operating on a 4 percent profit margin may not be able to absorb it without reducing hours, eliminating positions, or closing. The mandate does not distinguish between these situations. It imposes the same requirement on both, and the businesses least able to absorb the cost are the ones most likely to be harmed — along with their employees and the communities they serve.

The Republican position is that wages and benefits should be determined by the market — by the competition for workers and the financial capacity of employers — not by legislative mandate. When labor markets are tight, employers raise wages and benefits to attract workers without being told to. When mandates outpace what the market can sustain, jobs disappear. Michigan's small business owners are not the enemy of their employees. They are, in most cases, people who care deeply about the people who work for them and who are doing everything they can

to build something sustainable. They deserve a regulatory environment that makes that possible.

What I Will Fight For

My regulatory reform agenda is grounded in the conservative principle that government should do what is necessary and nothing more — that the burden of justification belongs to the regulator, not to the person being regulated.

I will fight for a zero-based review of occupational licensing that eliminates requirements that do not serve genuine public safety purposes. I will fight for permitting reform that makes Michigan competitive with other states for business investment. I will fight for land use reform that removes the regulatory barriers to housing construction that are making Michigan unaffordable for the next generation. And I will fight against labor mandates that impose costs on small businesses without regard for their ability to survive them.

Michigan will not grow its way to prosperity by making it harder to build things, hire people, and start businesses. The path forward runs through regulatory reform, and I will be on the front lines of that fight in Lansing.

Chapter 12
Michigan Priorities – Educational Deficits

My grandmother was proud of her decades spent teaching in Michigan, but she was also honest about something that the educational establishment in this state has been less than honest about for decades: Michigan's academic outcomes are not good enough, and they have not been good enough for a long time, and the people bearing the heaviest cost of that failure are the children who can least afford it.

The data is not ambiguous. Michigan has ranked near the bottom of national fourth-grade reading assessments for years. Math outcomes at the fourth and eighth grade levels have been a persistent concern on national benchmarks. The percentage of Michigan students graduating

genuinely prepared for the demands of college, skilled trades training, or competitive employment is far below what it should be.

Republicans believe in calling this what it is: a failure of policy, of institutional accountability, and of the honest prioritization of student outcomes over adult interests. And we believe in fixing it, not with new bureaucracies and new spending programs, but with rigorous standards, honest accountability, market-based competition, and the redirection of resources toward what actually works.

The Reading Crisis: Cause and Cure

Michigan's reading crisis is not mysterious. Its primary cause is well documented, extensively researched, and — most importantly — directly addressable through policy.

For decades, Michigan's schools taught reading using whole-language and balanced literacy approaches that research has consistently shown to be less effective than explicit, systematic phonics instruction. This is not a contested scientific question. The evidence base for phonics — for the direct, sequential teaching of the relationship between letters and sounds — is among the most robust in educational research. The evidence that whole-lan-

guage approaches produce inferior outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged students who do not benefit from rich reading environments at home, is equally clear.

Michigan has begun to acknowledge this, and efforts to mandate the science of reading in teacher preparation and classroom instruction are steps in the right direction. But Republicans will push further and faster, because every year that passes is another cohort of Michigan students leaving elementary school without the reading foundation they need.

I support mandatory implementation of evidence-based reading instruction across all Michigan public schools, with real accountability measures for districts that fail to implement it — not just reporting requirements, but consequences that create genuine urgency. I support investment in teacher training on explicit phonics instruction as a near-term priority, because the curriculum can change only as fast as teachers are prepared to deliver it. And I support honest, transparent reading assessment that tells parents the truth about whether their children are reading proficiently — not adjusted scores calibrated to avoid embarrassing institutions.

Career and Technical Education: Closing the Access Gap

Michigan's Career and Technical Education programs are among the most significant and underutilized assets in our educational system, and the inequity of access to them — with rural and lower-income districts dramatically underrepresented — is one of the most straightforward policy failures in the state.

The problem is largely structural: CTE programs are expensive to establish and operate, and smaller rural districts that lack the local millage base to fund them are simply left without access. The result is a geography of educational opportunity that benefits suburban and urban students with access to strong CTE programs while leaving rural students without the vocational pathways that could transform their economic prospects.

Republicans support the redirection of state educational funding to close this gap, not through new bureaucracies or new layers of administration, but through direct funding for CTE program expansion in districts that currently lack access. Every Michigan student, regardless of their zip code, should have access to quality vocational and technical education. The failure to provide it is not just an

equity failure. It is an economic failure that costs Michigan the workforce it needs in the trades and technical fields where labor shortages are already constraining growth.

I also want to address the teacher shortage that is affecting CTE programs specifically, because it is a real and significant constraint. Tradespeople and technical professionals who could bring invaluable expertise into classrooms are often deterred by certification requirements designed for traditional academic educators and not relevant to their expertise. Republicans support alternative certification pathways for CTE instructors that streamline the process without sacrificing quality. This would get qualified practitioners into classrooms faster and keep them there longer.

Weighted Funding: Getting Resources to Students Who Need Them

Michigan's school finance system was last comprehensively reformed in 1994, and it has not kept pace with what we now understand about the differential costs of educating students with different needs. English Language Learners, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities — these students require more re-

sources to achieve the outcomes that Michigan's educational standards demand, and the current funding formula does not adequately reflect those differential costs.

Republicans support a weighted student funding system that directs additional resources to the students who require them — not through new bureaucratic programs, but through a direct per-pupil formula that follows the student. The principle is straightforward: if a student requires more resources to achieve grade-level outcomes, the funding system should provide those resources. A funding system that provides equal resources for unequal needs is not equitable — it is a guarantee of unequal outcomes.

Critically, a weighted funding system should be designed so that the dollars follow the student regardless of which school they attend — public, charter, or private through an Education Savings Account. The money belongs to the student's education, not to the institution. This connects the school finance reform to the school choice agenda: when funding follows students, schools have genuine incentives to serve them well.

Accountability Without Bureaucracy

Republicans believe in strong educational accountability. This is the honest, transparent measurement of student outcomes and the use of that measurement to drive improvement. What we do not believe in is the proliferation of accountability bureaucracies that consume resources and educator time without producing better outcomes for students.

Michigan's Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework and the various reporting and compliance requirements that schools navigate represent a significant administrative burden that falls most heavily on smaller and rural districts with the least capacity to absorb it. The goal of accountability is student learning, not compliance documentation. Regulatory reform in education should apply the same standard as regulatory reform in business: every requirement should be able to demonstrate a direct benefit to student outcomes, and those that cannot should be eliminated.

I will fight in Lansing for an educational accountability system that is honest about outcomes, direct in its consequences, and stripped of the bureaucratic overhead that diverts resources from classrooms.

Chapter 13
Michigan Priorities – Healthcare Costs

Healthcare costs are the kitchen table issue that cuts across every other policy debate in this book, because they affect every Michigan family regardless of income, age, employment status, or political affiliation. The working family that cannot afford the deductible on their employer plan. The small business owner trying to provide coverage for forty employees while watching premiums increase every year. The senior navigating a fixed income against rising prescription drug costs. The young adult aging off a parent's plan and confronting the individual market for the first time.

These are not abstractions. They are the financial realities of people I know and represent, and the failures of policy that have produced them are failures that government has both the responsibility and the capacity to address —

not by expanding government's role in healthcare, but by removing the government-created barriers that are driving costs up.

Republicans believe the solution to healthcare cost problems is not more government. It is more market. The evidence from every sector of the economy is clear: competition drives costs down and quality up. The healthcare sector is among the least competitive in the American economy — not because of the nature of the service, but because of the regulatory and policy structures that have systematically suppressed competition and insulated incumbent providers from market pressure. Fixing that is the conservative healthcare agenda, and it is what I will fight for.

Opposing the State-Run Exchange, Which Is a Government Takeover by Another Name

Senate Democrats in Michigan are pushing for a transition from the federal ACA marketplace to a state-run insurance exchange. They argue this would lower premiums and give Michigan greater control over healthcare spending. I oppose this proposal, and I want to explain why in terms that go beyond the political shorthand.

A state-run exchange is not a market solution. It is a government solution. It replaces the federal government as the administrator of insurance markets with the state government, but it does not introduce the competition, the consumer choice, or the price transparency that actually drive costs down. It adds another layer of administrative infrastructure that consumers and employers will ultimately pay for. And it gives Lansing politicians direct control over the rules and regulations that govern what insurance products can be offered and at what prices — which is a tool for expanding government control of healthcare, not for reducing it.

The 20 percent premium increases that have driven this debate are not the product of insufficient government involvement in insurance markets. They are largely the product of federal ACA regulations that have constrained the range of insurance products that can be offered, mandate benefit packages that many consumers neither want nor need, and prevent the kind of interstate competition that would discipline insurance pricing. A state-run exchange does not fix these underlying problems. It layers state bureaucracy on top of federal dysfunction.

The Market Competition Solution

Republicans support the expansion of insurance competition as the primary tool for reducing premiums. That means association health plans that allow small businesses and individuals to pool across state lines to access better rates. It means the expansion of Health Savings Accounts to give consumers more control over their healthcare dollars and more skin in the game of healthcare spending decisions. It means transparency requirements that force providers and insurers to publish prices so that consumers can make informed choices — something that virtually every other market takes for granted and that healthcare has resisted for decades.

The insurer-hospital disputes that have disrupted coverage for Michigan patients, e.g., Blue Cross Blue Shield dropping Michigan Medicine, and UnitedHealthcare leaving the Corewell Health network, are symptoms of a healthcare market with inadequate competition and inadequate transparency. When two dominant players in a regional market cannot agree on pricing, patients lose coverage continuity and face disruption that they have no power to prevent. The answer is not to have the government dictate the terms of those negotiations. It is to create

the market conditions under which neither party has the market power to hold patients hostage.

Republicans support certificate-of-need reform, which comprises the elimination of Michigan's certificate of need (CON) laws that require hospitals and healthcare facilities to obtain government permission before adding capacity, purchasing certain equipment, or opening new facilities. CON laws are textbook incumbent protection. They restrict entry, suppress competition, and keep healthcare costs higher than they need to be. Every study of CON laws I am aware of finds that they increase costs and reduce access without improving quality. Michigan should join the growing list of states that have eliminated them.

Prescription Drug Costs and PBM Reform

Prescription drug costs are a genuine affordability crisis for many Michigan families, particularly seniors on fixed incomes who require multiple maintenance medications. Republicans support transparency and accountability in pharmaceutical pricing — specifically regarding Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs), the intermediaries who negotiate drug prices and who have come under increasing

scrutiny for practices that may inflate costs rather than reduce them.

PBM reform, which requires transparency in rebate arrangements, prohibits spread pricing practices that profit PBMs at the expense of patients and payers, and ensures that cost savings from drug negotiations actually flow to consumers, is a conservative market reform, not a government intervention. It is about making the market work honestly, not replacing it. I support PBM transparency and accountability legislation, and I will push for it in Lansing.

Medical Debt and Personal Responsibility

Michigan has seen significant attention to medical debt, including Governor Whitmer's forgiveness of over $144 million in medical debt. I understand the human reality behind that number. Medical bills that arrive at the worst moment of people's lives, in amounts that bear no relationship to anything most people can afford.

But blanket medical debt forgiveness is not a sustainable or principled policy. It does nothing to address the cost structures that generate the debt in the first place. It rewards non-payment over responsible financial planning.

And it is funded by taxpayers who have their own financial pressures and their own healthcare bills to manage.

The conservative approach to medical debt is to attack the underlying cost problem through competition, transparency, and market reform so that the bills are smaller in the first place. Combined with the expansion of HSAs and the availability of affordable, catastrophic-coverage insurance options that protect families from financially devastating events, this approach addresses the root cause rather than the symptom.

What I Will Fight For

My healthcare agenda is built on the conservative conviction that markets, when they are allowed to function honestly and competitively, produce better outcomes than government administration.

I will fight for competition in insurance markets, certificate-of-need reform, PBM transparency, price transparency requirements, and the expansion of HSAs. I will oppose the state-run exchange as a government takeover dressed in cost-saving language. And I will keep the focus where it belongs: on the policies that actually bring costs down

for Michigan families, not the ones that expand Lansing's power over their healthcare decisions.

Chapter 14
Conclusion: Let's Get to Work

I want to end this book the way I try to end every conversation on the campaign trail — not with a flourish, not with a slogan, but with a straight look at what we are actually talking about and what I am actually asking of you.

I am asking you to trust me with your representation in the Michigan House of Representatives. That is not a small thing. I do not treat it as one. The decisions made in Lansing affect your property tax bill, your utility rates, your children's classroom, your ability to find and keep a good job, and the basic condition of the state your grandchildren will inherit. I have spent every chapter of this book trying to show you not just what I believe about those decisions, but where those beliefs come from — so that when I am in Lansing without a camera pointed at

me and without anyone watching, you have some basis for confidence that I will act the way you would want me to act.

That confidence cannot come from promises. Every candidate makes promises. It has to come from character, from the accumulated evidence of who a person is and how they have behaved when it mattered. I have tried to give you that evidence honestly, including the parts that are not flattering. The college years when I drifted. The grief that broke me open. The hard calls I made and the hard calls I had to live with. I am not presenting you with a polished political biography designed to make me look inevitable. I am presenting you with a life — complicated, imperfect, shaped by loss and work and faith and the particular soil of Michigan — and asking you to judge whether it has produced someone you can trust.

I believe it has. But that judgment belongs to you.

What I know with certainty is this: Michigan is worth fighting for.

Not the abstract Michigan of campaign speeches and tourism brochures. The real one. The Michigan of the west side of Grand Rapids and the farm country around Potawatomi Lake, and the manufacturing floors where my

father spent thirty years, and the small businesses that people like me built from nothing in the years when building anything felt like an act of stubbornness against unfavorable odds. The Michigan of families who stayed when it would have been easier to leave, who built things and repaired things and passed things down and kept showing up — for their neighbors, their churches, their communities, and their state.

That Michigan is still here. I see it every day. I see it in the farmers who are up before dawn in April, coaxing the first growth out of still-cold ground. I see it in the tradespeople who are building and repairing and maintaining the physical infrastructure that everything else runs on. I see it in the parents who are fighting for their children's education and the small business owners who are fighting for their employees and the veterans who came home carrying things they were never asked to carry and built lives anyway.

That Michigan deserves better than it has been getting from Lansing. It deserves representatives who understand where it lives, what it costs, and what it needs. It deserves people who will tell it the truth about the problems and bring the same discipline and accountability to solving

them that Michigan's working people bring to their own lives every single day.

I am running because I believe I am one of those people. Not because I am special — I am not, in any way that I did not earn through experience and sometimes through pain — but because the combination of things I have been through has produced someone who understands this state and its people in a way that I believe is useful right now, at this particular moment.

I understand what it means to build a business in Michigan, to make payroll when the margins are thin, to navigate a regulatory environment designed by people who have never signed the front of a check. I understand what it means to serve — in uniform, in local government, and in the daily grind of trying to run an organization that actually delivers on what it promises. I understand what it means to lose someone to a system that failed them, and to carry that loss forward as a commitment rather than letting it settle into resignation.

And I understand Michigan's potential — the genuine, not-yet-fully-realized potential of a state with the workforce and the industrial heritage and the natural resources and the community character to be genuinely great. Not

great in the nostalgic sense, looking backward at what we used to be. Great in the forward-looking sense, building something worthy of the people who are living here right now and the children who will inherit what we leave them.

That potential is real. Realizing it requires the policy changes I have described in these chapters — on taxes, on energy, on education, on regulation, on the basic accountability of government to the people who fund it and depend on it. None of those changes will happen by themselves. They require people in Lansing who understand the problem, who are not beholden to the interests that benefit from the status quo, and who are willing to do the unglamorous work of actually governing rather than simply performing governance for an audience.

I am ready to do that work. I have been doing versions of it my whole life — on the farm, in Iraq, in the truck yard, in the township board meetings that nobody attended and everybody benefited from.

The campaign slogan we settled on is Keep Michigan Working. It captures something real about what I am running on and what I intend to do. But if I could add one line to it, it would be this: Keep Michigan honest. Honest about its problems. Honest about the cost of fixing them.

Honest with the people who are counting on their government to act in their interest rather than in its own.

That is the standard I intend to hold myself to.

Now — let's get to work.