

## Michigan: State-of-the-state speech touts a transformed state



David M. Kall | Thursday, January 26, 2017

Michigan currently has a population of about 9.9 million. During his Jan. 17, 2017 [state-of-the-state speech](#), Gov. Rick Snyder pointed to numerous priorities and past achievements that will help attract another 71,000 plus people to meet his 10-million-residents target.

To this end, while he did not offer particular funding mechanisms, the governor wants to devote billions of dollars to education, community development, and infrastructure, which includes transportation and mobility innovation, and water and sewer line investments.

Also in his address, Gov. Snyder contrasted the current situation to that of six years ago, conceding that back then, there was little hope and a lot of negative perception. But now, the Wolverine State is at its strongest position in decades, thanks to reform efforts that have accomplished the following:

- Revised the tax code
- Established the conditions employers need in order to grow new jobs
- Strengthened the economy, including the creation of nearly half a million private-sector jobs in the past six years
- Increased the population for five consecutive years

Gov. Snyder also highlighted that state government is more effective at delivering services and improving quality of life. For instance, he asserted that Detroit is no longer “one of Michigan’s biggest problems.”

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Instead, after forging the Grand Bargain, bi-partisan coalitions reduced cuts to retiree pensions, installed 65,000 new LED streetlights, and oversaw other efforts that resulted in residential occupancy rates of 98 percent, and increased home values. Further, he pointed out that the *New York Times* named Detroit number nine on its list of places to visit in 2017, beating out exotic locations like Athens, Madrid and even the Great Barrier Reef.

He declared that Flint's water problems have been staunched, having received \$27 million from the state for thousands of lead pipe replacements to the city of Flint; more than 600 pipes have now been replaced. Expanded programs enabled sixty-five four-year olds from Flint to attend summer preschool, and an additional 413 spots were available in the current school year. Beyond these measures, 827 new jobs have been filled in Flint, including jobs at the water resource sites, manufacturing jobs, and other positions where employers have worked with the state to find opportunities for Flint residents.

The governor also cited specific and measurable achievements from the following initiatives:

- **Great Start Readiness Program:** Increased funding by \$130 million, and added 150 percent more slots, to 64,441, for preschoolers from low-income families.
- **Pathways to Potential:** Added social workers in five new schools, for a current total of 250 schools, helping eliminate barriers to success.
- **Early/Middle College:** Increased the number of institutions that allow students to earn a high school diploma and either an associate's degree, a technical certification, or college credits, from 12 in 2011 to 117 today.
- **Michigan Advanced Technician Training Program:** Increased the number of students from 31 to 125, and the number of participating employers from 11 to 40. In this program, the employer pays the student's tuition in exchange for a commitment to remaining on the job for two years after the program's completion.
- **Skilled Trades Training Fund:** Created more than 3,100 new jobs and retained more than 10,000 jobs in 2016.
- **Community Ventures:** Helped 3,700 structurally unemployed individuals find jobs in a network of 150 businesses over the past five years.
- **Veteran Friendly Employers:** Increased the number of Michigan employers committed to hiring veterans, from 600 to 2,700 since 2015.
- **Silver Key Coalition:** Served 53,000 senior citizens home-delivered meals, up from 47,000 in 2014. In the last year, nearly 24,000 seniors received personal care, homemaking, chores, private-duty nursing, home health aides and other in-home services.
- **Secure Cities Partnership:** Reduced violent crime by double digit percentages in multiple urban areas over the last several years.

The governor, pointing to locations throughout the state that contribute to the momentum, cheered several additional outcomes: "[t]he world flies on airplanes built with parts from Whitehall. People all over the nation drink milk produced in Coopersville. The growing demand for craft beer is met by brewers from Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids. Everyone wants more of what Michigan offers, so let's keep going. Let's keep building, creating and welcoming more residents to be part of our great state."



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