



Government and Community Affairs

2021-2022 WSU Warrior Caucus



Senator Gary Peters (D) As a product of Michigan’s public schools, Gary understands that all of our children deserve a fair chance to succeed, and a good education gives them the tools they need to achieve their full potential. Education is a central component of economic development. If America does not lead the world in education, our future workforce will be less productive and less globally competitive. Gary is committed to a strong public education system that provides students with the skills they need

to succeed in the 21st century global economy. That means access to quality public schools for all children – affordable higher education for all who choose to pursue it – and expanding apprenticeships, skills trainings and career and technical education.

Matching the skills we teach with the needs of local employers is critical to closing the skills gap that leaves businesses with unfilled job openings and people out of work. Gary knows there are many paths to a good-paying job in Michigan beyond the traditional four-year college degree. Michigan’s manufacturing and auto industries in particular depend on skilled trade workers, and Gary wants to ensure that our education system is designed to produce this workforce and create a pipeline of talent. He passed legislation into law expanding career and technical education by increasing awareness of these opportunities for high school counselors. He’s also authored legislation into law increasing opportunities for veterans looking to use their GI Benefits towards apprenticeships.

Making sure that all of our children receive the best education possible starts with investing in our schools from early childhood to high school graduation. That includes funding science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) education that will help keep American students globally competitive. Gary co-wrote the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act, which refreshed federal research opportunities and priorities, promoted diversity in STEM fields, encouraged scientific innovation and cut administrative red tape for researchers. To help our students succeed, we have an obligation to make sure our schools have the resources they need to give the next generation the brightest future possible.

Higher education is increasingly essential to a bright economic future, but the cost of college continues to become more and more burdensome for families. With the majority of college



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students now graduating with significant debt, making higher education more affordable for everyone is a top priority for Gary. That is why he helped introduce legislation to allow borrowers with outstanding student loan debt to refinance at lower interest rates available to new borrowers. He also passed his bipartisan legislation into law to help private student loan borrowers rehabilitate defaulted loans and remove the default from their credit report after making a series of on-time payments.



Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (D) is a well-known progressive warrior and, in her own words, “a mother working for justice for all.” Her two young sons are at the root of her unwavering passion to help change lives for the better. She is the oldest of 14 children, born and raised in Detroit, the proud daughter of Palestinian immigrant parents.

Rashida made history in 2008 by becoming the first Muslim woman to ever serve in the Michigan Legislature. She is beloved by residents for the transformative constituent services she provided, and for successfully fighting the billionaires and corporations that tried to pollute her district. When families get to know Rashida, they have no doubt that she will work tirelessly to knock down barriers for real change, and whether by policy or

action, she will roll up her sleeves to make sure her residents are cared for, no matter how big the challenge.

When billionaire slumlord Matty Moroun refused to follow the law and get polluting semi-trucks off neighborhood streets, Rashida organized residents with the We Have A Right To Breathe campaign and forced Moroun to fulfill his obligations to protecting public health. When large piles of black dust started showing up on the Detroit riverfront and blowing into homes and parks, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality told residents everything was fine, Rashida collected samples and got the substance tested herself - exposing the cancer-causing “petroleum coke” as a threat, and getting it removed.

As an attorney at the Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice, Rashida took the movement to the courts, fighting racist emergency managers, abusive state agencies, and leading the fight for community benefits agreements that promote equitable development. Rashida knows that effective advocacy requires an all-out approach, fighting in the community,



in the legislature, and in the courts every day against injustice and inequality, so that every single person in this country has a chance to thrive.

She is currently the Congresswoman for Michigan's 13th Congressional District, which includes the city of Detroit and many surrounding communities



Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel (D) is a former criminal prosecutor and civil rights attorney and was sworn in as Michigan's 54th Attorney General on January 1, 2019. Her core initiatives have been fashioned in the image of her promise to Michigan's residents — to give the Department of Attorney General back to the people that it serves. Attorney General Nessel's consumer protection divisions have taken a lead role in fighting against companies that try to take advantage of Michigan consumers, whether it be through unfair utility rate increases or unscrupulous business practices. She launched the Department's Auto Insurance Fraud Unit to investigate and prosecute individuals and businesses that exploit Michigan residents and the system designed to protect the safety of Michigan's drivers. And, she established the office's first Payroll Fraud Enforcement Unit to crackdown on individuals and businesses who try to cheat Michigan's workers out of their pay and retirement benefits.

Since taking office, Attorney General Nessel has been a champion of the state's most important resource — its Great Lakes. Her environmental protection division is actively fighting to ensure clean air, water and energy for Michigan's residents so that our most valuable assets are preserved for generations to come. She has also joined the battle to combat the largest public health crisis in the nation — prescription drug addiction — and to stem the tide of Michigan's biggest environmental crisis in decades — PFAS contamination.

As the State's Chief Law Enforcement Officer, Attorney General Nessel launched Michigan's Elder Abuse Task Force, in partnership with the Michigan Supreme Court, to stop the rise of crimes against one of the state's most vulnerable populations. She has continued the Department's criminal investigations into the Flint Water Crisis and sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. And, she has created a Conviction Integrity Unit to investigate claims of innocence so that even when we prosecute the state's most heinous crimes, we can ensure the public's trust in our criminal justice system.



A graduate of the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Law School, Attorney General Nessel lives in southeast Michigan with her wife, Alanna Maguire, and her twin sons, Alex and Zach.



State Representative Mary Cavanagh (D) is serving her first term representing the 10th House District, which encompasses Redford Charter Township and a portion of northwest Detroit. Cavanagh brings a natural flair for community activism, relationship building and evoking positive change to her work at the Capitol.

With over 19 years of civic engagement, political and community organizing, and social activism experience, Rep. Cavanagh has built strong relationships in the 10th House District and beyond. As a proud alumna of the National Students Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., a former Precinct Delegate for Redford Township and AmeriCorps Member, and current member of the Michigan Democratic Women's Caucus Executive Board, she draws upon her diverse experiences to advocate for greater equity in education, strengthened economic opportunities and environmental justice.

In December of 2020, Rep. Cavanagh became a proud graduate of Wayne State University with a degree in Physical Anthropology, where her studies focused on the evolutionary analysis of human behavior from socio-economic and political approaches. While completing her undergraduate studies, Cavanagh's work focused on the historical social and political inequalities within Detroit in addition to furthering her knowledge regarding sustainable community building. After participating in several Water Projects throughout Detroit, Flint and Wayne County, Rep. Cavanagh has also seen first-hand the importance of and dire need for clean water and other environmental conditions when building healthy, thriving communities.

Cavanagh brings her experience of working side-by-side with labor unions, skilled tradesmen, school and community leaders, and various municipalities to her work with the Legislature, prioritizing the importance of fostering understanding amongst individuals and building a deep awareness of what it takes to work across differences to produce effective, impactful results for Michiganders everywhere.



State Representative Nate Shannon (D) is serving his second term representing the 25th House District, which comprises parts of the cities of Sterling Heights and Warren in Macomb County.

Shannon was raised by public school teachers, and it is from them that he learned the value of public education. He followed in their footsteps to become a public servant, first attending Oakland University to receive his BA in political science before moving on to

Wayne State University for a masters in secondary education.

After graduation, Shannon began empowering young Michiganders to think critically and creatively as a high school economics, government and history teacher for L'Anse Creuse public schools in Clinton Township. While teaching, Shannon saw firsthand the importance of connecting one-on-one with students and the detrimental impact of crowded classrooms that overemphasize standardized testing. Eventually, Shannon turned his passion for public service into a successful campaign for city council in Sterling Heights, recently finishing his third term before joining the Legislature. Shannon and his wife, Lori, have three kids



State Representative Bill Sowerby (D) is serving his third term representing the 31st House District, which includes a large portion of Clinton Township and the cities of Fraser and Mt. Clemens. In Rep. Sowerby's first term, he served as a member of the Education Reform Committee, Judiciary Committee, Legislative Council and was Democratic vice chair of the Natural Resources Committee.

Sowerby grew up in St. Clair Shores as one of five children. He attended St. Gertrude Elementary, then Lake Shore High School before graduating from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He began his public service career in 1989, serving four terms on the Macomb County Board of Commissioners representing Clinton Township. Sowerby was elected to the post of Clinton Township Treasurer in November 1996, and was re-elected four more times and served through November 2016.



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In his role as Treasurer, Sowerby also served as a voting member on the Township Board of Trustees. He also chaired the Township's Budget, Ways and Means Committee, the Ambulance Committee, the Refuse Committee and the Transportation Committee. He also served as Treasurer of the Township's Police and Fire Pension Board, as a member of the 41-B District Court Council, as well as a past board member of the Grosse Pointes Clinton Refuse Disposal Authority.



State Representative Pamela Hornberger (R) was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives in November 2016. She represents the 32nd District, which includes portions of Macomb and St. Clair counties, including the City of New Baltimore and portions of the cities of Memphis and Richmond, as well as the townships of Chesterfield, Casco, Columbus, Ira, Kenockee, Kimball, Riley and Wales.

Rep. Hornberger is the chairwoman of the House Education Committee, and is a member of the Elections and Ethics, and Health Policy committees. She also serves as vice chair of the Appropriations subcommittee on School Aid and Department of Education. Rep. Hornberger has a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University, teaching certification from Wayne State University and a master's in education administration from Saginaw Valley State University.

For the past 23 years Rep. Hornberger taught Art in the East China School District in St. Clair County. Prior to receiving her bachelor's degree from Michigan State University, Rep. Hornberger worked at Metrics Unlimited, her family's industrial tool supply. In 2010 Rep. Hornberger was elected to serve as a Trustee on the L'Anse Creuse Public Schools Board of Education. In 2014, she was appointed by the governor to serve as the Regional Representative for the Selective Services Board. She is the past chairperson of the Michigan Association of School Boards Legal Trust Fund and the past secretary of the Republican Committee of Northern Macomb County. Raised in Sterling Heights, Rep. Hornberger is a lifelong resident of Macomb County. She has lived in Chesterfield Township since 1998.



State Representative Ryan Berman (R) was first elected to serve the 39th District in the Michigan House of Representatives in November 2018, representing the residents of the city of Wixom, Commerce Township, a portion of West Bloomfield Township and the village of Wolverine Lake. Rep. Berman serves as vice chair on the House Regulatory Reform Committee, and is a member of the Financial Services, Insurance, and Judiciary committees.

Berman is a graduate of Detroit Country Day School, Michigan State University and Wayne State University Law School. Ryan is an attorney and counselor at law, with a general practice in Bloomfield Hills. As a general practice attorney, Ryan works on issues ranging from international business and real estate to criminal law; he acts as general counsel and legal advisor to many small businesses. Ryan is currently a reserve police officer, and previously served as a reserve deputy with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office.

Berman is president of the Parkside by the Lakes Homeowner's Association, an Orchard Lake St. Mary's volunteer assistant wrestling coach, and a member of the Board of Trustees for the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation. Ryan and his wife Stacie have been married for 12 years and have two young daughters.



State Representative Kelly Breen (D) is serving her first term representing the 38th House District, which encompasses the cities of Novi, Walled Lake, South Lyon and part of Northville. Breen is a lifelong Michigander born in Northville. She has served many roles including attorney, activist, former Novi City Council Member and proud mother of two.

Breen earned a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University James Madison School and a J.D. from Wayne State University Law School.

Breen's advocacy was fostered when she joined her neighbors to push back against an irresponsible local development project. That first taste of neighborhood activism led her to focus her time on supporting her community. Breen's advocacy and determination led her to her first elected office to the Novi City Council in 2017.



She is committed to collaborate and serve the true intent of public service—working to make each other’s lives better.



State Representative Jim Haadsma (D) is serving his second term representing Michigan’s 62nd House District, which is located in Calhoun County and comprises the cities of Battle Creek, Springfield and Albion; and the townships of Albion, Bedford, Clarence, Convis, Lee, Pennfield and Sheridan.

The son of missionaries, Haadsma spent a portion of his childhood living in Africa with his parents, which is where his deep appreciation for public service began. He went on to receive a BA in English from Michigan State University before earning his Juris Doctorate from the Wayne State University Law School. Haadsma was admitted to the State Bar of Michigan in 1984, and has worked at McCroskey Law, P.L.C. since 1987. He also served on the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners from 2009-2016.

Haadsma serves on numerous local not-for-profit boards, including those of the Art Center of Battle Creek, The Haven, and the Battle Creek Corps of the Salvation Army.

Haadsma is committed to serving the people of the 62nd House District by bringing Michigan’s industries into the 21st century, making sure Michigan’s schools are properly funded and supported, fixing the roads, preserving the Great Lakes, and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens of the state. Haadsma is the father of one young adult daughter and three young adult sons.



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State Representative Rodney Wakeman (R) was first elected to serve the 94th District in the Michigan House of Representatives in November 2018. The 94th District encompasses part of Saginaw County, including the city of Frankenmuth and the townships of Albee, Birch Run, Blumfield, Frankenmuth, Saginaw, St. Charles, Swan Creek, Taymouth, Thomas, and Tittabawassee. Rep. Wakeman serves as Vice Chair for the committee on Natural Resources & Outdoor Recreation. He also serves on the committees for Commerce & Tourism, Education, and Financial Services.

Rodney is a 1988 graduate of Wayne State University School of Mortuary Science in Detroit, is Board-certified by the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, and holds two post-professional education certifications. Wakeman is co-owner of Wakeman Funeral Home, a 108-year-old family business. In 2014, he was named runner-up for National Funeral Director of the Year Award.

Rodney was appointed in 2011 and 2015 by Governor Snyder to the Michigan Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science and served as chair from 2015 to 2018. Rodney is past president and board member of the Michigan Funeral Directors Association, where he also served in numerous leadership positions since 1994. He is a member of Wayne State University School of Mortuary Science Advisory Committee, president of the Valley Lutheran High School Foundation, former chairman of the VLHS Alumni Association Scholarship Committee, former member of LEAP Implementation Team to advance Lutheran education in the Great Lakes Bay Region, and past president of the Saginaw Lions Club.



State Representative Christine Morse (D) is serving her first term representing the 61st District of Michigan which encompasses the City of Portage as well as the Townships of Oshtemo, Prairie Ronde, Schoolcraft and Texas. She is a former Kalamazoo County Commissioner, former attorney, cancer survivor and mom of three.

Morse graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in Political Science/Pre-law. During her time in Lansing, she interned with Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld. She continued her education at Wayne State University Law School from which she graduated in 1998. She has practiced law in both Michigan and California.



For eleven years Christine and her family traveled the country and world while her husband served in the United States Navy. In 2010, Morse and her family settled in Kalamazoo where she has survived breast cancer, raised her children and has been an active community volunteer.

Seeing a need for transparent and accessible leadership in her community, Morse ran for Kalamazoo County Commission in 2018. She served on the County Commission from 2018-2020. Local governing experience highlighted the need for true representation at the State level, so Morse ran to be a leader who listens to her community. Morse is committed to improving our investment in education, ensuring access to healthcare/mandating coverage for those with preexisting conditions, and protecting our water/environment.



State Senator Paul Wojno (D) is a lifelong resident of our great state. He was born in Detroit, and he later moved to Center Line in Macomb County. Wojno proudly served in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1997 to 2002, and he was vice chairman of both the Regulatory Reform and the Insurance and Financial Services Committees. In addition, he was a member of Health Policy, Judiciary, Oversight and Ethics, and Tax Policy Committees.

He also served as House Majority and Minority Whip. In 2000, Wojno was named Democrat of the Year by the Warren/Center Line Democrats for his involvement in championing issues on behalf of Veteran Services, Women's Rights, Senior Citizens, Equality and Social Justice, and Environmental Safety.

Prior to the Michigan House of Representatives, Wojno worked as executive administrator for the City of Warren. From 2002 to 2007, he coordinated the district office for State Senator Dennis Olshove. In 2007, 2011 and 2015, Wojno was honored to be elected Warren City Clerk and was nominated by the Michigan Municipal Clerks Association in 2012 as one of the top five municipal clerks in the State of Michigan.

Wojno is a graduate of Center Line High School. He attended Macomb Community College, the University of Michigan, and earned his bachelor's degree from Wayne State University. He and his wife, Lisa, live in Warren with their children Kennedy, Bradley and Audrey. They also have three dogs, Daisy, Parker and Buddy.



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State Senator John Bizon, M.D. (R) was elected in November 2018, to serve residents of Michigan's 19th Senate District, representing Barry, Calhoun and Ionia counties. John chairs the Families, Seniors, and Veterans Committee. Prior to joining the Senate, Bizon served four years in the Michigan House of Representatives, representing the 62nd District.

Dr. Bizon is an otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat doctor) in Battle Creek who's been in medical practice for more than 40 years. He is a military veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force, eventually obtaining the rank of lieutenant colonel.

John also is a longtime volunteer with the Boy Scouts of America and past president of the Calhoun County Medical Society, and he served as longstanding chair of the legislative committee at the county medical society and on the Battle Creek Health System (now Bronson Battle Creek) medical staff, where he held several medical staff leadership and quality improvement positions. He has served the Michigan State Medical Society in several capacities, culminating in service as president.

Dr. Bizon earned a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and a medical degree from Wayne State University School of Medicine. His residency took place at the U.S. Air Force Wilford Hall Medical Center in Texas.

John and his wife, Deborah, have been married for 45 years and together have four adult children and six grandchildren. John and Deborah have belonged to the Catholic Church community since childhood, including the Battle Creek St. Philip and St. Joseph churches over the past 24 years.



State Senator Ruth Johnson (R) was elected to the Michigan Senate in November 2018 to represent the 14th District. Johnson serves as chair of the Senate Elections Committee and as vice chair of the Senate Local Government Committee. She also is a member of the committees on Environmental Quality; Families, Seniors, and Veterans; Health Policy and Human Services; Judiciary and Public Safety; and Regulatory Reform.

Ruth served from 2011 to 2018 as Michigan's secretary of state, where she made huge strides in streamlining operations, improving customer service and safeguarding elections.



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In 2004, Johnson was the first woman ever elected to serve as Oakland County clerk/register of deeds. From 1988 to 2004, she served 10 years on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and three terms in the Michigan House of Representatives — where she served on the Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, Education, Health Policy, and Transportation committees.

Johnson is a graduate of Waterford Township High School and has an associate's degree from Oakland Community College, a bachelor's degree from Oakland University, and a master's degree from Wayne State University with honors. Ruth is a lifelong resident of northern Oakland County and a former small business owner. She resides in Holly with her daughter Emily.