

GOV WHITMER'S 2026 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS RECEPTION – On February 25th, *Governor Gretchen Whitmer* will deliver her 2026 *State of the State Address* in the state Capitol. Prior to the *Governor's* address, clients are invited to attend a Pre-State of the State Legislative reception in the Capitol from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in Heritage Hall. Following the reception, clients are warmly invited to watch the speech at our office in the Boji Tower. Food and drinks will be provided for the watch party.

If you are interested in attending the legislative reception, please email Kim David (kdavid@mhsa.com) to confirm your attendance. Per new security requirements, you must RSVP for the reception. Your names will be provided to officials permitting entry into Heritage Hall. **The deadline to RSVP is Wednesday, February 18th at 3 p.m.** Please note, this RSVP grants you admission into the legislative reception, but does not grant you access to view the address in the *House Chamber*.

Please contact a member of the *MHSA* team if you have any questions!

GOV WHITMER'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET RECOMMENDATION – *State Budget Director Jen Flood* delivered the executive budget recommendation on behalf of *Governor Gretchen Whitmer* this week, outlining key initiatives for *Governor Whitmer* going into the final year of her administration.

The bigger picture: *Governor Whitmer's* final budget recommendation consisted of priorities and plans that aims to lower costs, protect health care access, and make investments to help Michigan families during a time of national economic uncertainty. The recommendation totals \$88.1 billion, with a \$13.6 billion *General Fund* total and a \$21.4 billion *School Aid Fund* total.

To read more, please click [here](#).

GOV WHITMER SIGNS CELLPHONE BAN BILLS – *Governor Gretchen Whitmer* signed two bills into law that would ban cellphone use in Michigan public schools.

The bigger picture: The first two Public Acts of 2026 passed both chambers in January with broad bipartisan support. *Senate Bill 495* and *House Bill 4141* ban cellphone use in public schools but contain exceptions for emergency situations and for instructional use. The language within the bills specifically bans the usage of cellphones during instructional time, while still allowing cellphone use in between classes.

To read more, please click [here](#).

MARK TOTTEN RETURNS AS GOVERNOR'S LEGAL COUNSEL – *Mark Totten* will return to his previously held position as chief legal counsel within the *Executive Office*.

The bigger picture: *Governor Gretchen Whitmer* announced *Mr. Totten* will return to the executive office on Monday. *Mr. Totten* held the same position during the *Governor's* first term, notably throughout the peak of the coronavirus pandemic. *Mr. Totten* most recently served as the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Michigan.

To read more, please click [here](#).

ELECTIONS

- *Former Representative Abraham Aiyash* launched his campaign for the *1st Senate District* on Monday. *Mr. Aiyash* said in his announcement that he will be focusing on affordability issues,

specifically high auto insurance rates, cost of living, and utility bill rates. He joins **Justin Onwenu** in the **1st Senate District Democratic** primary.

ODDS AND ENDS

- The **Senate Elections and Ethics Committee** took testimony only on a bill that would change Michigan's statewide primary election to May from August. Under **Senate Bill 691**, primaries would also be eligible to take place in February. Currently, February elections are only held in Michigan when there is a presidential election. The legislation is sponsored by **Senator Sam Singh (D-East Lansing)**.
- The **Senate Regulatory Affairs Committee** heard testimony on a bill that would prevent hospitals from requiring excessive overtime hours for nurses. **Senate Bills 296** and **297** would ensure that nurses are provided with a minimum of eight hours of off time after working a 12-hour shift. Hospitals would be able to require an additional two hours (four hours for rural hospitals) of work after regularly scheduled or on-call hours.