

Capitol Report

February 24, 2023

By Mary Pollock, AAUWMI Government Relations Coordinator

Since my January 12 Capitol Report, we have seen a tsunami of political activity in Michigan.

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Governor Gretchen Whitmer's **State of the State Address** on January 25 was held in person in a crowded joint session of the Michigan House and Senate for the first time since 2020 and broadcast live throughout the state. In Lansing, receptions, watching parties, and related events start in mid-afternoon and continue well past the end of the Address.

EXECUTIVE BUDGET PRESENTATION

On Friday, January 13, Michigan's Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference (CREC) convened. The CREC meets in January and May of every year and brings together the state's leading economists to discuss the national and state economic outlook, and issue revenue forecasts that help inform state policymakers ahead of the state budget process. The budget process formally began February 8 when Governor Gretchen Whitmer presented her proposed budget before the Joint Senate and House Appropriations Committees. The budget recommendation totals \$79 billion and includes a General Fund total of \$14.8 billion and a School Aid Fund total of \$19 billion. The remainder – \$45.2 billion - is federal funding revenue.

She divided her proposed budget into these themes:

- Lowering costs – targeted tax relief for retirees and working families; \$180 inflation rebate, free universal pre-K for 4-years olds
- Education – Getting kids back on Track.
- Public Health – Strengthening Families
- Rebuilding Infrastructure
- Economic Development

Appropriations Subcommittees will spend the next several months pouring over departmental budgets and hearing from witnesses about the proposals. The target for passage of a complete budget is in June so that municipalities and schools whose budget year starts July 1 can know how much state revenue they will receive. The state's budget year starts October 1. An excellent overview of the proposed budget via slide presentation is available at

www.michigan.gov/budget.

STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AAUW tracking - With only 16 session days into the 102nd Legislature, AAUWMI is tracking 101 measures – 99 bills (some are in more than one category) and two administrative rules:

- 38 Reproductive Justice bills with many more expected to implement Proposal 2022-3.
- 25 Firearms bills and at least 11 more announced for next week.
- 15 Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking bills.
- 14 Employment/Economic Security bills (Pay equity bills will be introduced on or around March 14 – national All-Women's Equal Pay Day).

- 9 Education, Sex Equity in Education bills.
- 8 Voting Rights, Campaign Finance, Ethics, Lobbying measures, two of which are administrative rules. Many more are expected to implement Proposal 2022-2.
- 3 LGBT Rights bills.

First day bills - The first-day, high-Dem priority bills included:

- Retirement tax relief (HB 4001 and SB 1)
- Earned Income Tax Credit boost from 6% of the federal EITC to 30% of federal EITC (HB 4002 and SB 3)
- Adding LGBT coverage to Michigan's civil rights law (HB 4003 and SB 4)
- Restoring agency fees in collective bargaining agreements (HB 4004 and SB 5)
- Restoring prevailing wage in public sector collective bargaining agreements (HB 4005, HB 4007 and SB 6), and
- Abolition of 1931 anti-abortion law provisions (HB 4006 and SB 2).

Tax relief - HB 4001 Substitute 2, which amends the retirement tax, increases the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 6% to 30% of federal EITC (AAUWMI supported the EITC increase when it was a stand-alone bill), and sends \$180 inflation relief checks to taxpayers in Michigan passed the House and then the Senate on February 16. One snag is that Immediate Affect was not approved in the Senate. After a series of procedural moves, the bill was retained by the Senate after the vote so that IE could potentially be negotiated in the coming weeks. Twenty-five votes in the Senate - all Democrats and 6 Republican votes are needed for IE.

HB 4001 Sub 2 includes a sufficient shift in General Funds to avoid triggering a 2015 law requiring an overall income tax cut using a formula that is estimated to take our 4.25% state income tax rate to 4.05%. Republicans favor an overall tax cut rather than the targeted tax cuts the Democrats favor in HB 4001 Sub 2. Without IE, the bill will not go into effect until 90 days after the end of the legislative session, usually in late December.

3rd grade reading bill – The Senate has passed 22-16 Senate Bill 12 that would eliminate the retention mandate in the 3rd grade reading law. A similar bill, HB 4020, is making its way through the House. AAUWMI supported SB 12 in Committee and will support HB 4020 in Committee.

Firearms bills – Scheduled for hearing in House Elections Committee on February 28 are four bills to prevent firearms in polling places (HB 4127), within 100 feet of an absentee ballot counting board while ballots are being counted (HB 4128), prohibiting intimidation of, or interference with, an election inspector (HB 4129) and providing sentencing guidelines for violation of these laws (HB 4130). AAUWMI supported the bills in Committee.

Three days after the deadly February 13 shooting on the Michigan State University campus, Senate Democrats introduced an 11-bill gun package, Senate Bills 76 – 86. The bills were referred to the Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee. The bills concern safe gun storage, expanded background checks, and a "Red Flag" bill. "Red Flag" laws are also known as Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) laws, which allows family, police and other "responsible individuals" to ask a court to temporarily order firearms to be taken away from someone who presents a danger to themselves or others. Nineteen states currently have

ERPO laws in place; Colorado, Vermont and Florida are looking to strengthen their laws. Hearings are expected to begin in early March.

LGBT rights – AAUWMI put in a card of support for SB 4 at the Senate Committee on Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety on February 14. The bill would add “sexual orientation and gender identity or expression” to the categories of prohibited discrimination in employment, education, public accommodations, public service, or housing. The Committee reported the bill out to the whole Senate, which is poised to take it up at any time. Some Republicans would like an amendment protecting religious conscience added to the bill, but religious discrimination and a requirement to accommodate individual religious beliefs is already in Michigan’s civil rights law.

Abortion ban repeal – The Senate Health Policy Committee scheduled a hearing for February 22 on SB 2 that would repeal one aspect of the 1931 abortion ban laws in Section 40 of the Michigan penal code, 1 1931 PA 328, MCL 750.40. It states:

750.40 Private diseases; conceptive preventatives; publication of cures.

Sec. 40. Publication in indecent language of cures for private diseases and conceptive preventatives—The publication or sale within this state of any circular, pamphlet or book containing recipes or prescriptions in indecent or obscene language for the cure of chronic female complaints or private diseases, or recipes or prescriptions for drops, pills, tinctures, or other compounds designed to prevent conception, or tending to produce miscarriage or abortion is hereby prohibited; and for each copy thereof, so published and sold, containing such prohibited recipes or prescriptions, the publisher and seller shall each be guilty of a misdemeanor.

AAUWMI put in a card in support of the bill. Unfortunately, that was the day of the ice storm in central Michigan and the Committee hearing was canceled. It will be rescheduled very soon.

Presidential primary moved - The governor has signed SB 13 to move the state's presidential primary from the second Tuesday in March to February 27, 2024, and on the fourth Tuesday in February in subsequent presidential election years. This makes Michigan the 5th presidential primary site and increases its importance, visibility, and influence in the presidential race. Objections from Republicans concerned its negative impact on their delegate count to their national convention in 2024. The bill did not receive the necessary 2/3 votes in the Senate to have Immediate Effect and does not go into effect until 90 days after Sine Die which normally occurs in the waning days of a calendar year. That means the effective date of the law would be AFTER the new primary date. Democrats could end this year’s session in September and then the Governor could call a special session in the fall to maneuver around the IE restriction some have speculated.

MAKE A MOVE

Contact your legislators – As educated women, we need to exercise our knowledge to achieve our goals. Contact your legislator by phone or email and let them know you are an AAUW member and what your position is on these bills discussed above.

Find your State House member [here](#).

Find your State Senator [here](#)

Want to be even more powerful? Contact the whole Committee where the bill has been referred.

Find the Committee member information [here](#).

Want to contact the whole Michigan Senate or House? See the **New AAUW directories of the 2023-24 House and Senate** with every legislator's **email address** on the AAUWMI Web site [here](#). Copy and paste all legislators' email addresses from one column into one email. Some email programs have a limit of the number of addresses in one email so you may have to send your message to two or three groups of legislators.

Your voice matters. Legislative staff picking up the call or reading the email for the legislator keep track of what the caller supports or opposes and reports to the legislator what communications are coming in.

The best free source of Michigan legislative information is at www.legislature.mi.gov .

AAUWMI VIRTUAL LOBBY CORPS

The AAUW of Michigan Virtual Lobby Corps has been meeting monthly (except for December) on the **third Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. by Zoom** or teleconference phone to discuss and share federal and state public policy issues of interest to AAUW and report on local branch public policy activities.

Our March 16 guest speaker will be State Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou (D-East Lansing), Chair of the House Elections Committee. She will talk about the Committee's current and future work.

The Lobby Corps is open to all AAUW members and will continue to meet virtually in 2023 at this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86342455027?pwd=aGdUNzhMQjhPendJalRoUIBhaGtGdz09> and this phone number - 312 626 6799 (toll charges apply), meeting ID: 863 4245 5027; passcode: 574916.

Help us grow our influence by urging other AAUW members to get on the Virtual Lobby Corps mailing list by letting them know of our existence and letting me know of their email address.

The AAUWMI Lobby Corps Facebook private group is where I post breaking news and relevant articles from national and state media almost daily. Please Friend our [Facebook group](#).

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