

Tuscola County Democratic Party Newsletter

December 2023

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Our Goals

- Ensure honest and transparent government.
- Restore and protect our environment.
- Support strong economic growth and opportunity.
- Strengthen voter access and turnout.
- Promote affordable education and health care for all.

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Notice of Our December Meeting

The regular monthly meeting of the Tuscola County Democratic Party will be held on **Thursday, December 21, 2023**. The meeting will be held at the Brentwood, 178 Park Drive, Caro, MI. Social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m.

We hope you will join us.

Highlights of Our November Meeting

Chair Deb Parker called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 16. Eleven members and one guest were in attendance. We had a brief business meeting during which Deb Parker reported on the Summit in the Thumb meeting that was attended by some of us on November 12. Then we broke into three working groups. The Party Building group worked on a phone banking campaign aimed at recruiting volunteers for next year's elections. The Community Outreach group worked on a plan to help needy families in Tuscola County during the upcoming holiday season. The Long-term Goals group came up with a list of goals for the coming year. The leader of each group presented that group's work to the entire membership. The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.

Thumb Summit

On November 12, Tuscola County Democrats attended the Summit in the Thumb, a meeting of Democrats from the five counties in Michigan's Thumb. The meeting was organized by Mona DeQuis of the Michigan Democratic Party and held in Imlay City at the home of Deb Stallings. Mona gave us tips on building party membership, mobilizing volunteers, and getting out the vote for next year's elections. Sue Alderman of the St. Clair County Democrats told us how to run a membership meeting and how to raise money and spend it wisely. She also shared with us some killer radio ads that she made with Jim Frank, Chair of the St. Clair County Democrats. Laurie Decker of the Sanilac County Democrats told us about her experience as one of Michigan's top phone bankers. Thank you, Mona. Thank you, Deb Stallings. Thank you, Sue Alderman. Thank you, Lauria Decker. We were inspired and learned a lot.

Here we are at the meeting. From left to right: Chuck Stockwell, Alex Kirsch, Deb Parker, Sue Kirby, a Democrat from another county, and Mike Furgerson (wearing the hat). That's Sue Alderman sitting at a desk behind us.



Christmas for Kids

Tuscola County Democrats are participating in Tuscola County Christmas for Kids, a project started by the Thumb Area Mud Runners Four Wheel Drive Club more than 25 years ago. We are delivering parcels to ten Caro-area families who have asked the Mud Runners for help during the holidays. The Mud Runners are providing a big box of food for each family. We are adding essential household supplies and Christmas presents for the kids, putting the parcels together, and delivering them to the families.

Here we are on December 16 putting the parcels together. From left to right: Sharon Schwab, Bob DeCoe, June Kennedy, Alex Kirsch (kneeling), Joan Wyskiel, Deb Parker, John Wyskiel (peeking out behind Deb), Lynne Kunze (seated), Jack Adams, Lisa Bertsch, Rod Bertsch, Sherene McCloy, and Gary Greania.



Tuscola Dems Welcome Your Donations



To donate, simply aim the camera on your smart phone at the QR image shown here, and it will take you directly to ActBlue, where you can donate whatever amount you desire.

Thank you.

What's Happening in Lansing?



In the 2022 midterm election, Michigan Democrats attained a trifecta, that is, a Democratic governor and a Democratic majority in both chambers of the Legislature. Governor Whitmer was handed something that no Democratic governor has had since 1984 — a legislature willing to pass her agenda. In January of 2023, Michigan lawmakers laid out plans for the upcoming legislative session, which included protecting civil and reproductive rights, lowering costs for Michigan families, protecting the environment, and building out the state's infrastructure, and they wasted no time in getting these pent-up Democratic priorities to the governor's desk. To date, Governor Whitmer has signed more than 1000 bills into law, including:

1. Repeal of Michigan's "right-to-work" law.
2. An increase in the Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit for Working Families, from 6 percent to up to 30 percent. This credit increase applies to the 2022 tax year. Starting in 2023, there will be no more retirement tax, which is expected to save half a million households an average of \$1,000 a year. There will also be an income tax reduction, from 4.25 percent to 4.05 percent, for the 2023 tax year.
3. Expansion of the Elliott-Larson Civil Right Act to protect Michigan's LGBTQ community from discrimination. The Act already prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and public services based on religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, familial status, or marital status. The new amendments will ban discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and prohibit employers from retaliating against workers for getting an abortion.
4. A bill ending the 1931 abortion ban. Michiganders have already voted to pass Proposal 3—a citizen-led initiative that made reproductive rights officially protected under Michigan's constitution. This bill ensures that Michigan's laws are consistent with the constitution, striking down a law that banned abortion except when necessary to save the life of a woman and another that made it illegal to advertise abortion drugs, and deleting abortion-related felonies from the state's penal code.
5. New gun safety reforms with three main components: (1) new requirements that background checks must be conducted before people can take ownership of any gun—not just handguns, as state law formerly required, (2) a ban on 3D printed guns, (3) new requirements that gun owners keep their guns unloaded and locked in a secure container with a trigger-locking mechanism when children are in the home, and (4) new risk protection orders (also known as red flag laws) that would allow judges to have guns temporarily seized from people considered a danger to themselves or others.

6. A \$82 billion budget that includes (1) an increase in education funding from \$9,150 to \$9,608 per pupil, (2) free preschool and transportation for all 4-year-olds in Michigan and free breakfast and lunch for all students, (3) expansion of eligibility for Michigan's state-funded Pre-K program to include families below 300% of the federal poverty guidelines (for example, a family of four making less than \$90,000 a year), (4) funding for tuition-free training to become a teacher, student loan repayment for school employees, and stipends to student teachers (5) \$6 billion for state and local roads, bridges, airports, transit, and rail programs with almost \$2 billion going to local road agencies, (6) dozens of grants totaling \$122 million for "community enhancement " plus \$176 million in public safety grants and dozens more "public infrastructure grants," totaling \$234 million, (7) statewide housing grants totaling \$39 million, (8) tens of millions of dollars from the Natural Resources Trust Fund to add new parkland and improve existing parks, (9) a \$100 million deposit into the state's Rainy Day Fund, and (10) a \$450 million deposit from the School Aid Fund into a newly created Budget Stabilization Fund for school funding.
7. Repeal of various abortion clinic regulations and a 2015 law that required women to purchase a separate insurance "rider" if they wanted their policy to cover abortion.
8. Requirement that utilities deliver 100 percent clean energy by 2040 and let state regulators override local decisions about where to allow large-scale wind and solar arrays.
9. Writing portions of the federal Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") into Michigan law. The new law continues prohibitions on out-of-pocket expenses for preventative care and keeps coverage for "essential services," like ambulance rides and birth control. It bans annual or lifetime coverage caps and lets young people stay on their parents' policies until 26 years old.
10. Enhancement of criminal penalties for intimidating election workers, regulation of the use of artificial intelligence in political advertisements, making poll worker intimidation a criminal offence, automatically restoring voting rights and registration to former prisoners upon release, tightening the election certification process, and repeal of a ban on paid transportation to polling locations.

Democrats ended this year's legislative session on November 9, nearly a month earlier than usual. They checked off a lot of priorities this year, but there's still plenty left to do in 2024, such as community solar, Freedom of Information Act reform, polluter pay, sexual assault statute of limitations, Detroit tax overhaul, charter school reforms, and lots more.

Why did Democrats adjourn so early? Two reasons:

1. Earlier this year, the Legislature passed a bill moving up Michigan's presidential primary to February 27, 2023. That bill won't take effect until 90 days after the legislature adjourns, which means that adjournment needed to occur no later than November 29 to make sure the 2024 primary election can take place on February 27.

2. In last November's election, two Democratic state representatives — Kevin Coleman and Lori Stone — won mayoral seats in their hometowns and were therefore required to resign their House seats. As a result, the Michigan House is now split equally at 54-54 between Democrats and Republicans, so the Democrat's voting majority is gone, at least for now. To fill those two empty seats, Governor Whitmer will call for a special election which is expected to be won by Democrats, but that special election won't happen until next year. In the meantime, the House is deadlocked and unlikely to pass much legislation.

Another Setback for Trump

Trump has now been indicted four times: (1) by a New York grand jury on state charges of falsifying business records related to hush money payments to Stormy Daniels, (2) by a Miami grand jury on federal charges of taking classified national defense documents from the White House after he left office and resisting the government's attempts to retrieve them, (3) by a District of Columbia grand jury on federal charges of attempting to overturn the 2020 presidential election, and (4) by a Georgia grand jury on state charges of attempting to overturn Joe Biden's victory in Georgia.

Trump has filed motions to dismiss federal charges of attempting to overturn the 2020 presidential election. On December 1, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan rejected all of them. Trump claimed that the Constitution confers absolute immunity from criminal prosecution for actions performed by the president. Judge Chutkan denied this claim, saying, "The Constitution's text, structure, and history do not support that contention. No court — or any other branch of government — has ever accepted it. And this court will not so hold." She continued, "Whatever immunities a sitting President may enjoy, the United States has only one Chief Executive at a time, and that position does not confer a lifelong 'get-out-of-jail-free' pass."

Trump also claimed that he is protected by the First Amendment, the prohibition against double jeopardy in the Fifth Amendment, and the due process clause in the Fifth Amendment. Judge Chutkan rejected Trump's First Amendment claim, saying that he is not being prosecuted for speech, but for attempting to overthrow the election, and that speech in the furtherance of criminal activity is not protected by the First Amendment. Regarding Trump's argument that he had already been acquitted for his January 6-related actions under the impeachment clause, she held that "neither traditional double jeopardy principles nor the Impeachment Judgment Clause provide that a prosecution following impeachment acquittal violates double jeopardy." She rejected Trump's due process claim on the basis that the laws Trump is accused of violating are written in plain language and clearly forbid the conduct he is being charged with.

Trump plans to appeal Judge Chutkan's ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals, but that process could take months and significantly delay the start of the trial. On December 11, Jack Smith — the federal prosecutor appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland to lead the investigation of Trump — took the highly unusual step of going directly to the Supreme Court, asking them to bypass the appellate process and take up the issue of Trump's immunity right away.

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a better place to live.



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