

State Legislative Candidates – House District 102 - Curt VanderWall

1. Why are you interested in serving the people, families, and businesses in northern Michigan?

I've lived in Northern Michigan for most of my adult life. It's where I rooted my family and operate a small business. I want to be a voice for Northern Michigan families. We are often left behind when it comes to state resources. For instance, students are facing a mental health crisis across the state, but there is an even bigger lack of resources in the north. I will spend my time in Lansing making sure that Northern Michigan is equipped to face challenges and create a flourishing economy.

2. How will you use your role to support the economic vitality of our region?

I have had the privilege of serving as the vice-chair for the Senate Committee on Economics and Small Business. I have used my time to support legislation that will increase economic activity and help businesses address the problems they are facing every day. One of the most important issues that business owners are facing is workforce recruitment. I have worked on plans to increase the available housing stock so workers will have a place to live. I have also worked closely on child care issues so that mothers are able to go back to work without having to worry about the extremely high cost and availability of child care.

3. Do you believe local government should have broad authority to regulate short-term rentals?

I believe that localities should engage community members to come up with a solution. As a former county commissioner, I know how important local engagement is. Any solution needs to be led by the community itself.

4. How would you address the shortage of skilled labor in northern Michigan?

We can address the shortage of skilled labor by increasing the availability and quality of trades and technical training. I sponsored a bill that would make it easier for public school students to attend a career tech center outside of their school district. We also need to increase the available housing supply in the area. I have worked on creative solutions to lower housing costs for employees.

5. How would you prioritize leftover funds from federal aid packages and surplus dollars in the state's general fund?

I believe the leftover ARPA dollars need to be invested in projects that will provide long-term benefit. We used a significant amount of the funding to improve our water infrastructure. I believe in prioritizing infrastructure that will help set Michigan up for success 5, 10, and 50 years down the road.

6. The availability of housing is a barrier to business growth and talent attraction in our region. How do you intend to address the affordable housing shortage?

Increasing the supply of attainable housing takes community collaboration and creative problem solving. I have supported a plan to expand the number of Community Land Trusts in Northern Michigan. These would allow 501c3 organizations to own the land houses sit on so residents would only pay taxes on the assessed value of the house and not the land. Programs like this can reduce the ongoing costs associated with housing but are not an end-all solution.

7. Many families struggle to secure quality child care. This can be a barrier to attracting talent and keeping people in or bringing people back into the workforce. How will you work to increase access to affordable and quality child care?

I was a major supporter of the Tri-Share program which uses State, employer, and parent dollars to pay for the cost of child care. I believe that the expansion of this program will help hundreds of families find quality child care and allow them to go back to work. I have also supported the recent child care plan promoted by Rep. O'Malley which would increase ratio rules, simplify some regulations and provide resources to child care providers. We need to create consistency in the regulation of child care providers and ease the burden that is placed on them by the regulatory agencies.

8. What are your solutions for supporting businesses being affected directly by inflation and supply chain costs?

It's imperative that we lower costs. As a small business owner myself, I know how much price increases can eat into a small businesses profit margin. The first thing we need to do is lower the State income tax. I have supported the plan to lower the corporate income tax from 6% to 3.9%, as well as lowering the individual income tax. I also think we need to continue to lower fuel prices as the price of fuel contributes to the price of supply chain costs. Eliminating the sales tax on gas is a step that would dampen costs. We can also look at the viability of expanding the shipping industry in Michigan. We have the easiest shipping access of any state in the Midwest and yet shipping isn't very prevalent in Michigan. If we can increase the viability of shipping, our supply chain will become more resilient.