

State Legislative Candidates – House District 103 – Jack O’Malley

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

The answer is “to serve”. I spent 38 years in radio. Thirty four at WTCM, a community oriented station. When the seat opened up 4+ years ago I thought this would be a way I could use my communication skills to continue helping the region. I said then and I will say again, I can’t promise all sorts of things, I am only 1 of 110. But I can promise effort. I believe I have definitely kept that promise. I also continue to say my agenda is my districts agenda. I don’t come with a list of personal issues.

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

I believe I have done so during my first two terms fighting to keep businesses functioning during the pandemic. The rules were arbitrary and hurting the small businesses of the north. I have worked across the aisle to bring much needed reform to childcare...which is critical in the lack of workforce issue. I have a plan I am working on to think outside the box with regards to work force housing. As Transportation Chair I have been working to secure more funding for our local roads. Also in my term I have been an advocate for locals in there issues and disputes with various state agencies. I have also been a vocal advocate of Pure Michigan especially after the Governor vetoed its funding. I am all about working to help this area grow and keep our quality of life top notch!

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

STR’s are an issue that does not seem to lend itself to compromise. I think STR’s if not controlled can impact many of the small communities in the region. I pushed back against the most recent bill that did pass the house. I am a believer in property rights...but also understand community rights. I spent many a frustrating hour trying to work a compromise. So yes I think a local community should be able to set reasonable requirements for the short term rentals in their community. I also believe we need to do more to encourage landlords to keep housing in the long term rental stock.

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

#1. Housing. No place to live, ya can’t work here. Then I would look at encouraging supporting training for skilled trades and labor. This is why I am such a supporter of Community Colleges. The jewels of training and retraining. Childcare is also an issue for younger families. I believe we are working on a good fix there! Also, we are very dependent on the hospitality industry. I would continue to support growing existing business and encourage others to relocate or build in the region.

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

Since much of this money was set to be spent on "specific buckets"...I think the wise plan is to use it where it will have long term impact. Since this money first started flowing the request for this money has come in from all corners for all types of uses. I think the Legislature has done a good job being careful in how it was spent. I think as the amount declines we still need to have discussion on how it will be spent. Where will it have impact? Our foster care system needs work. How do we encourage people to come teach or practice medicine here? Can that money be used in that area for example? Continued diligence in how its spent is important.

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?

No silver bullet. I support the housing bills currently being debated in Lansing. I think our local communities have to take a solid look at zoning. Where can this housing be built? 5 acre minimums and "not in my back yard" don't help. I am currently working on an idea with various groups that would set up a Pilot program to enhance housing in nearby communities with coordination with local transit. The idea, build affordable housing where it's actually more affordable. Then provide transportation to and from.

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 worked across the aisle and got an 8-bill package through the legislature and to the Governor signed into law that will do much to jumpstart childcare. There is more to be done in my next term to continue solid reforms. Also I have a bill in Committee that will change the definition of "in home" childcare. This would allow the location to be something other than a home while all other style of care and ratio's remain. I also think where it fits more and more employers are offering childcare benefits. The Tri-share pilot is showing promise...We are on the way!

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

Much of that is a federal issue. But locally, and in the state we need to support our citizens. Smart focused tax cuts. Bring the cost of living down...help with building affordable middle class housing. Eliminate as much red tape when dealing with state departments. We can invest in our energy production and delivery. I am a believer in multiple base fuels. Small Nuclear needs to be seriously looked at. My port assistance bill is focused on building up our ports to increase shipping. Michigan the Great Lakes State is last in Maritime commerce in the Great Lakes! Also Michigan has a balanced budget. Washington does not. We need to hold our Federal contingent's feet to the fire to push for smarter spending, balancing the budget and bringing inflation back into line. Let me close by saying I am a pragmatic person. Working to find consensus. Compromise is not a dirty word. I have always been a supporter of our region and plan to continue being an advocate in the House.