

State Legislative Candidates – SD 36 – Michele Hoitenga

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

Being a native to northern Michigan, I have been honored and humbled to serve in the role of State Representative - and I did not make the decision to run for Senate lightly. But witnessing how COVID has disrupted and negatively impacted those I serve, I know there is more work to be done. We need serious and viable solutions to restore our families, businesses, and local economies at a time when inflation and the threat of recession loom. For the sake of our grandchildren's future, I stand ready to deliver serious, viable solutions in the Senate.

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

The effects of inflation, high energy costs, and high fuel prices are evident in the lives of many families and businesses. Rather than continuing the bad policies that exacerbate these issues, I would like to see energy, economic, and tax policies that will restore hope and prosperity to us all. Communities thrive most when federal and state governments stop interfering, mandating, and excessively tax the very entities and job providers that make them thrive. In addition to the necessity for affordable and reliable energy, broadband is also a necessary element for economic growth in rural Michigan. I will continue to utilize the knowledge, resources, and experience I have gained as chair of the Communications and Technology committee to bridge the digital divide where it is most needed.

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

A bill was recently passed in the House that prevents local governments from banning short-term rentals outright, but preserves their authority to regulate them as they see fit. The legislation also placed geographic percentage caps in an effort to prevent family friendly neighborhoods from becoming overrun with rentals. It is understandable that homeowners are concerned about their neighborhoods becoming 'party zones,' but I also recognize the right of homeowners who make the argument that property decisions should remain within their control - the ones who pay the mortgage and property taxes. In my opinion, House Bill 4722 addresses this balance, but it hasn't been signed into law.

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

It is one of my staunchest beliefs that skilled trades should be promoted more in our high schools. In most cases, these trades are so in demand that they lead to excellent paying careers. This also incentivizes our youth to stay in the area where they grew up and raise their own families. There are already existing opportunities through a plethora of state programs for both youth and adults to learn trades. There seems to be a shift in culture and attitudes that is hindering production, so we must acknowledge that the state and job providers can only do so much. Ultimately, it is up to individuals to engage in the workforce and contribute to the enrichment of their own lives and communities.

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

We cannot spend our way to prosperity. I do not agree with the amount of government spending that has been happening - and we are seeing the results of deficit spending. It would be wise to put away leftover funds for future rainy-day emergencies that seem almost inevitable. One thing we must not do is use the funds to start new programs that cannot be sustained in the future when there are no funds left. Ultimately, this is the hard-working taxpayer's money. Perhaps letting them keep more of their earnings through an income tax cut is long overdue.

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?

Until we build more, there will continue to be a lack of housing options. Unfortunately the entrepreneurial spirit is being crushed by high pricing and lack of availability of goods, in conjunction with a lack of workforce willing to show up to work. It is a vicious cycle. To retain businesses, industry and housing, I will continue to promote common sense policies that bring down electric energy prices, eliminate laws and mandates that are barriers for expansion and growth, and work with local governments and businesses on ways to incentivize more construction in the housing market. Local governments must also be cognizant of ordinance, zoning and permitting to accommodate for growth and development.

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?

In the last two years, the legislature has dealt head-on with childcare availability and affordability. Together with resounding stakeholder input, a special Child Care committee drafted thoughtful legislation. Although these bills have now become law, it may take some time to see their full effects. It is always a pleasure to hear suggestions and recommendations from parents, employers, and community leaders on how to continue addressing Michigan's child care shortages.

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

This is a globalization issue exacerbated by some poor American policies that are driving up production costs. Inflation, energy costs, high fuel prices, and unaffordable health care/insurance are crushing many families and businesses and dampening their entrepreneurial spirits. The policies that have exacerbated these issues have to be eradicated - and replaced with energy, economic, and tax policies that restore hope and prosperity to us all. As an example, sending more IRS agents after manufacturing producers isn't going to help anyone.