

Relentless Positive Action

“One tough nerd” is not a nickname you’d expect to see encapsulating a state governor, but Michigan’s 48th governor, Rick Snyder has embraced the persona, using it anywhere from the campaign trail to his Twitter account. “Tough” is the perfect word to describe governor Snyder, who stepped up to the plate to lead Michigan when the State needed him most. Bringing businesses and investment expertise to a failing government, to create a “comeback state” Governor Snyder was able to turn Michigan around. When Governor Snyder took office in 2011, he inherited a state reeling from the recession; battling unemployment, blight, and ineffective fiscal policies. Governor Snyder tackled these problems head on. Creating more than 540,000 jobs and lowering the unemployment to 3.8 percent, a full percentage below the national average. Just how did these groundbreaking changes occur? *Relentless Positive Action*: Governor Snyder’s hand-crafted attitude that he applied to nearly every change he made as Governor.

Reforming Tax Codes

Governor Snyder was deeply committed to creating a tax code that would increase prosperity for Michiganders and create jobs, and he ran on such ideas in both 2010 and 2014. Any tax reforms would need to be “simple, fair, and efficient;” good for businesses while keeping services for the public that increase the quality of life for Michigan residents. To accomplish such a task, Governor Snyder recruited a strong legislative partner. He found Brian Calley, who he chose to be his lieutenant governor. With the help of Lieutenant Governor Calley, the dynamic duo worked together to protect small businesses from the Michigan Business Tax. Thanks to their efforts, 70 percent of Michigan small businesses no longer have to file the MBT or their burden has been reduced. Governor Snyder also made Michigan’s corporate tax system simpler and more efficient, instituting a flat tax of six percent for corporations.

He also created policy to offset the effects of federal tax reforms, which could cause a 1.5-billion-dollar tax increase for Michiganders. In 2018, he proposed a four-thousand-dollar personal exemption, which would increase to four thousand five hundred dollars in 2021. At the federal level, Congress has eliminated the personal tax exemption, and Governor Snyder’s plan will lessen this additional tax burden on Michiganders. With Governor Snyder’s proposal, Michigan residents may claim an exemption for themselves and each dependent regardless of the number of exemptions of the federal level.

The tax reforms do not end there. He is making the most of his last year as governor, pursuing a smarter tax code until the day he leaves office. For Fiscal Year 2019, Governor Snyder has proposed the Homestead Property Tax Credit, which would create 206 million dollars in tax relief for the state of Michigan, giving homeowners an extra 300 dollars in their pocket. Additionally, the income cap for this tax credit will be increased by 10 thousand dollars, so more families will benefit. Additionally, Governor Snyder wants to phase out the tax on trade-in cars, which will end up shaving 42 million for buyers. Governor Snyder also hopes to reform the personal property tax to provide additional relief to small businesses and manufacturers.

Job training

Governor Snyder was committed to revitalizing Michigan’s economy through job creation. One surefire way to create jobs is through job training programs to ensure that the public meets

employers' needs. With the ambitious goal of creating 800 thousand jobs by 2024, with an average salary of 60 thousand dollars, Governor Snyder set out to create comprehensive job training that emphasized cost effective education for in-demand careers. His 2018 program focuses on training programs, incentives, and financial assistance to help Michiganders get into careers like IT, manufacturing, healthcare, and business. This plan emphasizes partnerships between businesses and schools, to bring the needed skills directly to students. Governor Snyder also stresses the importance of technical certificates over traditional college degrees. Often, these grant the ability to perform many technical jobs at a fraction of the cost of four-year universities.

Governor Snyder also promoted his 100 million dollar "Marshall Plan for Talent". This plan would give scholarships and stipends to low income Michiganders seeking trade certificates. Additionally, it incentivizes teachers to get additional certifications to teach in high demand areas, like biology. Under this plan, schools will receive grants if they prioritize career preparedness in their curriculum. The plan also provides grants to schools that choose to partner with businesses to train students. The Marshall plan is also future minded, prioritizing booming fields such as cybersecurity. Schools are given financial incentives to increase the number of students pursuing degrees or certificates in cybersecurity. Lastly, the Marshall Plan entails an awareness and outreach program to ensure that the most schools possible are taking part in this program. One million was also given to a Michigan Advanced Technician Training Program. This program combines classroom instruction with paid work experience in a three year, no cost program in booming fields like mechatronics, IT, and technical product design.

Community colleges are a strong education option that can provide students with training and degrees at a more reasonable price. In 2015, Governor Snyder advocated for a 50-million-dollar initiative to partner with the state's community colleges. The fund aimed to close the talent gap between employees and employers through the Community College Skilled Trades Equipment Program (CCSTEP). CCSTEP catered to over 400 thousand community college students and provided training for skills-trade jobs that do not necessarily require a four-year degree. Community colleges can apply for a grant up to 4.8 million dollars. CCSTEP still holds community colleges accountable, as they are not eligible to receive funding lest they are able to come up with a 25 percent match of the total equipment cost.

After the recession, job prospects were slim, not only for career-minded students, but for the workforce as well. Governor Snyder created various programs to combat structural employment and mitigate the skills gap between employers and employees. 10 million was allocated to support community ventures such as job placement programs. Additionally, 10 million was allocated for the Skills Trades Training Fund which gives grants to Michigan Works! Agencies.

Paying back debt

Paying back debt is a crucial step on the road to economic prosperity. The debt of Detroit's Public Schools was taking a toll on not only the economy, but the quality of students' education. Governor Snyder knew that something had to be done. In 2007, Michiganders voted in favor of giving responsibility to the state government to handle debt in Detroit's public schools. While an appointed board was in charge of the district, the debt grew to 213 million dollars. In 2015, the debt was expected to rise to 700 million. In 2016, the legislature approved 617 million dollars to fix the district. This deal took many negotiations between lawmakers and Governor Snyder, ultimately resulting in an agreement to begin debt alleviation. Ultimately, 467 million would go towards paying off debt, and 150 million would be invested into students. To begin paying back debt, the Detroit Public Schools district was split into two. One district was created for educational purposes and one district remained to collect mileages and continuing paying down

debt. A new, locally elected school board was also created to ensure that educational decisions were made by true stakeholders in the Detroit Public Schools system.

Criminal Justice

A key element of a successful society is a criminal justice system that appropriately corrects offenders, and then allows them to reenter society as contributing members. Governor Snyder stressed the importance of job training for offenders, with the goal of reducing recidivism rates. To accomplish this, he created a partnership between the Michigan Department of Corrections and Talent Investment Agency to first identify skills to train prisoners for and then improve the quality of training that prisoners receive. Governor Snyder also sees the value of diversion and rehabilitation programs for non-violent offenders. Some cases are now able to be dismissed after appropriate treatment in mental health facilities or drug courts, saving tax dollars. Additionally, inconsistent parole violation has been regulated and presumptive parole has been increased for inmates who have a high chance of success. Governor Snyder also wants to eliminate laws that penalize minor crimes.

Budget Reform

The key to smart and successful budget making is planning far in advance, while never losing sight of fiscal responsibility. Governor Snyder partnered with the state legislature to get budgets done early, to ensure that schools, and local governments can begin planning their own budgets as soon as possible. By prioritizing long-term investments in his budget proposals, for example, restoring roads and bridges, Governor Snyder ensured the creation of sustainable growth and prosperity. Governor Snyder made fiscally responsible moves to get Michigan out of the red and reduce unnecessary spending that was ultimately hurting Michiganders. At times, this warranted unilateral action to create a noticeable change in the State's budget. He created an executive order to reduce the Fiscal Year 2015 budget to alleviate the effects of revenue loss due to former business tax credits. To create a culture of fiscal responsibility while still maintaining important government services, he worked with state agencies to determine areas where spending could be reduced, while ensuring that local governments and schools still received ample funding.

The budget for Fiscal Year 2016 was a landmark budget for Governor Snyder, who managed to get a responsible budget done early that prioritized education, health, jobs, infrastructure, and more. By prioritizing education, 75 more dollars was spent on each student in Michigan. Additionally, the budget made investments in the future, allocating 25 million for a third-grade reading initiative and an additional 100 million to help at-risk students. The budget also provided room to help Michigan regain its footing as it continues to recover from the Recession. Six million was allocated to restore financial aid for part-time college students, and 75 million was allocated to the rehabilitation of distressed districts. Additionally, the budget proposed smart financial practices by allocating an additional 30 million to the school districts that performed the best financial practices.

The 2016 budget also prioritized getting Michiganders healthy. 21.8 million was allocated to expand the Healthy Kids Dental Program to increase the number of children who receive dental care by 210,000. Additionally, 23 million dollars is included to expand dental care to over 600,000 Medicaid recipients. The budget also allocated funds to prioritize mental wellness, particularly in the university setting.

Governor Snyder made smart decisions concerning the future of infrastructure in Michigan. In the 2016 budget, 113 million dollars were allocated to for the building and repair of roads. This ideal amount ensured that Michigan could receive the maximum match in federal funds. Additionally, he proposed 31 million for building and maintenance of facilities, ensuring that the state government can run at its full potential. Governor Snyder also understands the importance of being future-minded when it comes to technology. 70 million dollars was included in his budget to modernize computer systems and cyber-security efforts to ensure that Michigan is able to hold its own in the digital age.

Governor Snyder continues to make important recommendations about Michigan's budget that will put the state on the right path to fiscal responsibility and economic prosperity. For Fiscal Year 2019, he has recommended 20 million for broadband expansion. Funds were also allocated in his proposal to investment in business and struggling urban neighborhoods. As always, Governor Snyder kept his eye on the prize: the creation of full time jobs, so his budget proposal includes 10 million for the "Going Pro" program which teaches trades in high-demand jobs. Above all, this tough nerd plans ahead. Under his administration, Michigan's "rainy day fund" has increased from two million to 900 million dollars. His 2019 proposal includes the goal of increasing the fund to one billion dollars.