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# MICHIGAN'S DEFINING MOMENT



spend a little time on the future of your state

#### CO-CHAIRS

Paul Hillegonds  
Mark Murray  
Phil Power  
Glenda D. Price  
Doug Rothwell  
Marilyn Schlack  
S. Martin Taylor

*"Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

*-- Margaret Mead*

## Introduction

It's no secret that Michigan is at the most critical period in our lifetimes. Economic, governmental, and social systems are floundering. Our political and policy mechanisms are largely broken, the product of hyper-partisanship and failure of shared vision. We desperately need energized, mobilized, pragmatic leadership to navigate through our present crisis and lay the foundation for our future prosperity. And we need an urgent, intense, inclusive statewide discussion about our best future and the political will to mount concerted action to achieve it.

A group of more than 100 diverse Michigan leaders has been guiding this unfolding discussion for nearly two years. In collaboration with the Center for Michigan, an IRS-approved 501(c)3 nonprofit "think-and-do tank" founded in 2006 by Phil Power, they have launched an ambitious campaign to combine broad state, regional, and community leadership with public engagement and action to move our state to a new era of prosperity. This transformational campaign is called "Michigan's Defining Moment" (MDM). Public Sector Consultants, a distinguished Lansing public policy research firm, is assisting in planning and execution.

## Goals

Michigan's Defining Moment has four goals:

- **Ignite and fan a citizen movement around a common ground agenda to transform Michigan.** Many of our problems have arisen from lack of a shared vision for Michigan's future. Without it, we cannot forge a policy consensus or develop a focused and disciplined set of action steps and investment priorities. A broad-based citizen movement can call forth a new generation of pragmatic, forward-looking civic leaders who can bring the vision to reality.
- **Achieve long-term, comprehensive reforms of policy and politics in Michigan.** Michigan's Defining Moment is aimed at comprehensive reform, not one-time fixes. Our intent is to make the agenda for Michigan's transformation the primary subject of political discourse in the 2008 election and the watershed contest in 2010.
- **Provoke widespread and in-depth public engagement and civic education.** By 2010, the MDM campaign will engage thousands of community leaders and citizens in reaching bottom-up consensus on how best to position Michigan for growth and success, including the required strategies and tactics. MDM will develop a suite of civic action tools to greatly increase public understanding of our present situation and facilitate effective citizen response.
- **Trigger a widespread sense of urgency, leadership and the political will to get something done.** Michigan truly is at a hinge in our history. The decisions we will make over the next decade or so will go a long way to determining the kind of state we will have in 50-75 years. Yet, segments of our political and policy system are content to kick the can down the road, hoping somebody else can take the tough decisions that are needed. This must change.

[www.thecenterformichigan.net](http://www.thecenterformichigan.net)

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## ***Progress Report***

Since May, 2007, The Center for Michigan and the Michigan's Defining Moment campaign have come a long way. Among the benchmarks:

- **Community Conversations:** Small group gatherings reflecting the diversity of Michigan and taking place in communities all across the state. More than 180 conversations took place in late 2007 and early 2008. They involved nearly 2,000 people in an unprecedented effort to engage Michigan citizens in developing a shared vision for Michigan's best future and working out strategies and actions steps to achieve that vision. Neither snapshot results from a poll nor the result of ideology administered from above, these instances of bottom-up "deliberative democracy" result in a compelling statement of Michigan's priorities and a comprehensive action agenda. The MDM campaign plans on holding hundreds more community conversations over the next two years.
- **Michigan's Defining Moment: A Common Ground Agenda for Michigan's Transformation** presents in detail the outcome of the community conversations. The report calls for a virtuous circle of a talented and globally competitive workforce, a vibrant economy and a great quality of life, and an efficient, effective and accountable government. To attract and retain talented and skilled people, Michigan offers a great – and affordable – quality of life based on our incomparable natural resources and attractions of our urban areas. A talented workforce will attract companies in search of skilled and productive workers to compete and succeed. A vibrant economy will provide the jobs for our most talented here at home and recruit the best from other states and abroad. And an effective and efficient government will provide the policy architecture and financial resources to invest in our public goods and our long-term competitive advantages of talent and quality of life. The full text is available on The Center's web site.

Included in the report is the **Michigan Scorecard**, a benchmarked set of 36 metrics tied to the main recommendations of the common ground agenda for change.

- **Web site and Newsletter:** The Center's web site has grown substantially, now receiving more than 180 unique visitors daily. From a standing start and without spamming, The Center's weekly email newsletter, "Fresh Thoughts for Michigan Moderates", now is distributed to more than 4,000 subscribers. To subscribe and to learn more about The Center, go to [www.thecenterformichigan.net](http://www.thecenterformichigan.net).
- **Fund-Raising:** The Center and the Michigan's Defining Moment campaign have raised more than \$3 million in cash and pledges from Michigan philanthropies, businesses and individuals. Investors include: the Dow, Frey, Hudson-Webber, Kellogg, Kresge, Mott, Power and Stryker-Johnston Foundations; the Van Dusen and the Gilmour Funds; AT&T, Consumer's Energy, Domino's Pizza, DTE, Meijer and Stryker companies; Davenport University; and numerous individuals. The Center is grateful to these generous supporters.
- **Media Notice:** The Center and the MDM campaign have benefited from considerable media coverage. Examples can be found on The Center's web site.
- **Legislative Dinners:** The Center is nurturing a "scorecard caucus" among Michigan legislators through a series of bi-partisan, bi-cameral, off the record and confidential dinners for lawmakers. So far, around 30 legislators have attended, and The Center hopes for greater participation after the elections to the House of Representatives in 2008.

- **Outreach:** The Center hired in June three outreach coordinators to work in expanding the scope and reach of the Michigan's Defining Moment campaign. The goal is to hold 400-500 more community conversations by the end of 2010. The coordinators will also be bringing to the attention of candidates for the Michigan House of Representatives the MDM agenda for Michigan's transformation and in facilitating conversations between community conversation participants and legislative candidates from their own districts. MDM does not care whether those elected are Republican or Democrat; it does care that those elected are aware of the agenda for Michigan's transformation.

### ***Governance***

The MDM campaign must be firmly rooted in the diversity – geographic, gender and ethnic – of our entire state. The campaign is co-chaired and governed by seven diverse, experienced Michigan leaders:

- Paul Hillegonds, Senior Vice President, DTE Energy
- Mark Murray, President, Meijer, Inc.
- Phil Power, President, The Center for Michigan
- Glenda Price, President Emerita, Marygrove College
- Doug Rothwell, President, Detroit Renaissance
- Marilyn Schlack, President, Kalamazoo Valley Community College
- S. Martin Taylor, retired executive and longtime community leader

The Center for Michigan is a non-profit corporation ; it is governed by a board of directors and advised by a bi-partisan Steering Committee of distinguished Michigan citizens. Members of both are listed on The Center's web site.

### ***Why This Approach Can Succeed***

We appeal to the moderate majority. Relatively few people are either extremely left or hard right in political orientation; most are middle of the roaders who feel alienated by the ways in which our politics have been hijacked by extreme partisans and our policy-making has been paralyzed by a preoccupation with scoring political points. The events of last fall are the best argument we cannot continue to have business as usual. The Center for Michigan aims to mobilize the majority population of Michigan into a practical, effective governing coalition.

The Center is not interested in starting a third party; American history teaches this approach does not work. Nor is The Center a stalking horse for the personal political ambitions of any one person. Instead, The Center and the MDM campaign are working to change aimed at changing the behavior of both of our political parties, calling forth a new generation of civic leadership and encouraging more effective cooperation in the interests of all Michigan citizens.

The MDM campaign aims at building a citizen movement of 10,000 Michiganders, a group sizable enough to command attention from both political parties and the media. Simultaneously, early adherents of the MDM campaign – champions – represent a cross section of leaders in communities throughout Michigan. This practical combination – outside and inside – can move a political and policy system that has been frozen in dysfunction for far too long.

We invite your participation and support.