

## UPDATES FROM THE CAPITOL

### April 1 - 14, 2025

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tuesday, April 15, 2025**

House Returns from Spring Break

**Friday, April 18, 2025**

McCall Hamilton Office Closed for Good Friday

**Sunday, April 20, 2025**

Easter Sunday

#### 2026 MICHIGAN GOVERNOR'S RACE INCLUDES MANY FAMILIAR FACES

Our state's 2026 gubernatorial election is taking shape with high-profile candidates from across the political spectrum announcing their campaigns well ahead of the primary. So far, bids have been launched by a wide array of candidates, including department heads, sitting legislators, and local officials. Below is a snapshot of those who have officially declared their candidacy:

##### Declared Gubernatorial Candidates:

- **John James** (Republican) – U.S. Representative (Shelby Township)
- **Aric Nesbitt** (Republican) – Michigan Senate Minority Leader (Lawton)
- **Jocelyn Benson** (Democrat) – Michigan Secretary of State
- **Garlin Gilchrist II** (Democrat) – Michigan Lieutenant Governor
- **Chris Swanson** (Democrat) – Genesee County Sheriff
- **Mike Duggan** (Independent) – Mayor of Detroit

See Also: [Hillary Scholten opts for US House re-election, bows out of Senate race](#) for a list of candidates running for the open Michigan U.S. Senate seat in 2026.

#### MICHIGAN JOINS MULTI-STATE LAWSUIT TO BLOCK FEDERAL PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT CUTS

Attorney General Dana Nessel is part of a 24-state coalition that has successfully secured a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) to stop the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) from terminating nearly \$11 billion in federal public health grants — cuts that include more than \$379 million originally promised to Michigan. Affected programs include vaccination funding for children, infectious disease prevention, mental health care for those with severe conditions, and opioid treatment for vulnerable populations. The TRO halts those cuts for now, ensuring continued funding while the legal challenge moves forward in federal court.

Members of the coalition, including attorney generals from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin, plus the governors of Kentucky and Pennsylvania, argue the terminations were made without proper notice or legal justification.

Specifically, the lawsuit claims DHHS acted unlawfully by ending the grants under the justification that the COVID-19 pandemic has ended — despite Congress not tying the funding to the pandemic's status. According to state officials, this lack of funding is already disrupting services and creating confusion for health departments and organizations that rely on these dollars.

## **SUPREME COURT: SENATE LAWSUIT OVER HOUSE BILLS WILL GO THROUGH USUAL LEGAL PROCESS**

The Michigan Supreme Court has declined to immediately take up a lawsuit filed by the state Senate against the House of Representatives, confirming the case will go through the normal legal process by having the Court of Appeals review it first. The ongoing dispute centers on the House's refusal to formally present nine bills passed by the Senate during the last session, a procedural step required to send legislation to the governor.

While Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks had asked both the Court of Appeals and Supreme Court to weigh in on the matter immediately, the court said it was not persuaded to skip the usual legal process. However, it did order the Court of Appeals to expedite its review so the matter can move forward more quickly.

Related Articles: [Brinks seeks Supreme Court ruling and makes Senate rule change in ongoing fight over House bills](#) • [Michigan House declines to send 9 bills to Governor](#) • [Senate Democrats file lawsuit against Speaker Hall](#)

## **BALLOT PROPOSALS BREWING FOR THE 2026 ELECTION CYCLE**

After a quiet 2024 election cycle with no statewide ballot proposals, early indicators suggest Michigan voters will face several proposals in 2026. At a minimum, they will be asked whether to convene a constitutional convention—a question required every 16 years by the Michigan Constitution, and one voters have consistently rejected in the past. Meanwhile, new petition drives are already underway, including a proposed constitutional amendment that would require proof of citizenship to register to vote. The proposal echoes recent national conversations and has sparked debate, with supporters citing election security and critics warning of potential barriers to voting.

Additional proposals could also make the ballot if enough signatures are gathered. These include efforts to expand Michigan's Bottle Bill, introduce ranked choice voting, and remove the dormant ban on same-sex marriage from the Constitution. Some groups are also eyeing potential referendums or amendments on taxes and minimum wage. With over 440,000 valid signatures needed and stricter rules around how they're collected, getting a proposal on the ballot won't be easy or cheap. Still, if even a few proposals make it through, this would signal that ballot issues are back in a big way for Michigan voters.

## **STATE SUPREME COURT RULES MANDATORY LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE UNCONSTITUTIONAL FOR 19- AND 20-YEAR-OLDS**

The Michigan Supreme Court has ruled that automatically sentencing 19- and 20-year-olds to life without parole is unconstitutional under the state's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. In a 5-2 decision, the court said these young adults must instead receive individualized sentencing, allowing judges to weigh circumstances before issuing such severe penalties.

The decision applies retroactively, meaning it could impact past cases that are still eligible for court review. While life without parole remains a sentencing option for serious crimes like first-degree murder, courts must now consider factors such as age and personal history before deciding. Chief Justice Elizabeth Clement and Justice Brian Zahra dissented from the majority opinion.