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**EMBARGOED UNTIL 7 P.M.**  
**January 25, 2006**

**Working Our Plan, Securing Our Future**



**Jennifer M. Granholm**  
Governor  
State of Michigan

**State of the State Address**

*State Capitol • Lansing • Michigan*  
*Wednesday, January 25, 2006*

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Thank you.

Lieutenant Governor Cherry, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Majority Leader, members of the Legislature, distinguished guests, fellow citizens, my beloved family:

Before I begin, I would like to recognize one more person – Melissa Dennis, wife of National Guardsman Anthony Dennis, Captain of the 125<sup>th</sup> Bravo Company serving in Iraq. I visited the 125<sup>th</sup> when I went to Iraq on Thanksgiving. Mrs. Dennis is here representing all of the families and soldiers who have put their lives on the line for us. Please join me in thanking her and all our Michigan heroes.

State of the State addresses are traditionally formal affairs where the Governor talks policy with the Legislature. People with titles and expensive suits pack this ornate hall. With utmost respect to you, I ask your indulgence as I speak more directly tonight to our employers – the people of Michigan.

I want to talk to the father who has worked for 30 years at a manufacturing plant who just got notice that his job as a welder has been outsourced to China.

I want to talk to the waitress who dreams of sending her only daughter to college but worries that she'll never be able to save enough to afford the tuition.

I want to talk to the woman behind the counter at the dry cleaners where you picked up your suit to wear tonight, the woman who's sick but who can't afford to see her doctor.

I want to talk to the worker at Delphi, at GM, at Chrysler, and at Ford. And I want to talk to the worker at the Ford Wixom plant.

Tonight, I want to talk to the everyday people of Michigan, the people who built Michigan's schools and churches, its little leagues and Kiwanis Clubs. The people who power its economy and who only expect for themselves a fair opportunity to build a good life for their families.

I want to talk to those who are fearful, and to those who are hopeful, and to many of you who are both.

Wherever we live in Michigan, we know that as our auto industry struggles in this global economy, our people feel that pain more than in any other state in the country.

Michigan, I am here to tell you: We have a detailed and comprehensive plan to grow this economy. We are working that plan. **And** everything in that plan will secure the opportunity for a good life for you and your family. In Michigan.

Some will say, "How can you talk about a good life in Michigan when for over six years we have been losing manufacturing jobs – like the ones that Ford just announced?"

Here's the answer: I will not stop working our plan until we create a Michigan where every one of you, from the autoworker to the homemaker to the nurse, has the opportunity to build that good life.

The foundation of a good life, of course, is a good-paying job. But we know there are other critical building blocks. You need health care for your family. You need a quality education for your children – and, today, that means an affordable college education. And you need a government that fights for you, to protect your family, your home, your community.

Many fear that good life is slipping away in Michigan as our economy faces unprecedented challenge.

Tonight, I want you to know that our plan will meet that challenge because it, too, is unprecedented, both in detail and in scope. And I want to tell you how we will work that plan and move our state forward in four distinct ways:

- We will protect you and your family and your financial security – all the more important during this time of economic transition.
- We will give all of our children the education they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. We want the most educated workforce in the nation.
- We will make health care more affordable and more accessible for hundreds of thousands of more people in Michigan.
- And because the foundation of a good life IS the opportunity for a good job, I'll keep fighting to protect the jobs we have. I will go anywhere and do anything to bring jobs to this state. And we'll diversify our economy by adding jobs in growing sectors.

We have been working this plan. We have been consistent, disciplined and unwavering in executing it. And it's already bearing fruit.

Our efforts have created and retained 327,000 jobs that otherwise would have gone to some other state or – more likely – some other country.

You hear all the time the bad news, so let me give you a couple of examples of our main successes in bringing jobs here:

J&L Industrial Supply, the largest metal cutting distributor in America, is consolidating operations from Texas, North Carolina, and California in Southfield. Advanced Photonix, a California technology firm, is moving its headquarters to Ann Arbor. Ohio-based Cobra Motorcycles is moving its headquarters to Hillsdale.

And, let me introduce Greg Boll, CEO of Cummins Bridgeway – he moved factory jobs back to Michigan from Mexico because of the quality of Michigan’s workforce – with support from us, he chose to bring jobs home. Thank you for choosing Michigan, Mr. Boll.

International companies are creating jobs in Michigan at a remarkable pace. In the past three years, German and Japanese companies created more than 10,000 jobs and invested \$1.7 billion in Michigan. Only two other states attracted more international investment than ours.

Our domestic automakers, despite their own challenges, have invested over \$9 billion in their Michigan facilities in the past three years.

Because of our sustained efforts to keep and attract automotive research and development companies, Michigan has more employees and investments in that growing part of our economy than all of the other 49 states, plus Canada, plus Mexico combined.

In the 12 months since I spoke here last, more than 1,600 new small businesses opened their doors in Michigan. In fact, in 2005 we were named one of the friendliest states in America for small businesses.<sup>1</sup>

There are 99,000 more people working right now than when I first took office.

And we are creating 30,000 jobs by accelerating nearly \$3 billion in infrastructure projects across the state. Rather than waiting 10 years to get the work done, we’ll finish it in the next three. Soon, everyone will live within 30 minutes of an infrastructure project – from roads and bridges, to sewers, to upgraded nursing homes, to environmental cleanup sites.

If you are unemployed or need training to become employed, thanks to our MI Opportunity Partnership, we’re more successful than ever at training and placing unemployed people in good paying jobs that exist today in Michigan.

People like Armenia Smith, a Detroit mom who lost her job but gained the training she needed to become a nurse. Armenia’s just one of the 19,000 people we have already placed in good jobs. Mrs. Smith, thank you for being here. We are on track to place 30,000 unemployed people in jobs in the first year of the program. We will place 40,000 more in year two. We have focused an entire department of state government on giving workers the skills they need to take new jobs.

So, you say, I see that you are training and placing thousands of people in jobs, and that you have attracted thousands of jobs to Michigan. But, you ask, what are you going to do to keep the jobs we have, and to make Michigan less reliant on the auto industry?

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<sup>1</sup> The Small Business Entrepreneurship Council, Washington, D.C.

Here's the answer: Michigan has the most aggressive economic plan of any state in the country. It is a bold \$6 billion plan to grow jobs today and jobs tomorrow. Two of the most powerful pieces of this economic plan were just approved by this Legislature in the last two months.

First, a bipartisan \$600 million tax-cut package that will fight the outsourcing of our existing jobs and encourage the insourcing of new ones.

And second, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs Fund, the product of almost unanimous bipartisan agreement – the largest investment in diversifying our economy this state has ever seen. It'll create tens of thousands of new jobs. We'll invest more than \$2 billion in public and private funds to develop new sectors of our economy: Advanced manufacturing. Homeland security and defense. Life sciences. Alternative energy. This effort will create all kinds of jobs for all kinds of people. Jobs that will not be outsourced. Jobs that will keep our children in Michigan.

I know I said this speech was to the people, but let me just pause for a moment to thank you, the Legislature, for putting politics aside to put people first by approving this critical part of the plan.

We are wasting no time in putting this powerful tool to work to create jobs.

This month, we held 13 sessions across the state, explaining this fund to standing room only crowds of excited entrepreneurs and business people eager to grow their businesses.

In a few months, we will begin making prudent investments in the diverse companies that will grow jobs in Michigan.

And by this time next year, we'll see new businesses doing just that. In five years, you're going to be blown away by the strength and diversity of Michigan's transformed economy.

### **ALTERNATIVE ENERGY**

Let me touch on one of those groundbreaking areas of job growth that we're targeting – alternative energy.

This is a big deal – and a huge opportunity for Michigan. Innovators across the country are developing new ways to power our refrigerators, heat our homes, and fuel our cars. Power plants and engines fueled not only by coal or oil, but by, for example, hydrogen, the sun or the wind, or waste from landfills or farms.

The Great Lakes State will be the alternative energy epicenter of America. Since we are the home of the automobile, it is our proud, patriotic duty to be the state that ends our nation's dependence on foreign oil.

Our universities are already leaping into the alternative energy field. At Michigan State University, President Lou Anna Simon is positioning our state (and her Spartans) to lead the world in the new “bio-economy” – developing energy and other products from our agricultural sector. Kettering University in Flint, MAREC in Muskegon, and Next Energy at Wayne State all are leading in the development of alternative energies. If you went to the auto show, and I hope you did, you might have seen the national championship solar car developed by University of Michigan students; it tops out at 80 mph.

We will use our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs Fund to grow businesses here that put Michigan on the path to alternative energy leadership. And in the months ahead, we will form a statewide partnership among all of the alternative energy research and development institutions in Michigan, and we will dramatically increase the demand in our state for alternative sources of energy to bring those kinds of businesses to Michigan.

We will continue to reach for the vision of a nation independent of foreign oil – a nation powered by Michigan’s green businesses, Michigan innovation, and Michigan workers.

### **GOING ANYWHERE, DOING ANYTHING TO BRING JOBS TO MICHIGAN**

In the year ahead, I will continue to go anywhere and do anything to bring jobs to Michigan. Instead of seeing our jobs outsourced to China or India or Mexico, I’m going to continue to bring jobs home.

In 2004 and 2005, the destinations were Germany and Japan. When tourists go overseas, they bring back souvenirs. We brought back jobs. German companies – Behr Industries, Eberspacher, and Bosch – are hiring people in Kent County, Brighton, and Plymouth. Our Japan trip brought commitments for hundreds of more new jobs from Denso, Tokai Rika, Hitachi Automotive, and others.

This year, whether we are courting life science leaders in Boston, technology leaders in California, homeland security businesses in Washington, or their counterparts in Europe or Asia, I will tell each of them this: there’s no better place on the planet to grow your business than right here in Michigan.

### **Fighting for the Jobs We Have**

In addition to bringing jobs home, I’ll continue my fight to keep the jobs we have right here in Michigan.

On this point, let me be very clear: We *will* grow new segments of our Michigan economy. But we will *not* concede the automotive industry to any other state or nation.

We are the state that put America on wheels – the state that put the “car” in NASCAR. There is no vision for Michigan’s new economy that does not include cars designed, engineered, and made in Michigan. The industry’s changing – but we in Michigan

cannot – will not – abandon it. And we should not allow our government in Washington to abandon it either.

Believe me, Michigan will continue to do everything in its power to support our manufacturing sector. We know state government has a role to play.

But as manufacturing CEOs have repeatedly told me: No state can fix this problem alone. No state can adopt or enforce trade agreements. No state can impact the nation's laws on pensions. The leadership in Washington must be our partner in responding to the crushing challenges of a global economy. A partner. Not a bystander.

Our bipartisan Congressional delegation agrees. We all owe thanks for the leadership of our Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow and Deans of the House, Congressmen John Dingell and Fred Upton, who are fighting for a federal partnership to help our manufacturing sector.

I'll continue to call on our President to craft a uniquely American solution to health care and pension reforms to make our nation's manufacturers competitive with other countries. I've called on the administration in Washington to enact fair trade policies, not trade policies that help other countries grow jobs while ours are outsourced. Michigan workers make the best products in the world. We're not afraid of trade. I say "bring it on." But it must be fair trade. Fair to our businesses. Fair to our workers. Fair to our country.

As long as I am your Governor, no state will fight harder to keep our manufacturing jobs.

### **Slash Bureaucracy and Streamline**

I'll also continue to do everything I can to make our state more friendly to job providers.

We will continue to slash the red tape that entangles businesses.

Michigan is already the first state in the nation to offer environmental permits online – a step that has cut air quality permitting time for businesses by 66 percent. This year, we'll cut in half the time it takes for new employers to open their doors as a Michigan business – and we'll do it online. We'll nearly double the number of business permits available online.

A state that can balance its books and maintain a high quality of life is a state that will attract businesses and jobs.

I'm proud that we've resolved \$4 billion in budget deficits without a general tax increase. And proud that I've signed 51 tax-cuts into law, both for individuals and to help businesses create jobs, without leaving gaping holes in our budget. I've also made it clear that I will not support business tax breaks that would shift the burden to everyday citizens or force cuts to education and health care.

The main reason we've been able to do more with less in state government is because our state workers are, without a doubt, second to none. Please join me in honoring and thanking these incredibly dedicated public servants.

As part of our economic plan, last year I ordered our departments to buy Michigan first. Today, more than 85 percent of what the State of Michigan buys is sold to us by Michigan companies, and we're proud to support the home team.

Before I leave this discussion of supporting our businesses, I want to underscore the importance of supporting the cities they call home.

In my budget presentation next month, I will offer cities a major incentive to partner on significant economic development projects. Partner with the state. Partner with the private sector. And partner with other municipalities to encourage regional collaboration for major economic development and jobs projects. It will create construction jobs today. It will promote regional cooperation. And it will enhance our cities.

And let me pause on our largest city.

For the past two weeks, Detroit has showcased the world's premiere auto show. It was on TV across the nation. It was a reflection of Michigan.

And next week, the Super Bowl spotlight will shine on the Motor City. It will be on TV around the world. It will be a reflection of Michigan.

Mayor Kilpatrick, welcome. The entire state needs and wants Detroit to be successful. We all have to work together to see it happen.

So, to those who practice the politics of division, who would drive a wedge between the city and the state, let me say this:

The only thing that should come between Detroit and Michigan is a comma.

Period.

Let me turn to two other issues related to our economic growth. Making health care more affordable and accessible, and ensuring that our children have the education to succeed in this new economy.

## **MAKING HEALTH CARE MORE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE**

### **Create a Michigan First Health Care Plan**

We have already expanded health care in Michigan. Beginning this year, we will revolutionize it.

Our first step is a quantum leap: We will provide access to quality, affordable health care for 550,000 people. We'll create a new insurance product in this state: the Michigan First Health Care Plan.

The concept is simple: Give families who otherwise could not afford health insurance access to a basic, low-cost health care plan through a private insurance company. We will offer this plan through a new financial partnership with the federal government.

Michigan First will cover the small business employee who doesn't get coverage through work and doesn't qualify for Medicaid.

It will cover the self-employed worker who can't otherwise afford to purchase a private plan.

It will allow us to provide mental health services – because it is as important to cover mental health as it is physical health.

And this will make Michigan the state with the highest percentage of its population insured.

If you already have insurance, you may be asking yourself, “Why does this matter to me?” Because Michigan First will save you money, too. Having fewer uninsured people reduces the costs of insurance for everyone – you pay an extra \$730 per year for the cost of your insurance just to cover people who are uninsured. The more people who are insured, the less *everyone* pays.

### **Bring health care delivery into the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The second step in our plan to provide more affordable, better quality health care is to bring health care delivery into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In Michigan, we'll help our health care industry stop depending on your memory and their paper records as databanks. We are going to use technology to vastly improve the system. In the future, you will be able to give your pharmacist, your doctor, or the emergency room immediate access to your information, but you will control who sees it and what it is used for.

Think about it, never having to remember the name of the medicines you've been prescribed. Never having to fill out another form detailing your medical history, your allergies and the last time your 10-year-old got a tetanus shot.

In December, I convened a new Michigan Health Information Network of health care and technology professionals to develop that new network. Already, pilot projects are up and running in Southeast Michigan, right here in Lansing, and in the Upper Peninsula.

This investment in information technology will reduce errors, reduce duplication, reduce insurance costs, and increase your medical privacy.

### **Encourage Healthy Lifestyles and Personal Responsibility**

Third: Quality, affordable health care requires a healthy initiative by citizens to make lifestyle changes.

We can decrease the rates of preventable diseases, like diabetes, lung cancer, and heart disease, by changing our eating habits, giving up smoking habits, and getting into the exercise habit.

In this year, we will continue to implement current strategies targeted at encouraging personal responsibility for healthy lifestyles and outcomes for all Michigan citizens by incorporating and extending the principles supported by Michigan's Surgeon General in the Michigan Steps Up initiative. These principles include focus on healthy behaviors through better eating habits, getting regular exercise, and avoiding tobacco use.

Tonight, I'm charging the Departments of Community Health, Labor and Economic Growth, and Education; the Surgeon General; and business leaders to lead our state in developing lasting, local public-private partnerships among schools, corporations, foundations, the faith-based community, public health, health care, and community organizations. These partnerships will help foster a culture of physical activity, prevention, and wellness in our communities, workplaces, and schools.

### **Remove Limits on Stem Cell Research in Michigan**

If we are truly serious about improving both the cost and quality of health care in this state, we must tap the full power of modern science to combat life-threatening illnesses.

Imagine having to watch your child suffer with juvenile diabetes. Imagine watching your wife lose her ability to speak, and walk, and even eat, as her Parkinson's worsens.

Stem cell research holds the promise for finding cures and for improving the lives of thousands of people.

Talented researchers and businesses around the world are working right now on those cures...but we can't recruit them to Michigan to do their work because of the limits Michigan law puts on them. When human lives are at stake, we should lead the nation in this work, not put obstacles in our own path.

Tonight, I am asking you, our Legislature, to join with me in supporting this search for cures. Pass Representative Meisner's bill to remove the limits on stem cell research in Michigan, and do it now.

**INVEST IN KIDS TO ENSURE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL; CREATE THE BEST-EDUCATED WORKFORCE IN THE NATION**

Now, when it comes to education, we will have one overarching goal: to become the best-educated workforce in the nation. To do that, we will give our children the tools they need to be successful in the classroom and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

As your governor, my position has been clear.

I believe in the promise of public education, and I'll fight those who would break that promise.

I'm proud that we have increased our investment in our public schools to record levels.

But I have also said this: While we will continue to invest more in our schools, we also have to expect more of them.

So, in the year ahead, we'll do two things: We'll set the bar high for our students and teachers, and we'll ensure they have the tools and skills they need to clear that bar.

**Create a Michigan Promise with a New Merit Award Scholarship**

First, we must make sure that every parent who's watching tonight can afford to send their children to college. To achieve our goal of a workforce that's second to none, we must be first when it comes to giving citizens access to higher education.

Last year, I proposed allowing every child in Michigan who continues their education beyond high school to earn a \$4,000 new Merit Award Scholarship – not just those who pass a standardized test in high school.

Just weeks ago, we all watched as the Kalamazoo Promise changed the dynamic of public education in that community. Through the tremendous generosity of private donors, all children who attend Kalamazoo Public Schools will grow up knowing that their college tuition is paid for.

As we celebrate the Kalamazoo Promise, let's change that dynamic in every community in Michigan. Our new Merit Award Scholarship will create a *Michigan* Promise right now.

A promise that every child in Michigan will – for the first time in this state's history – have the financial means to go to college.

And, therefore, a promise to anyone who wants to build a business and grow jobs that Michigan will have the nation's most highly educated workforce.

It has been a year since I put the new Merit Award Scholarship before this group, and it is even more critical to Michigan's future today than it was then.

Tonight, Michigan's citizens, you should ask this Legislature: "Why are you waiting?"

### **An Agenda for Strong Schools**

Making higher education affordable is half the equation. Let me lay out the rest.

First, we're toughening the required curriculum for high schools.

Right now in Michigan, we require only one course for our high school graduates: a single semester of civics. Only one-third of the students who graduate from our high schools right now have taken the math, science, and communication courses we know they'll need to compete in our new economy.

That is why I called for the creation of a required core curriculum for all Michigan high school students.

I applaud both our State Superintendent Mike Flanagan and our State Board of Education for recommending what that curriculum should be.

To ensure that it can be in place by September, this Legislature needs to give that new curriculum the force of law before March.

So we *will* set the bar high, but we'll invest in our classrooms to make sure your child can clear that bar, too. In the budget I'll introduce next month, I'll call for a significant new investment in education, and I'll focus that investment on student learning.

For you who have 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, know that we will increase after school programs to give middle schoolers extra hours of learning focused on math, science and computer technology. We want them to be prepared when they get to that tougher high school curriculum.

For those of you who have babies and toddlers, know that we'll invest in greater support for early childhood learning. We *know* that the biggest opportunity to secure your baby's success later in life comes *early* – before your little one even enters kindergarten. So even in these tight budget times, we'll increase the size of our pre-school program for four-year-olds significantly.

For every parent – with children at every school age – we will make sure that you know *early* if your child is falling behind. When something's not going right for your child in school, you want to know right away, so you can help right away, not after they've been falling behind for weeks. In the year ahead, we'll ask our school districts to give prompt notification to parents whenever a child's grades dip or attendance slips. And I'll ask this

Legislature to write these requirements into law. Parents make a world of difference in their children's performance in school when they have the information to act.

We'll also work to make sure that your children are safe in their schools. No child in Michigan should have to be the victim of a schoolyard bully, and no child should have their learning disrupted by a child who's unruly. That's why, tonight, I am urging this Legislature to require every school district in Michigan to have tough and effective anti-bullying policies. I've also asked Superintendent Flanagan to require that Michigan's teachers learn how to run disciplined, orderly classrooms before they even leave their teacher training programs. Michigan is blessed with dedicated teachers who'll hit even greater heights when we give them the tools they need to keep kids focused on learning.

The challenge of creating strong schools for this new century will not wait. It demands action now. It calls for both new investment *and* new direction.

### **PROTECTING OUR FAMILIES AND THEIR WAY OF LIFE**

Quality education for our children. Affordable and accessible health care. Good-paying jobs.

These are the things that we all want in Michigan. And this good life we work so hard to create is worth protecting.

There are those who believe we should simply let people fend for themselves in a tough world and let the chips fall where they may.

I'm not one of them.

Tonight, let me share some of the work we'll do to protect you, your family, and your financial security.

First, let us increase the minimum wage in Michigan.

You who are working in minimum wage jobs have not had a raise for nine years. Even the Legislature got a raise since then.

I pledge to you this evening, those workers will get that increase this year.

I was the first person in the state to sign the petition to put this question on the ballot in November. I'll be the first to vote yes.

If this Legislature is not willing to raise the minimum wage in our state, the voters of Michigan will.

Second, we'll make it more affordable for you to pay your heating bills. We have set aside money for emergency assistance for those struggling to pay their bills this season.

Earlier this month, I asked our Public Service Commission to set aside an additional \$25 million for home heating help this year – they’ve agreed. We will not allow those on fixed incomes to choose between heating and eating this winter.

Third, I ask the Legislature to pass measures that will demand high standards of corporate responsibility from any business that seeks a state grant, a tax credit, or a state contract.

We are blessed in Michigan with countless businesses who know what it means to be good corporate citizens. But we should not use your tax dollars to enrich the bad actors – the companies that incorporate in off-shore tax havens, violate U.S. pension laws and international labor standards. We should ensure that your dollars go to creating jobs here in Michigan, not moving jobs overseas.

And while we’re asking corporations to be responsible: Fourth, I urge the Legislature to pass strong ethics legislation for politicians and candidates for office. The citizens, our bosses, the ones who hired us – you deserve to know that *your* interests are being represented by the people you elect. Last month, I introduced a series of ethics reforms that will require public officials to disclose their personal financial information so taxpayers know elected officials are working for the public, not enriching themselves.

Fifth, we will protect our senior citizens. I urge the Legislature to protect our seniors by passing legislation requiring criminal background checks for those who provide elder care and employees of nursing homes in our state.

Sixth, give Michigan citizens a break on the costs they pay for their home and auto insurance. This year my administration started a first-of-its-kind pooling program for citizens who live in our cities and who traditionally pay the state’s highest insurance rates just because their address reads Detroit or Flint.

But pilot programs aren’t enough – we have to reduce the cost of insurance in every city – and, frankly, in every driveway across the state. Democrats introduced a package of bills that would roll back insurance rates by 20 percent. It will give the Insurance Commissioner’s office the teeth it needs to find – and penalize – companies that are charging too much.

Pass that package – not because I asked you to, but because everyday citizens need us to.

Seventh, I urge this legislature to enact new protections against identity theft in Michigan.

Today with an ever-increasing amount of our personal information stored in the computer systems of corporations, Michigan consumers are at risk like never before. Today, companies are not required to tell consumers when the security of their personal information has been compromised.

That is why I am asking you to enact the strongest notification law in the country. In addition, I call on you to pass legislation that has been introduced by both Senator Jacobs

and Representative Angerer that will give consumers the power to freeze their credit report in the event of identity theft. And let us also pass tough new penalties for criminals who perpetrate this high-tech crime.

Eighth, I ask you to protect the children of Michigan by enacting legislation that will allow us to crack down on those who expose them to the production of life-threatening methamphetamines.

Last year I signed legislation restricting over-the-counter sales of ingredients used in meth labs. The legislation I send to you this year will allow us to charge those who expose children to meth labs with statutory child abuse, because that is what it is.

Ninth, I ask you to take prompt action to protect those who every day put their lives on the line to protect us – the men and women who serve in our National Guard and military Reserves.

I strongly support new legislation that would increase penalties on businesses that refuse to give our service members their old jobs when they return from duty.

It may be impossible to calculate the debt we owe to those who risk their lives for their country, but this we do know. We owe them the right to return to their lives and their jobs in Michigan.

Tenth, join my call for a national cap on exorbitant oil company profits. The families of our state are being squeezed by the high cost of gasoline while the oil companies are earning jaw-dropping profits.

This is not a partisan issue. It is a Michigan issue.

I ask you all to stand with me and the families of our state, not the oil giants.

Finally, many of you listening tonight who work for small businesses do not have a pension plan. My administration will design and open a 401(k) plan, like the state's plan, for those workers of small companies who don't offer a pension plan. At minimal expense to state government, we will help tens of thousands of Michigan workers save for their retirement and achieve economic security.

If those in this room can have a pension plan, thanks to the citizens, certainly those same citizens who are watching tonight ought to be able to have one, too.

## CONCLUSION

So, my friends, as I've said tonight, we have much to do. A comprehensive plan to create jobs today and tomorrow, to give you and your family affordable health care, to give your children the best education in the nation, and to protect people and defend their opportunity for a good life.

Michigan was built on the hard work of everyday people, and I'll fight to protect the opportunity that hard work has won every day.

So while I've talked a lot about the work before us, let me be clear: there is certainly a lot to love about Michigan just as she is.

Like the incredibly dedicated Michigan soldiers and their families who we began by honoring tonight. The communities that celebrate the soldiers' return with potluck dinners and yellow ribbons. The Lenten fish fries and church BBQs. The kids in neighborhoods across the state holding lemonade sales for tsunami victims they will never know. Fishing on a quiet lake at dawn. Going to a cottage – maybe even building or owning one – Up North and lazing in an Adirondack chair on the porch with the sun on your face, smelling the white pine trees. Being able once in a while to afford a Wings or Pistons game. Or vacationing on Lake Michigan, eating a Pronto Pup hotdog on the beach with the sand in between your toes.

This plan is about fighting to protect your opportunity for that middle class way of life. It's our Michigan version of the American dream.

It's about a Michigan where everyday people can afford to take care of their family's health.

It's about a Michigan where everyday people know they'll have a peaceful, secure retirement.

This is about a Michigan where any child *really can* go to college and have a better life than her parents did.

This is about a dynamic Michigan whose ancestors were not afraid to believe that one day there might be a Mustang on four wheels, not four hooves.

This is about a Michigan whose engineers can harness the power in alternative fuels, whose doctors will develop cures for cancer, whose businesspeople are excited this very minute about designing offices, creating jobs, and selling products that we don't even have a name for.

We love the Michigan that is, and the Michigan that will be.

God has blessed us all to live in an amazing land and to be part of an incredible story. I invite you to join me in *believing* in that next chapter in Michigan's story. And then join me in writing it.

God bless you all. And God bless Michigan.