

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS 2018







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## Fiscal Policy

Experts:



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### **Close all defined-benefit pension plans to new employees at the state and local level**

Politicians and bureaucrats at all levels of government have demonstrated that they cannot properly fund or manage defined-benefit pensions systems. The only way to start to improve this situation is to stop digging a bigger hole and that can only be done by closing these failed pensions systems to new employees and offer them competitive defined-contribution, 401(k)-style retirement plans instead. Governments at every level also need to trim retiree health insurance benefits, the costs of which are being pushed onto future taxpayers.

[mackinac.org/opeb](https://mackinac.org/opeb)



### **Require full transparency for corporate welfare schemes**

Michigan taxpayers have a fundamental right to know which companies have been granted special tax breaks and credits, as these deals are paid for either through higher taxes or reduced government revenues and public services. Every public dollar that is gifted to select businesses should be reported publicly, consistently and clearly.

[mackinac.org/21742](https://mackinac.org/21742)



### **Review and reduce or eliminate occupational licensing requirements that do not protect public health and safety**

Lawmakers made strides towards this end recently, but more needs to be done. Michiganders shouldn't have to get permission from the government to pursue their dreams or make a living. Some occupational licenses are beneficial, but far too many provide no benefit to the public and simply limit competition, artificially raise prices and make it more difficult for entrepreneurs and hard-working Michiganders to earn a living.

[mackinac.org/v2016-08](https://mackinac.org/v2016-08)



### **Reform Michigan's Liquor Control Code system**

The current code and related rules reads in parts as if it were written to protect special interests from competition and even drive business to them. A proper alcohol control code can protect the health and safety of the Michigan public without lavishing favors on crony capitalists.

[mackinac.org/1933](https://mackinac.org/1933)

## Labor Policy

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### **Grant government employees the right to vote on their union representation every two years**

Most government workers and school employees have never had the opportunity to vote on whether or not they want to be represented by the union operating in their workplace. Policymakers should require government unions to hold a certification election once every two years so that workers have a voice in who represents their interest at the bargaining table.

[mackinac.org/22234](https://mackinac.org/22234)



### **Eliminate taxpayer-funded union release time**

Dozens of school districts around the state provide their local unions with a taxpayer-funded, inappropriate benefit: they “release” union officials from their teaching duties and allow them to work entirely on union-related issues. This is a misuse of tax dollars, and lawmakers should outlaw the practice.

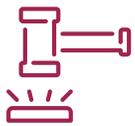
[mackinac.org/21722](https://mackinac.org/21722)



### **Eliminate union leader pension spiking**

Union officials for the Michigan Education Association are improperly spiking their public pensions through a scheme that allows the union to set the level of their taxpayer-funded pension. This is a slap in the face to hard-working school employees who play by the rules and deserve every penny of their pension. Lawmakers should end this scheme.

[mackinac.org/21051](https://mackinac.org/21051)



### **Repeal the state’s Prevailing Wage Law**

Artificially higher costs are forced on Michigan’s school districts and municipalities through the Prevailing Wage Law. These government entities exist to provide services to taxpayers, not pad the wallets of union laborers.

[mackinac.org/19352](https://mackinac.org/19352)

## Education Policy

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### **Fix the state's school ranking system**

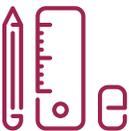
Parents, taxpayers and school officials deserve to know how well our public schools are performing, but the state's current system of measuring school performance is too blunt, constantly in flux and difficult to understand. A better system would put more weight on individual student growth and be easy for parents to comprehend and use, such as an A-F grading system.

[mackinac.org/20682](https://mackinac.org/20682)



### **Give districts lower-cost health insurance alternatives**

Despite previous reforms, many districts and their employees spend significantly more for health insurance benefits than is common in other government agencies or in the private sector. All school districts should have access to affordable plans so that money can be directed to schools' number priority: student learning.



### **Eliminate "count days" and target school funding to real student needs**

Michigan's school districts are paid based on how many students they enroll on just two days of the school year. This creates a disincentive for schools to enroll students after these count days. Instead, funding should be based on a rolling average daily attendance, which would allow districts to be paid for the students they actually serve, not just the ones in a desk on one of the two count days.

[mackinac.org/V2012-29](https://mackinac.org/V2012-29)

## Criminal Justice Policy

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### Eliminate civil forfeiture

Even with recent improvements, Michigan still fails to protect the property and due process rights of its residents. Michiganders can still have their property seized and forfeited to government without ever being convicted of or even charged with a crime. Law enforcement agencies should only be able to forfeit someone's property to the government after they have been convicted of a crime.

[mackinac.org/forfeiture](https://mackinac.org/forfeiture)



### Loosen restrictions on former offenders' ability to obtain a license to work

Most Michigan occupational licenses are unobtainable by former offenders, even if their offense was not in any way related to the occupation they seek to be licensed in. Recidivism rates are reduced when former offenders are legally employed, and Michigan should make it easier for former offenders to find work.

[mackinac.org/v2016-25](https://mackinac.org/v2016-25)



### Raise the age

Michigan is one of only five states where 17-year-olds are automatically prosecuted as adults and, if convicted, imprisoned with adults. Raising the age of criminal liability to 18 would bring the criminal justice system in line with the other legal responsibilities of adulthood in Michigan, while still affording judges the discretion to give young offenders the additional time and resources they may need to get their lives back on track.



### Reform penal fines and fees and bail system

Michiganders are subject to a large number of fines and fees in the criminal justice system – many more than the penal fine that may be the sentence for a crime. They may have to pay fees to cover the costs of court proceedings, probation supervision and jail housing. These are expenses that many criminal defendants can't pay and that may pose massive barriers to making a successful reintegration in to society. Additionally, requiring bail payments for people unable to pay needlessly increases the cost of our criminal justice system. Policymakers should review the costs incurred by criminal defendants and find out if the revenues actually recouped outweigh the burden they put on low-income Michiganders.

# Energy and Environmental Policies

Expert:



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## **Rein in the power of the DEQ**

Michigan business and land owners often complain about the DEQ overexerting their regulatory power. Many states forbid their environmental agencies from creating rules that are more stringent than federal regulations. Michigan should adopt this standard and only allow elected officials to create or approve environmental regulations that go above and beyond federal standards.

[🔗 mackinac.org/6956](https://mackinac.org/6956)



## **Clear way for development of natural gas industry**

Michigan has a comparative advantage over other states in natural gas storage and transportation. With coal being phased out, there's a huge opportunity to grow Michigan's natural gas industry. Policymakers should ensure that state tax and permitting rules encourage natural gas exploration and drilling, pipeline infrastructure and storage development.

## Government Transparency

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### Improve Freedom of Information Act

Under Michigan's current FOIA law, government agencies can delay responding to a FOIA almost without end and without consequence. This law should be tightened and clarified, so that taxpayers can receive information in a timely manner about how their taxpayer dollars are being spent.

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If you have any questions or seek further clarification about these policy recommendations, please contact the experts at their email addresses listed above.



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