



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

March 6, 2009

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

Mickey's Blog: Children's Health Initiative

Switalski to Red Bull: List the Caffeine

Slainte! Na Zdrowie. Here's to your good health.

In that spirit, and with much fanfare, I recently introduced my **Children's Health Initiative**, a package of eight bills designed to improve the health of young adults. Key features of the package require caffeine labeling on energy drinks, education and testing on the use of steroids among student athletes, and the elimination of a subsidy on junk food with proceeds to fund dental care for children.

Senate Bill 230, the caffeine content bill, has gained the most attention.

America has an epidemic in child obesity and diabetes, and the principal causes are poor eating habits and lack of exercise. Since an ounce of prevention beats a pound of cure, much of my package focuses on education and prevention.

If you haven't noticed, Energy Drinks are increasingly popular among kids. Sales are growing 47% a year, and most of these drinks are loaded with caffeine and sugar. Producers are required to list the amount of calories, sodium, and sugar on the label. There is no requirement to list the amount of caffeine, which is the most active ingredient in the drink. Some of these products are classified as dietary supplements, and are virtually unregulated.

I don't know too many parents who let their young children drink coffee. But what is going on right under their noses, without their realizing it, is far worse.

I know our economy is a mess, and people need jobs. But I think children's health is also important. Unfortunately, we promote a very unhealthy lifestyle for kids. It is both bad for them physically and will eventually bankrupt our Health Care System.

Energy drinks are a prominent symptom of our poor nutritional values.

There is an escalating *Caffeine Race* going on in the marketplace today. *Coke* and *Pepsi* contain 35 milligrams of caffeine, and they voluntarily print that on the can. Few others do. *Red Bull*, the most popular energy drink, more than doubles that at 80 milligrams, and that is in an 8-ounce can, compared to *Coke* and *Pepsi's* 12 oz. A can of *Jolt* now clocks in at 280 milligrams of caffeine. Clearly, the race is on, and the competition is headed toward higher and higher concentrations of caffeine for younger and younger kids.

Sports figures are making commercials promoting a 2-oz bottle of *5 Hour Energy*, available on the counter of convenience stores. But now we have *6 Hour Energy*. If that's not enough, allow me to introduce you to *7 Hour Energy*. To my horror, one of my interns brought me in a bottle of *80 Hour Energy*. It isn't even a drink. It is a spray you shoot under your tongue.

How long before we start providing kids with a syringe?

Think I'm exaggerating?

Consider some of the names of these products. They come straight from the Drug Culture. There's *Blow*, and *Buzzwater*. There's *Dopamine*, *Wired*, and *Fixx*, which packs 500 milligrams in a 20-oz can. There is even a drink called *Cocaine*, dubbed, "The Legal Alternative."

Perhaps the next product will be named *Crystal Methamphetamine*.

I think the message to kids is pretty clear.

It's a message that says a high, or a rush, can be had in a bottle or a spray. The more the better. That's why I find the concentrated drinks, with high caffeine in a small amount of liquid, to be especially pernicious. It's physically difficult to down two 20-oz. cans of liquid. But remember your first beer, and the macho competition to see who could drink the most?

That's what kids do.

And concentrated caffeine makes it that much easier to overdo. Especially since the drinks are frequently combined with alcohol.

It should be no surprise that a new study found a surprising number of caffeine overdose reports to a Chicago poison control center. Researchers reported 265 cases of caffeine abuse in a 3-year period. 12 percent of the cases required a trip to the hospital.

In October, 100 of the nation's leading doctors and scientists wrote a letter to the Food and Drug Administration, asking that these drinks be required to print caffeine content on the label, that a limit be established for the amount of caffeine in drinks, and that a warning label be required. To date, no action has been taken.

My bill simply requires producers to list the amount of caffeine their drink contains. I am a Democrat, but I got the two doctors in the Senate, both Republicans, to co-sponsor my caffeine bill. You have a right to know the ingredients of your drink, and your kid's. It should be on the label.

It's a Free Country. So choose your poison. But without the facts, your choice isn't really free. For more information, please check out the following websites: <http://www.energyfiend.com> and <http://cspinet.org/>.

Mickey's Ends and Notes

FEDERAL STIMULUS PACKAGE WILL HELP MICHIGAN

Last month, President Barack Obama signed a stimulus bill into law that will help Michigan fund necessary programs and infrastructure projects that will help put more people back to work. As many as 109,000 new Michigan jobs could be added according to federal officials. Michigan's share of the \$787 billion dollar stimulus package is about \$6.7 billion.

Some of the stimulus money will be directed toward certain services. Decisions on how a portion of the money will be spent will be up to the governor and lawmakers. Governor Granholm has said that she is still waiting to hear exactly how much stimulus money the state will receive. A recent presentation by the nonpartisan Senate Fiscal Agency (SFA) outlined the money the state could expect to receive.

Most wage earners will see tax breaks in their paychecks that, over time, will total \$400 for individuals and \$800 for couples. A one-time \$250 payment will also go to Social Security recipients, low-income people on Supplemental Social Security Income, and veterans receiving disability and pensions. Unemployed workers would see a \$100 increase per month, and the plan will also extend unemployment benefits for an additional 162,000 laid-off workers. In addition, there will be \$105.9 million for workforce investment, with \$87.1 million for dislocated workers and \$16.1 million for the state's unemployment system.

Michigan would receive \$634.5 million for state roads, another \$211.5 million for local roads, and \$165 million for transit projects.

To help with Medicaid costs, Michigan should receive \$882.6 million this year, and another \$931.9 million in extra Medicaid funding next year. Other stimulus money will go for prevention and wellness programs, projects to modernize health information technology systems, and subsidies to health insurance programs for the unemployed under the COBRA program.

More information on the stimulus package and its impact on Michigan can be found at the following link: http://www.michigan.gov/gov/0,1607,7-168-46485_52682---,00.html. We must be careful in how we use the stimulus funds, with our first priority being to create as many jobs as possible by putting unemployed people back to work and not spending one-time monies on programs that will create a new structural deficit while investing in sustainable projects that improve efficiency and productivity.

SENATE DEMOCRATS SPONSOR LEGISLATION TO PROTECT CONSUMERS FROM WINTER UTILITY SHUTOFFS

The Michigan Senate will soon be introducing a plan to protect Michigan residents by banning dangerous winter utility shutoffs and regulating other shutoff practices. The bills in the shutoff protection plan will:

- Permanently outlaw winter shutoffs for all utilities from December 1 to March 31.
- Require a utility company to give all customers at least 15 days notice before shutoff through a certified letter or delivery of a shutoff notice in person before cutting power.

- Ban the use of an electric service limiter in Michigan until the Michigan Public Service Commission (PSC) is able to develop proper, uniform standards regarding their use.
- Expand the authority of the PSC to include all utilities, including municipalities, for regulating shutoffs.

The package will also require a utility provider to include information on government, company or other assistance programs that are available with any utility service shutoff notice, and establish penalties for improperly shutting off a utility service. This may include a fine to the utility company that goes into the Low Income & Energy Efficiency Fund, which provides shutoff and other protections for low-income consumers and promotes energy efficiency, and may even provide a customer refund.

HIRE MICHIGAN FIRST

Recently, the Senate Democrats introduced a package of bills that would give Michigan workers priority for jobs on state-funded projects, and call for stronger penalties for those who hire undocumented workers. Our goal with the "Hire Michigan First" plan is to get thousands of dedicated workers in Michigan back on the job.

The bills in the Hire Michigan First plan call for:

- Awarding state tax breaks and other economic development incentives to companies that hire the most Michigan residents. This rule would apply to projects handled by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and other state-funded programs, including the Michigan Economic Growth Authority, the Renaissance Zone Act, and others.
- Encouraging transparency and accountability by requiring companies that take economic development incentives to report on who they hire to ensure that Michigan residents are given priority.
- Discouraging the hiring of undocumented workers by canceling state contracts and tax incentives for companies that employ illegal labor, requiring them to pay back incentives they received and barring them from future contracts.

MICHIGAN MILITARY FAMILY RELIEF FUND

Michigan citizens that are required to file a Michigan Income Tax return may choose to donate a portion of their return to the Military Family Relief Fund by entering a donation amount on the "Military Family Relief Fund" line of the MI-1040. The MFRF provides grants to qualifying families of military members of the Michigan National Guard and Reserve forces stationed in Michigan who are experiencing financial hardships as a result of an active duty deployment or a line of duty related injury or illness. This is a simple yet effective way we can show our gratitude to these dedicated individuals.

Three basic items are required to qualify for assistance:

- A copy of deployment orders issued by headquarters, or a military contact for verification of in line of duty injury or illness cases.
- Copies of bills/invoices/estimates/notices for expenses.
- A completed DMVA application form 10-1 (Rev. 04/08).

The DMVA application form is available at the Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs website: www.michigan.gov/dmva, by clicking on "Inside DMVA" and then, "Support our Troops," or by calling 1-866-271-4404. In addition to the Michigan Income Tax return, donations may also be mailed to: Military Family Relief Fund, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, P.O. Box 30261, Lansing, MI 48909-7761.

SENATE DEMOCRATS LAUNCH FACEBOOK, TWITTER PAGES

Recently, the Michigan Senate Democrats launched the state's first ever legislative caucus Facebook and Twitter pages. These new interactive tools will feature up-to-date information on legislation and issues of interest, offer an insider perspective of the Capitol and focus on the Senate Democrats' priorities for Michigan. Through these new forms of media the Senate Democrats will be able to interact directly with the people of Michigan and receive feedback on what issues are most important to them.

The Senate Democrats' Facebook page can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Lansing-MI/Michigan-Senate-Democrats/57144052517?ref=mf> and the Twitter page can be found at <http://twitter.com/MISenDems>. I have also taken a stab at Facebook and you can check out my page at: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=1273804774&ref=ts>.

FOOD SAFETY ALERTS AVAILABLE

With the recent peanut butter recall, it's important to stay up to date on what foods are safe for you. The Michigan Department of Agriculture has recently unveiled a new program that alerts users about food-borne illness and product recalls available via text messages and e-mail. This new technology is vital in the effort to quickly inform citizens and consumers of products that may pose potential danger to themselves and their families. This is a terrific program that combines cost and labor efficiency with improved communication between state officials and Michigan citizens. Those wishing to subscribe to the alerts may do so at <http://www.michigan.gov/mda>.

CENSUS BUREAU HIRING FOR TEMPORARY POSITIONS

The Census Bureau, a branch of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is gearing up for the 2010 Census, the information the government uses to determine how to distribute \$300 billion annually in government funding for community services. The U.S. Constitution requires a national Census every 10 years. The positions, which pay \$10.50 to \$17.00 hourly, include office clerk, recruiting assistant, administrative assistant, office operations supervisor, enumerator, crew leader, crew leader assistant, and field operations supervisor. Practice tests, job descriptions, and applications are available online at <http://www.2010censusjobs.gov>.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE ANNOUNCES TAX CREDITS

Buying energy efficient home improvements is not only good for the environment, but also for your wallet. This year, a tax credit will be available for those who purchase energy improvements for their homes. Also, if you installed a small windmill to generate energy for your home, you may qualify for a credit for up to \$4,000 of the cost. Wind-produced energy was added for 2008 to the alternative energy sources under the Residential Energy Efficient Property Credit.

It's not just energy efficiency in your home that can save you money on taxes. Also for 2009, Congress has added a tax credit for plug-in electric cars, up to \$7,500. Visit <http://www.irs.gov> to view a list of 2008 and 2009 model year hybrid vehicles eligible for a tax credit, and the amount of the available credit.

GOVERNOR APPOINTS TWO STERLING HEIGHTS RESIDENTS

Two Sterling Heights residents were recently appointed by Governor Granholm to two important public safety boards last month. Michael Deprez, currently the Assistant Fire Chief for the Sterling Heights Fire Department, was appointed to serve the Firefighters Training Council; and Richard Weiler, Director of the Police Officers Labor Council, was appointed to the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards.

The Firefighters Training Council is responsible for establishing the standards, courses of study, certification criteria of instructors, establishing regional training centers, and developing and administering mandatory certification examinations for firefighters in Michigan.

The Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards serves as the oversight commission for all law enforcement and criminal justice training funds in Michigan. The main focus of the commission is on professionalism, formal in-service training, and the institution of law enforcement training standards. The commission is also tasked with the implementation of a web-based information system available to all law enforcement officers, and award training grants that advance the objectives of the commission.

Coffee Hours

*In response to requests from constituents, I have added coffee hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

<p>March 30 1:30-2:30 p.m.</p> <p>Location: Biggby Coffee (26740 Gratiot) Roseville</p>	<p>April 27 1:30-2:30 p.m.</p> <p>Location: Clinton-Macomb Public Library (40900 Romeo Plank) Clinton Township</p>
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Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times-check local listings
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

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