



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

February 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: Chillin' with Zvonko

Senator Switalski and Rep. Haugh Open New District Office

Roseville's landmark bright green Theatre was built in 1929 at the historic Junction of Utica and Gratiot Avenue. I grew up going to the movies there for a quarter and getting my school shoes at the Roseville Department Store at the south corner of the building. I went to church and school across the street at Sacred Heart. After college, I worked for Russ LaBarge's Law Firm in the north end of the Theatre Building. I still get my hair cut at Bob the Barber's, in the middle of the building, where Bob Slain has been cutting hair for over 50 years.

I have great affection for the Theatre, and I maintained my district office there for 10 years. But it was time to move. My suite mate, former State Representative Frank Accavitti, was term-limited and was moving out. My friend Harold Haugh was elected to replace him, and we agreed to take a fresh look at what was available in our districts.

The Theatre had great character and location, which I often stressed to Zvonko Blazevski, my long suffering Aide who mans the District Office. Zvonko is a very dedicated worker. He comes early and stays late. He is hyper, with an abundance of energy. He is always doing three things at once, which he calls multitasking. He's even going to school for his master's degree at night.

Nevertheless, he would listen patiently to tales of my first cigarette in the Theatre bathroom with Ricky Scarcella, or a kiss stolen from Patty Saputo, the Beauty of Biehl Street.

Then he would interject more practical concerns, pointing to the ice forming inside the spacious windows, or the birds nest bits strewn on the inside sills. He would make it a point to call me each time the toilet backed up. Zvonko turned a deaf ear to my entreaties to empty the trash daily, because he is devoted to St. Francis, and had a mission to provide for the occasional mouse.

All these indignities he would have suffered gladly, but for one last hardship. The high tin ceiling was beautiful, and the enormous windows offered great urban vistas of the Junction and Gonzo's mural. But they contributed to Baltic temperatures in the office.

We had a thousand more square feet than we really needed. The furnace ran constantly, but it was undersized. Despite being the little furnace that couldn't, the heating bill approached \$1000 a month, and Zvonko still shivered. I tried insulation and weather stripping, to little effect. Every time he plugged in the space heater, he blew a fuse. I'm not saying it was cold, but I walked in one morning, and saw sides of beef hanging from the ceiling, and Zvonko was warming his McGriddles by placing them inside the refrigerator.

As a concerned boss, I told him to put on another coat. My distress heightened when, despite fingerless gloves, the typing speed of his frozen digits plummeted and the work backlog rose inversely with the temperature.

"Don't worry, Zvonko," I reassured him, as I aimed a blow dryer at his hands. "Spring will be here before you know it."

But Spring led to the Scourge of Summer. Without air conditioning, the office sweltered. I urged Zvonko to dress for the weather, but he is first generation immigrant, old school. He wears shirt and tie, and dress pants, and argued that a speedo was inappropriate for the office. That eliminated the option of setting up a hose and sprinkler for him to run through during his breaks.

Although Zvonko's comfort weighed chiefly on my mind, I reviewed my office budget, which had been trimmed annually in these tough times. Summer brought no utility respite. What I saved on the gas furnace, I paid in electricity, because Zvonko ran about 5 fans in order to maintain consciousness. He refused to open the doors for cross ventilation, because the traffic noise distracted him.

The return of winter spelled more misery for Zvonko. With reluctance, I decided I must liberate him from Siberia. Harold and I looked around and found a great new location on Gratiot just north of 13 Mile Road, just south of Sajo's Restaurant and north of the Shadowoods Sunoco gas station. The square footage is smaller and the furnace larger, so it is cozy. We even saved a little on rent. After some renovations, Zvonko settled in, and I am happy to report the feeling has returned to most of his fingers. Now all I have to do is get him to empty the garbage, and the returnables, which is always full of empty Red Bull cans.

Maybe that's why he is so jumpy. I'd better put the heat on low and slow him down.

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Mickey's Ends and Notes

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 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>.

"MONEY BACK IN MICHIGAN" CAN PUT MORE IN YOUR POCKET

Lower-income families can put hundreds or even thousands of dollars back into their wallets by making sure they file for all available credits and deductions during tax season. The 2009 edition of Money Back in Michigan by the Michigan League for Human Services encourages households to take advantage of seven federal and state tax credits and deductions. The packet also encourages tax-filers to use free tax preparation services and skip expensive "rapid refund" centers. New this year is the Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit, aimed at helping low-income working families.

The Money Back in Michigan packet also encourages tax-filers to use IRS-trained volunteers for help in filing taxes. Visit <http://www.michiganEIC.org> or call 1-800-552-1183 to find the closest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site.

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 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.

STUDENTS, PARENTS ADVISED TO APPLY EARLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

If you or your teenager is heading to college this fall, many educational counselors are advising you to apply for financial aid as early and often as possible. Experts say competition for college financial aid will be tougher this year because of decreased endowments, fewer private student loans, and increased unemployment.

This year more than ever, students should make sure they fill out the paperwork for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as FAFSA. The FAFSA form is needed to apply for state and federal grants and loans. It also is a must for the need-based scholarships and grants awarded by colleges and universities. The deadline for the FAFSA is March 1, but many types of financial aid are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mickey's Legislation: Bottle Deposit Expansion Revisited

I reintroduced a bill on January 27 that would expand Michigan's bottle deposit law to include water bottles and other non-carbonated beverages. Current Michigan law provides for a 10-cent deposit on carbonated beverages, such as soda pop and beer.

The original bottle deposit law has proven to be a success in reducing the amount of trash we send to landfills. I have been working on this important environmental issue since I was first elected in 1999 and is one of the first bills that I have introduced this year.

Recycling programs help generate jobs while preserving our environment for everyone to enjoy. I believe that Michigan is long overdue for a change in the bottle deposit law, which would go a long way towards protecting our environment and conserving energy.

According to statistics from the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, it is estimated that 97 percent of the containers that fall under the current 10-cent bottle deposit law are recycled. However, only about 20 percent of water bottles are recycled. These water bottles are often thrown in the trash, which end up in crowded landfills, or tossed on the side of the road.

Several polls and surveys conducted over the years have shown that most Michigan residents support an expansion of the bottle deposit law. We were once at the forefront of this issue when the state became the first industrial state to pass a bottle deposit law in the 1970s. Today, with the increased use of bottled water and other non-carbonated beverages to quench our thirst, it only makes sense to include them in the recycling incentive that we provide for carbonated beverages.

Senate Bill 54 is currently in the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee. Because the legislation amends a citizen initiative, three-quarters of the Michigan Legislature must approve Senate Bill 54 for it to become law.

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.

February 23 7-8 p.m. Location: Clinton-Macomb Library (35891 South Gratiot) Clinton Township	March 30 1:30-2:30 p.m. Location: Biggby Coffee (26740 Gratiot) Roseville
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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)

Contact My Office

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