

# House District 35, Eric Coleman

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## **Eric Coleman**

Democrat

Michigan State Representative

District 35

(Southfield, Lathrup Village, Charter Township of Royal Oak, 4 precincts in Oak Park).

Oakland County

## **Why are you running for office?**

Without question, the legislative process in Lansing is broken. As County Commissioner, I witnessed first-hand the impact that decisions made in Lansing, some devastating, have had on local communities, schools and vital services.

The repeated efforts to raid revenue sharing are having a detrimental impact on our local cities and townships. Stabilizing revenue sharing for our local communities is of critical importance. The ability of local cities and townships to provide needed services, especially police and fire protection, depends on this revenue stream from the state. I want to work with our local leaders and the legislature to prevent raids on funding for schools and revenue sharing.

Oakland County has been a “donor county” for far too long – by sending more local tax dollars to Lansing than are received in return through revenue sharing of services. Since Southeast Michigan was especially hard hit with the decline in the auto industry, I want to go to Lansing to have resources redirected to serving our region which has the largest population and the greater need from the state.

I have spent my entire career bringing people together for the betterment of our community. I will bring to Lansing proven, experienced leadership and an earnest dedication to ensuring the needs of our people and communities are met. I want to bring to Lansing some of the proven budgetary and economic development practices from Oakland County, such as a 3-year budget and Emerging Sectors to attract businesses and create new jobs. I am seeking office as a State Representative because the State of Michigan, our communities, schools and businesses can no longer afford the prolonged, non-productive, partisan-fueled dysfunction that exists in our State's Capitol.

## **What is the biggest problem facing Michigan residents today and how would you solve it?\***

Education: As a former President of the Southfield School Board, I remain a staunch supporter of the public school system. Stable and sustainable funding is needed for K-12, community colleges and public universities. I will fight to strengthen our schools and provide EVERY student with the skills they need to make them successful in a globally competitive environment. As State Representative, my initiatives will include:

- Assuring that all school districts have equitable funding.
- Measuring student achievements more broadly than the current standardized test.

- Developing curriculums that prepare students for the jobs and careers of the 21st century.
- Building learning partnerships between businesses and schools.

Michigan's spending for Community Colleges is down by about one-fifth and general fund spending on universities is down by more than a quarter. In order to move our communities and families forward, we must invest in having a highly trained and skilled work force that can compete in a global economy. I will work to make training and education affordable and accessible for all.

**What's a better solution: finding revenue or cutting costs to meet Michigan's public education budget? How would you do it?**

Dept. of Corrections employees now comprise over 30 percent of all state Civil Service employees 20 percent of the Michigan General Fund. It does not make sense for our State to spend more on incarceration than on education. The first step is to reduce costs and make the structural changes that have been delayed for far too long. Michigan has a higher incarceration rate than neighboring states. We must investigate what is the cause and incorporate alternative to incarceration measures. The next step is for management oversight to control overtime costs, undocumented transport costs, prison guard bonuses, dry cleaning allowances, shift reorganization, negotiations for better prices for goods/services.

Other structural changes and cost reductions should include:

- 2 to 3 year budget; with a 10 year forecast
- Implement recommendations in performance and financial audits of departments and operations
- Consolidate state government departments
- Eliminate undocumented and fraudulent payments - a state audit last year found \$230 million in undocumented and potentially fraudulent payments

After these measures are fully implemented and there is still not enough general fund dollars to properly fund education, the State needs to identify additional resources for revenues, which could include:

- Instituting a graduated income tax – which is fairer because individuals with larger incomes have more income for discretionary spending. Graduated income tax provides tax relief to low and middle income people and only impacts those with the highest income. This provides more disposable income to the vast majority of residents and stimulates economic activity
- Expanding the sales tax to additional

products and services. Some projections indicate that this could generate up to \$14 billion in additional revenues.

- Amending Proposal A – which has proven to be totally inadequate for funding schools and services during periods of declining property values.

**What's the best way to create jobs for Michigan residents?**

Emphasis should be on supporting small and medium sized businesses. Incentives should be provided for hiring displaced and retrained workers. All incentives and/or tax abatements to any business – large or small – should be contingent upon job creation.

There needs to be an entire overview of the existing and complicated system that provides over \$30 billion in tax incentives and tax breaks to make certain that those businesses that are benefitting are also producing the jobs and economic activity that was promised.

My initiative for creating jobs and improving Michigan's economy is to create a business friendly environment where businesses can thrive and grow by:

- Reducing the burdensome red tape and regulations that make it difficult for businesses to operate in Michigan.
- Linking university research and training with small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Putting an equitable business tax structure in place.
- Tax incentives for small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Expand successful economic development strategies established in Oakland County, such as Automation Alley, Emerging Sectors and the new Medical Main Street, to attract new businesses

**After you leave this earth, what will they say about you?\***

I hope that people will say that I was a devoted and loving husband. A proud and dedicated father and grandfather. A true public servant who was straight-forward, honest and fair. An unabashedly outspoken and determined advocate for the people that he served. And, that the world is a better place because of the battles he fought and the sacrifices he made for us all.