

STATE SENATE CAMPAIGN KICKOFF

Remarks by Pam Byrnes
announcing her candidacy in
Michigan's 18th Senate District
at the Ypsilanti Freighthouse
December 13, 2009



Hello and welcome!

I have lived and worked in various communities in Washtenaw County since my return in 1975. Over the last 35 years, I have lived and worked in Ann Arbor, Saline, Ypsilanti and Chelsea.

I chose to announce my candidacy for this Senate seat at the Freighthouse for several reasons:

There is a brick not far from here that reads "where we found love." Almost twenty years ago, my husband, Kent Brown, and I were active in the Ypsilanti central business community; we both having served as chairs of that organization. We were also members of the Ypsilanti Chamber, and worked on the Heritage Festival for a number of years. As many of you know, Kent operated his business in this community for over 25 years, and I had my law practice here for 15 years.

This Freighthouse symbolizes my desire to preserve the past to be a part of our future. The Freighthouse and Depot Town will be a vital part of a progressive Michigan, a Michigan that ties its citizens together with both commuter and high-speed rail. Public transit must be an integral part of the transportation infrastructure that is vital to the recovery of Michigan's economy.

For those of you who know me, you know I have a strong work ethic and will continue to be a fierce advocate dedicated to serving my constituents. Constituent service is my number one priority. My staff members know well that I set the bar high to be accountable and responsive.

I have developed a reputation in Lansing for being the go-to-person when you need to get something done. I know how to get to “yes.” This involves the art of negotiation and compromise, which requires you to respect and acknowledge everyone's point of view. Many of you know me as a “no-nonsense” person. These traits will help me move this state forward.

Time and again it's been said, “It’s the economy, stupid.” The financial outlook for Michigan is challenging, very challenging. We are going to see even more cuts in the coming year to programs we support and consider essential. The political will to increase revenues simply is not there. We must look to re-thinking the role of government in our lives. We must look to efficiencies and reforms to accomplish our expectations. This is a herculean effort, particularly in this era of term limits. We can finger-point and blame the Engler administration for its many unnecessary tax cuts, but laying blame does not move us forward.

Instead, let's focus on the future and what we can do and should do to promote economic recovery. What do we need to achieve this?

- 1. We must attract and retain talent.** We know we have a skilled workforce that is the envy of many states. We have several outstanding public institutions of higher learning that are leading the way. Washtenaw Community College is bursting at the seams and needs more parking. EMU’s enrollment is exceeding expectations. U of M’s purchase of the Pfizer property has positioned the university to be a world leader in bioscience technology and we are expecting to attract 2,000 additional scientists to this area.
- 2. We need to embrace educational changes that can increase graduation rates,** including rigorous graduation requirements, charter schools in failing districts, educating more non-traditional students, and institutional accountability
- 3. We need to spend our limited resources wisely.** This is proving to be one of the hardest adjustments for our state. For many years we were fat and sassy, basking in the wealth of the auto industry and relying on it for our revenues. That bubble has burst, and we must all tighten our belts until we can attain a level of equilibrium, which may be years down the road. We must be all willing to share the responsibility of this new frugality, including looking at our own benefits. I support eliminating lifetime health care for legislators and have voted to cut our

salaries starting in the next term; our co-pays and deductibles have increased and our office allotment has again been cut.

4. **We must provide fair and consistent public policies.** This is one of the major complaints lodged by businesses that are reluctant to locate in Michigan. We must examine government policies to reconsider those that hinder economic growth. For example, how many site plans and multiple permits does a business really need to prepare? Can we cut through the red tape so that this can be done more efficiently?

5. While there are global forces beyond our control that affect Michigan's economy, there are actions we can take in Michigan. **We need to promote and protect our natural assets.** Our agriculture and tourism industries are based on the wonderful resources indigenous to Michigan.

6. **We need to look at regional opportunities for collaboration, rather than competition with our neighboring states.** International businesses do not care about state lines. They want to locate in communities that have the resources and infrastructure available that help their bottom line.

In this time of challenge, there is great opportunity; we must continue to work together; we must embrace change.

Thank you!

Please feel free to share these remarks with friends and other interested people.

Also, keep in touch with Pam via her website or on Facebook, where you can keep informed, share stories and photos, learn about upcoming events, or pass the word to your friends.

Pam on the Web: <http://pambyrnes.com/>

Pam on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pamgbyrnes>

Your input is important: Pam Byrnes wants to connect with you, listen to you, and continue working to make sure your voice is heard in Lansing.
