

UPDATES FROM THE CAPITOL

May 28 - June 9, 2025

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, June 14, 2025

Flag Day

Thursday, June 19, 2025

Juneteenth (Office Closed)

FORMER SPEAKER LEE CHATFIELD SET FOR TRIAL ON MULTIPLE FELONIES

Former Michigan House Speaker Lee Chatfield and his wife, Stephanie Chatfield, have been ordered to stand trial on numerous felony charges related to misuse of public, campaign, and nonprofit funds. Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel announced that the charges stem from a lengthy investigation revealing what her office describes as a series of elaborate financial ploys intended to personally benefit Chatfield during his time in office.

Lee Chatfield faces a total of 13 felony counts, including charges of conducting a criminal enterprise, embezzlement from nonprofit and public funds, conspiracy to embezzle, and violations of the Charitable Trust Act. The allegations include false reimbursement claims, personal credit card payments made with nonprofit funds, and the misuse of political action committee contributions through a check kickback scam.

Stephanie Chatfield is charged with one count of embezzlement from a nonprofit organization and one count of conspiracy to commit embezzlement. Follow along to find out when a pretrial date has been set.

FAMILIES AND ADVOCATES RALLY TO SAFEGUARD MEDICAID

Michigan parents, health providers, and advocates came together at the Capitol last week urging legislators to safeguard Medicaid in the face of proposed federal funding cuts. During a Senate Health Policy Committee hearing, members of the Protect MI Care — a coalition of 240+ organizations working to preserve access to health care — shared personal stories illustrating how essential Medicaid has been to their families' survival and stability. Two mothers from Grand Rapids spoke about how Medicaid coverage made it possible to care for their medically complex children, one born with a serious heart defect necessitating open heart surgery, the other living with cerebral palsy and epilepsy. Both emphasized that Medicaid was not a "handout," but a vital safety net that filled gaps private insurance did not cover. Coalition leaders and health experts warned that the proposed cuts would threaten access to care across Michigan, particularly in vulnerable and rural communities.

AG NESSEL PUSHES BACK ON CONSUMERS ENERGY \$436M RATE HIKE PROPOSAL

Attorney General Dana Nessel has formally intervened in Consumers Energy's request to raise electric rates by approximately \$436 million, potentially the largest request filed in decades.

The proposed hike, submitted to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC), would increase electric bills for Michigan residential customers by 13.3% and take effect in May 2026, if approved. In addition to the rate increase, Consumers Energy is also seeking to recoup \$24 million in deferred distribution costs through a separate 12-month charge.

The multi-billion dollar company announced the latest hike to electric rates just seven days after the MPSC approved a separate \$154 million rate increase that went into effect in April. The Attorney General's office has stated they will be closely examining the filing to prevent state residents from paying unnecessary costs.

OPIOID DEATHS CONTINUE TO DECLINE IN MICHIGAN

Michigan is on track to see its third straight year of falling opioid overdose fatalities, with state figures showing a 34% drop from 2023 to 2024. Health officials attribute the trend to a combination of targeted public health efforts, expanded access to naloxone, and increased investments in prevention and treatment. A key player in this effort is \$1.6 billion in opioid settlement funds received from major pharmaceutical retailers. Since receiving the funding, the state has supplied over a million naloxone kits and invested in community-based response programs. Since distributing the naloxone kits, more than 34,000 have been used in overdose reversals. Some of the funds are also being directed toward the early identification of harmful substances in the drug supply, preventing overdoses altogether.

While Michigan now ranks among the top five states for reducing overdose deaths, health advocates caution that the fight is far from over. Nonfatal overdoses continue to be alarmingly high, and long-term progress will depend on continued investment in treatment access, education, and stigma reduction.

RISING HEALTH CARE COSTS IS TOP CHALLENGE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Small businesses across Michigan are feeling the pressure of rising health care costs, with many reporting a direct impact on their ability to expand and bring on new employees. In a recent survey conducted by the Small Business Association of Michigan (SBAM), over three-quarters of respondents said the cost of offering health insurance has made hiring more difficult. More than half have already scaled back or eliminated benefits, and 83% said the expense is eating into resources they would otherwise invest in growing their business.

Even so, most small business owners still see health benefits as essential for keeping employees satisfied and onboard, with 91% calling them a key part of employee retention. Yet, affordability remains a major hurdle. Nearly 70% of employers reported that their health insurance premiums increased by more than 10% in the past year. Cost drivers such as hospital fees, prescription drug prices, and administrative overhead are pushing premiums higher, while only a small share of employers—about 10%—are negotiating directly with insurers. Many rely on high-deductible plans or higher employee contributions to make do. Industry leaders continue to urge a systemwide response to tackle rising costs, prevent further strain on local shops, and maintain health care coverage for small business employees.