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Capitol Corner

News Brief

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House Passes Resolution Denouncing Schriver Posts

Wednesday at 11 a.m., nearly 40 legislators on behalf of the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus (MLBC) gathered to support a resolution introduced by Rep. Jason HOSKINS (D-Southfield) denouncing the “espousal of racist, xenophobic and white supremacist language by members of this chamber.”

At around 3 p.m., the resolution was taken up and passed, 98-5. Reps. Steve CARRA (R-Three Rivers), James DESANA (R-Carleton), Neil FRISKE (R-Charlevoix), Matt MADDOCK (R-Milford) and Josh SCHRIVER (R-Oxford) voted no. Reps. Joseph D. FOX (R-Fremont) and Rachelle SMIT (R-Shelbyville) abstained, and Reps. Gina JOHNSEN (R-Lake Odessa), Tom KUHN (R-Troy) and Donavan MCKINNEY (D-Detroit) were absent.

Despite the resolution not naming Schriver specifically, the MLBC made it clear the resolution was a response to the first-term House Republican, who came under fire last week for promoting a post on X that espoused “the great replacement theory,” a white nationalist conspiracy theory centered on a perceived effort to diminish the demographic and cultural influence of white people.

Schriver spoke in opposition to the resolution, citing free speech concerns.

The resolution marks further action taken against Schriver, after House Speaker Joe TATE (D-Detroit) stripped him of one committee assignment, removed his office allotment and reassigned his staff on Monday.

In sum, HR 191 references “the people’s house” and the responsibility of House members as the voice of those people.

It goes on to say “the promotion and espousal of racist, xenophobic and white supremacist language, regardless

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of the source or form, is a vile stain on our society. Such language and images often draw on stereotypes and conspiracy theories that do not reflect the reality of the world or its people.”

The resolution references how this discourse has been used to incite and justify deadly violence against communities of color, which Hoskins referenced in connection with the 2018 Pittsburgh synagogue shooting and the 2022 Buffalo, New York grocery store shooting.

“We rightly hold elected officials to a higher standard in matters of discourse. The language of leadership carries a greater weight with the general public than that coming from peers,” the resolution reads. “When a person in a position of authority spreads words and images designed to foment hate and division, it sends a signal that those words and images are acceptable for use in the marketplace of ideas.”

It then denounces the use of racist, xenophobic or white supremacist language, theories and images, and adds that such “language, theories and images being posted, reposted or otherwise shared by members of the Michigan House of Representatives represents a failure of decorum and a dereliction of each member’s duty both as the voice of a diverse group of people and as a keeper of the public trust.”

The resolution was also amended by Hoskins to add condemnation of antisemitic and Islamophobic language, which Rep. Bill G. SCHUETTE (R-Midland) spoke in favor of.

Hoskins said when he was planning ahead for the week last Wednesday, he didn’t anticipate having these kinds of conversations or introducing the resolution.

“When I was thinking about this week, and what it will look like, this was certainly not the plan,” he said. “I planned to do what many of us plan to do here in the Michigan

House of Representatives. I planned to serve our district, serve our state . . . I had different plans for this Wednesday. Unfortunately, last Wednesday changed that."

Hoskins said after seeing Schriver, "without context, out of nowhere decide to post baseless, racist, dangerous conspiracy theories... I have to do the thing that many of my colleagues have to do, that many Black people have to do . . . I now have to educate people on the complex nuances of racism and discrimination, for my mere survival, simply because of, and for no reason other than, I exist as a Black person."

He said it's necessary to condemn Schriver's action, and he introduced his resolution because Michigan legislators have a duty to serve the people.

"You have a duty to keep them safe," he said, "and the promotion of replacement theory is antithetical to that duty."

Ahead of the presser, Schriver today released a second statement, in which he said: "Hate is sinful. Hating others because of race is sinful and stupid."

Schriver went on to say that, "it is never racist to assess statistical trends and causes of why Whites have declined to 12 percent of the world's population and fell from 90 percent to 60 percent of the U.S. population in the last 60 years.

It was racist (of) other Representatives to draft and vote for Michigan's 2023 Budget, which allocated specific money to ONLY be granted to non-White business owners," he said. "Nonetheless, all bigoted individuals who supported this budget should be free to speak without being politically punished by our elected officials."

Tate said he's had an opportunity to read the statement, and called it "very interesting."

When asked about the lack of a public statement by Republican leaders, Tate said that elected officials are held to a different standard, and "across the board, I'm certainly disappointed (in) anyone that does not speak out against this."

"People travel through this building every day. This is... that gateway that many Michigan residents have into our

state government." Tate said. "People are saying this hateful rhetoric. What does that say about us?"

Rep. Amos ONEAL (D-Saginaw), MLBC executive vice chairperson, likened Schriver's continued posting, especially during Black History Month, to a scab that is torn off.

"It's like, you have a sore, and it starts to heal, and then something happens where you knock part of the scab off," he said, "and then things continue to happen and eventually, the entire scab is off and a sore re-emerges. The pain and the anguish that goes with getting a sore is revisited. And so, just the gains that we've had over the last 60 years are being revisited today."

Sen. Erika GEISS (D-Taylor), MLBC chair, said Schriver's action has taken away from the Legislature's ability to govern.

"We had to rush through session this morning on the Senate side," she said. "I don't know what House committees had to be readjusted for this."

O'Neal recognized that several Republican members have condemned Schriver publicly, including Rep. Donni STEELE (R-Lake Orion) and Sen. John DAMOOSE (R-Harbor Springs), and said many Republican caucus members are not happy, "but leadership needs to address this publicly."

Today, several Republican members spoke in favor of the resolution, including Reps. Brad PAQUETTE (R-Niles) and Schuette, who tied the resolution to other actions they believe the caucus should condemn, with Schuette referencing the addition of antisemitic condemnation and his resolution late last year in support of Israel.

Schriver opposed the resolution, and did so on the grounds that "free speech especially includes speech we don't agree with."

A truck parked outside the Capitol during the presser and House session supported Schriver and defended his "great replacement" post.

In other news, the House unanimously passed Rep. Graham FILLER (R-St. Johns)'s HB 4416, which makes amendments to the state's probate code and was returned to the chamber with a Senate substitute.

Whitmer Creates New Clean Energy Transition Office

Gov. Gretchen WHITMER created a new Community and Worker Economic Transition Office within the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) today, to assist communities, workers and employers in preparing to transition to a 100% clean energy economy.

The transition office would be responsible for shifts in jobs in the utility and automotive sectors, which make up more than 20% of the economy in Michigan. By 2040 there could be 41,000 new jobs in EV manufacturing and renewable energy construction.

MIRS QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I have better things to do than make fake Facebook pages."

- Rep. Jamie THOMPSON (R-Brownstown Twp.) when it was suggested that she was behind a phony Facebook page that paints Thompson's potential General Election opponent as a raging liberal.

"Michigan can lead and build the future of clean energy as we bring home more critical supply chains and create thousands more good-paying jobs," Whitmer said.

The office would also be responsible for the collaboration between leaders of businesses, citizens and government, and put the state initiatives, resources and technical assistance in one place.

The office would also collaborate with businesses to help fill workforce gaps and reach out to populations that need help.

"Their mission is to connect workers to the in-demand, high-skill jobs that will be created right here in Michigan in the decades ahead—building electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, and so much more," Whitmer said.

LEO Senior Chief Deputy Director Jonathan SMITH said the outreach to communities had already begun. He added that, if there is an auto factory or coal plant closure, the community involved would have the opportunity to apply for grants or other help.

"It's about getting a playbook together with all the data that we can get access to that will help them make these plans so that, rather than just waiting for change to happen, they can make a proactive plan driven by their local original priorities, so that they can really take the most advantage of the opportunity that might be created in the future," Smith said.

He said the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 budget and a 2024 supplemental would both contain funding to get the new office up and running.

There would be two portions. The first would be the operational budget, which would cost \$5 million annually and there would be a prorated \$2.5 million in the supplemental that would let the office start before FY 2025 hits.

He said the second part would be \$10 million for a transition fund pilot fund, to test out possible solutions in a targeted community.

Smith gave an example of an auto factory that needed to shut down for six months to retool for electric vehicles. During that time the workers would need to get training, as well, so when the factory reopened they would be able to just start back up with the necessary training. During that training they may also get some income, so they can get the skills they need.

He said the office is already starting to operate "with a very limited staff" from LEO, which included Smith to plan and prepare to "hit the ground running once the budget comes online."

"We're working collaboratively with other departments to identify others who can help support this work," Smith said.

Yellen: Inflation No Longer An Issue For Most People

U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet YELLEN told Gov. Gretchen WHITMER Wednesday during a "fireside chat" in front of the Detroit Economic Club that the nation's inflation rates are returning to "normal levels, where it's not an issue for most people."

The U.S. inflation rate so far in 2024 is 3.1 percent, following a 3.4 percent rate in 2023. These numbers are still higher than the .7 percent-to-2.3 percent numbers from 2014 to 2020, but they are half of the 7 percent rate of 2021 and 6.5 percent rate of 2022.

Yellen conceded that inflation spiked during the pandemic to levels not seen since the late '70s and early '80s, but inflation is now fallen to "almost" levels that are consistent with the "fed's objective." Gasoline prices are now in the \$3 range. Eggs, which spiked in price during the pandemic, are "pretty close to pre-pandemic levels." Car and truck prices are declining, as well, she said.

Meanwhile, wages have gone up and they've "gone up quite a lot," she told Whitmer.

The Treasury Secretary said the median worker in the United States can buy exactly the same basket of goods and services today as he or she could have purchased in 2019.

"Their wages have gone up to permit that and they have \$1,400 leftover on top of that to spend or to save," Yellen said.

While public polling has inflation or the economy among voters' top concerns, Yellen noted an Axios survey from last month that showed 63 percent of Americans rate their current financial situation as being "good," including 19% who say it's "very good."

The survey also found that most people believe their situation will be better in 2024 than it was in 2023.

THIS WEEK IN MICHIGAN HISTORY

On Feb. 17, 1918, the U.S. Department of Justice sent instructions to "war bureaus" throughout Michigan to arrest all German aliens who had failed to register. As a result, many of Michigan's 80,000 German-born and 20,000 Austrian-born residents who had not registered with the government faced internment or deportation. This came in the wake of anti-German sentiment sweeping the nation after the declaration of World War I.

That said, Yellen said the cost of child care is expensive. Health care remains a concern, however, she said President Joe BIDEN has been able to bring down premiums under the Affordable Care Act.

"I think Americans are beginning to feel better about the economy," she said.

For her part, Yellen said the U.S. economy is "very strong" and features "a labor force that is the envy of the world."

During a 30-minute back-and-forth, Yellen highlighted the nation's unemployment rate being at 4 percent or below every month for the last two years, the longest string of time in the last 50 years.

"People can feel confident about the job market," she said. "Economic growth is also strong, in spite of the fact that the economy had recovered and the job market was operating at something close to full employment."

In response to Yellen's appearance, U.S. Rep. John MOOLENAAR (R-Midland) quoted a recent CBS report that found that Michigan residents need to earn \$10,435 more just to afford the same standard of living they had before Yellen and Biden took office.

He also highlighted Yellen admitting in 2022 that she was wrong when she repeatedly said inflation would be "transitory."

"Ever since Secretary Yellen and President Biden took office, their policies have hurt Michigan seniors, families, and small businesses with higher prices, record inflation, and burdensome regulations. Unfortunately, nothing Secretary Yellen says today in Michigan will make life easier for Michigan residents who are paying more for everything they buy," Moolenaar said. "Secretary Yellen misled Americans when she said inflation would be transitory and disappear quickly. She has no credibility on the economy now."

Craig Drops Out Of U.S. Senate Race, Rogers Cleared As Frontrunner

Former Detroit Police Chief James CRAIG told the Detroit News he is suspending his lackluster U.S. Senate campaign after only raising about \$60,000 in his first quarter and starting the 2024 calendar year with less than \$30,000 in the bank.

Since announcing his candidacy Oct. 3, Craig has attended no public events and has been unable to retain staff. Ted GOODMAN has been a part-time political consultant, but Goodman also does work for Rudy GUILIANI. His first staff quit after they weren't getting paid and then held his campaign webpage hostage until he paid up.

While leading in both public polls for the Republican U.S. Senate primary due to his strong name ID in Metro Detroit, questions persisted as to how he was going to gather the 15,000 signatures needed to get his name on the ballot without broad grassroots supports and little money.

"I had to make a business decision," Craig told the Detroit Free Press. "Many of the donors that invest in candidates wanted to know if I was going to get on the ballot given what happened in the last cycle. Priority one was getting signatures that were validated."

On Jan. 29, The Midwesterner reported a campaign funding email that read that this could be his last email of his campaign because he was failing to raise enough money.

That prediction ended up being true.

The announcement leaves former U.S. Rep. Mike ROGERS as the undisputed frontrunner on the Republican side. This week Rogers received the endorsements of Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice MILLER, County Commission Chair Don BROWN, Rep. Joseph A. ARAGONA (R-Clinton Township), Rep. Alicia ST. GERMAINE (R-Harrison Township) and Rep. Douglas C. WOZNIAK (R-Shelby Township).

"James Craig is a true son of Detroit who built a long and distinguished career in law enforcement that brought real change, safety, and security to his hometown. He made a real difference for the community and his dedication to public safety is respected throughout Southeast Michigan and America," Rogers wrote. "I hope that he will continue to be engaged, and I will seek his counsel on how we can work together to bring a brighter and safer future for all Michiganders."

Fellow U.S. Senate candidate Peter MEIJER wrote on X that Craig "was a worthy Senate candidate, and he'd make a fantastic Mayor of Detroit if he chooses to run. I really enjoyed the chance to get to know the Chief during the campaign, and am excited to see where he directs his passion for public service next."

Outside of Rogers and Meijer, the announced U.S. Senate field on the Republican side now includes: Samuel BENSSON, Michael HOOVER, Sherry O'DONNELL, Sandy PENSLER, Sharon SAVAGE, Nikki SNYDER, Alexandria TAYLOR, Glenn WILSON and J.D. WILSON.

Treasury To Mail Supplemental 2022 Working Families Tax Credit Checks Soon

Tax season has officially started and Gov. Gretchen WHITMER said the 2022 supplemental Michigan Working Families Tax Credit checks would soon start hitting bank accounts.

The average check is expected to be \$550 and should arrive by mail over the next five to six weeks. The state law goes into effect Feb. 13 and would add 24% to the 6% tax credit in 2022. Anyone who received the tax credit at that time would be getting a check.

“Last year, the majority of the Michigan Legislature and I quintupled the Working Families Tax Credit, which will put hundreds more dollars back in the pockets of 700,000 working families,” Whitmer said. “These checks that are starting to be mailed out this week will lift tens of thousands of people out of working poverty and directly benefit half the children in Michigan by helping their moms and dads pay the bills, put food on the table and buy school supplies.”

The checks would be issued to the most recent address on file with the Michigan Treasury.

To qualify for the state’s version of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, tax filers must file a federal income tax return, even if nothing is owed and there is no requirement to file. The Michigan tax return would have an extra 30 percent credit.

The requirements to be approved for the Working Families Tax Credit mirror those of the Earned Income Tax Credit. Anyone over age 60, with low income or a disability could qualify to have their taxes prepared for free.

“Michigan’s Working Families Tax Credit at the 30 percent rate applies to the 2022 tax year and beyond,” State Treasurer Rachael EUBANKS said. “I encourage those who are eligible for this tax credit to explore filing electronically or connecting with a reputable tax preparer when filing a return this year.”