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Whitmer defends appearances with Trump, calls for advances on literacy, roads

MACKINAC ISLAND – [Governor Gretchen Whitmer](#) in a Thursday speech touted bipartisan policy accomplishments made on her watch and urged lawmakers to build off past successes to tackle what she sees as three key needs to address: education, infrastructure and economic development.

She also leaned into her recent appearances with President Donald Trump, saying she will speak to whomever she has to when seeking to deliver for Michigan.

"We cannot give in to the instant gratification that comes from cheap, divisive, anger-driven politics," Whitmer said. "We need leadership that that provides certainty."

Whitmer repeatedly told the audience at the Detroit Regional Chamber Mackinac Policy Conference that Michigan can come together to do the hard things, pointing to the construction of the nearby Mackinac Bridge decades ago.

More recently, she pointed to the announcement of a new mission at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

Upon referencing this, pictures appeared on the screen consisting of her at the base with soldiers.

"Oh, we didn't put a picture of me and my new bestie up there, didn't we?" Whitmer joked, drawing laughter.

Whitmer was referring to being at the base alongside Trump for the announcement. It was the second time in recent months she appeared with Trump, the other being when she wound up in the Oval Office for a press conference thinking it would be a private

meeting with a small group of people. She drew fire from fellow Democrats for meeting with him at all.

The governor said having a new mission at Selfridge protects thousands of jobs as well as thousands of military families and hundreds of millions of dollars in yearly economic activity.

"For MI, this is a B-F-D," Whitmer said, again drawing laughter.

Whitmer on Wednesday had struck a similar theme, pointing to work earlier this year to amend earned sick time and tipped minimum wage laws (See [Gongwer Michigan Report, May 28, 2025](#)).

"We did all of this while maintaining flexibility for small businesses, ensuring that they could continue operating in Michigan without raising prices or laying people off," Whitmer said.

Whitmer said she has three goals during the remainder of her final term: improving literacy for young people in the state, finding a long-term infrastructure and road funding plan and locating a microchip fabrication plant in Michigan.

"Let's be frank: we face a literacy crisis," Whitmer said. "Just a quarter of our fourth graders can read proficiently. It's not acceptable."

Whitmer also touched on the [State Board of Education](#) 's search for a new state superintendent. She said the next state superintendent will be a key part of the process in beginning to reverse the literacy rates among the state's youth.

"I urge them to pick a candidate with a proven record on literacy," Whitmer said.

She also touched on roads as being a foundation to spurring further economic development.

"We need to deliver a sustainable, long-term solutions for local and state roads," Whitmer said.

The governor acknowledged that the road bonding plan she spearheaded in 2020 was a temporary fix for a long-term solution.

"We need to fix our local roads, which have been under-invested for decades," Whitmer said. "I'm grateful for the engagement on this

issue all year long by members of the Legislature of both parties.
We're inching closer to a deal."

Whitmer also pledged to continue to do whatever she can to push
for Michigan priorities.

"I can't control the global tariff war and its impact on our economy,
although every opportunity I get to go to the Oval Office, I will make
our case," Whitmer said.

– By Nick Smith

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