



## **Gov. Muscles Through Strong Bi-Partisan Plea**

2/26/25

Gov. [Gretchen WHITMER](#) stitched together a series of relatable stories about Michiganders' struggles with a seemingly sincere offer of bipartisanship solutions in a State of the State address that viewers may have questioned whether she'd finish.

A dry cough and several sips of water didn't seem to help Whitmer's voice from rasping several times before the halfway mark. She apologized to a packed House chamber for coming off a cold and after that she started to rally.

She delivered possibly her most genuine address yet, getting even reluctant House Speaker [Matt HALL \(R-Richland Township\)](#) to stand in applause at least four times as she ran through ways Republicans and Democrats have worked and can work together.

In bringing up needed state regulation reform, more money for local roads and budget earmark transparency, Whitmer stuck with only issues that could realistically get bipartisan support and steered clear of anything that couldn't.

“The state of our State is strong, but it's on all of us to make it stronger and kinder, too,” she said.

The word “bipartisan” was uttered 13 times. “Together” 12 times. Beyond the frequency, the words were delivered not as a political challenge or gimmicky rhetoric, but as a Governor who sees a nation exhausted by polarized bomb-throwing and a realization that we all gotta get through it together.

She pointed to an insert put into the programs of lawmakers that included residents' quotes from across the state. She said, “They're sick of the games. And they're counting on us to work together. We can't let them down.”

The most poignant of her several relatable anecdotes was about the Kalamazoo neighbors from opposite ends of the political spectrum who fix each other's roofs and shovel each other's sidewalks.

“They show up for each other, all year long. Their bond is deeper and stronger than politics,” she said.

Gone was the fiery rhetoric or hokey pop culture references of prior speeches. At various points, Whitmer spoke for a few minutes without applause lines as if letting the words sink in was more important than prodding people from their seats. President

Donald **TRUMP** was mentioned by name one time . . . in the same sentence as “common ground.”

And, possibly most notably, she said it was “not acceptable” that Michigan spends among the most on its education system and is getting among the worst results. Using a line you'd expect to hear from a Republican, Whitmer said, “We spend more and we get less. It's not acceptable. For our kids, let's do better. Let's face our literacy crisis with fierce urgency.”

Boiled down, the substance of the speech resulted in about a dozen nuggets. Tariffs with Canada are bad. People need help buying homes. Medical debt is a real issue. Affordable childcare is a necessity. Yes to career and technical education. Young men need a career boost. A fighter mission at Selfridge would be nice. State permitting fees must be streamlined. Let's fix more damn local roads. “SMART” education budget, please. Cell phones out of classrooms. Time for vape tax.

But delivering a compelling speech has never been among Whitmer's problems. Leaning on Democratic issues and forcing issues down Republicans' throats hasn't been a problem either. Scoring legit bipartisan victories has been few and far between, though, making 2025 a critical legacy-making year if she's to reverse that trend.

In general, Republicans are skeptical. Senate Minority Leader [Aric NESBITT \(R-Lawton\)](#) went so far as to say in his statements before the speech that Whitmer only works with those people she can get something out of, which explains why she's buddying up with Hall. His point was, Whitmer has no choice but to work with Hall, if she wants to get anything done in her last two years in office, so she is.

“She’s always willing to engage when she wants something, but if it’s actually growing a true relationship, it’s harder to see from here,” Nesbitt said. “Too often, we’ve seen it. It’s all about public relations and social media stunts.”

Other Republicans shared other critical observations, including Rep. [Bill G. SCHUETTE \(R-Midland\)](#), who noted that Whitmer wasn't exactly a visible bipartisan negotiator during the sub-minimum wage/paid sick leave negotiation.

“It was nice to actually see Gov. Whitmer in Lansing and at the Capitol today,” he quipped.

Speaker Pro Tem [Rachelle SMIT \(R-Shelbyville\)](#) saw Whitmer embracing traditionally conservative policy positions as an act. She questioned the Governor's genuineness as national pundits continue to mention her as a potential presidential candidate in 2028.

“I'll tell you what, the Governor sure is trying on her best Republican impersonation,” Smit said. “Between cutting permitting fees, protecting businesses, and supporting our military,

our governor might give Tim **ALLEN** a run for his money if she decides she wants a career in conservative television.

“That’s the thing about our governor; she has great talking points, but at the end of the day, all she’s doing is playing a part. She’s been governor for six years; the only thing she’s successfully led is her social media team.”

Rep. [Carol GLANVILLE \(D-Grand Rapids\)](#) said the Governor's comments hit home as she brought her stepson as her guest to the State of the State address. As a postgraduate student, he faces the decision many young professionals are facing – stay in Michigan or look for opportunities out of state.

“I wholeheartedly agree with the Governor's message that we need to provide more opportunities for young people to build their lives right here in Michigan.”