

FOCUS

THE MONTHLY BUSINESS NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

JANUARY 2025

Making Sense of the Dollars & Cents

What Michigan Businesses Need to Know About
New Sick Leave and Minimum Wage Mandates



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Kelsey Teribery

Design

Tandem Studios

Print and Mailing Services

BRD Printing Incorporated

Feature Writer

Jennifer McEntee

Cover Illustration

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER



AMY SCOPY
BOARD CHAIR
LANSING REGIONAL
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The LRCC's agenda for 2025 is ambitious, and it hinges on collective action. Through educational programs, professional development opportunities, and advocacy efforts, we provide platforms for people to connect, grow, and thrive. I encourage you to join us in shaping a vibrant future for the Lansing region.

It is with great enthusiasm and a strong sense of purpose that I step into my role as Chair of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce (LRCC) Board of Directors. As Senior Vice President at The Christman Company—a national construction services firm proudly headquartered in downtown Lansing—I am deeply committed to doing my part to drive our region forward.

Our community is at an important crossroads of economic success and growth, and the potential for transformative progress has never been greater. As Chair of this 124-year-old organization, I am eager to act on key priorities in 2025 that will enhance the well-being and prosperity of people, places, and businesses throughout Greater Lansing.

One major initiative for the LRCC in 2025 is the State of the Region Report, a collaboration with the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP). This report will benchmark Lansing against 11 peer regions, offering critical insights into population trends, business creation, private-sector employment, educational attainment, housing, and more. These metrics will highlight our strengths while focusing on areas of opportunity for strategic improvement. The data will assist in creating a proactive policy agenda that fosters sustainable economic growth and ensures the Lansing region remains competitive in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Strong local leadership is essential for translating vision into tangible outcomes. With pivotal elections in Lansing and East Lansing on the horizon, including Mayor Andy Schor's reelection campaign, 2025 presents an opportunity to shape our region's future. The LRCC will advocate for leadership that prioritizes collaboration, innovation, and long-term vision. Moreover, fostering a regulatory climate that balances business growth with community needs is key to unlocking investment and advancing transformative projects, such as the over \$300 million in downtown Lansing developments.

On the federal front, we will work closely with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and local businesses to support policies that drive growth and competitiveness. This advocacy ensures that our region's voice is heard at all levels of government.

The LRCC's agenda for 2025 is ambitious, and it hinges on collective action. Through educational programs, professional development opportunities, and advocacy efforts, we provide platforms for people to connect, grow, and thrive. I encourage you to join us in shaping a vibrant future for the Lansing region.

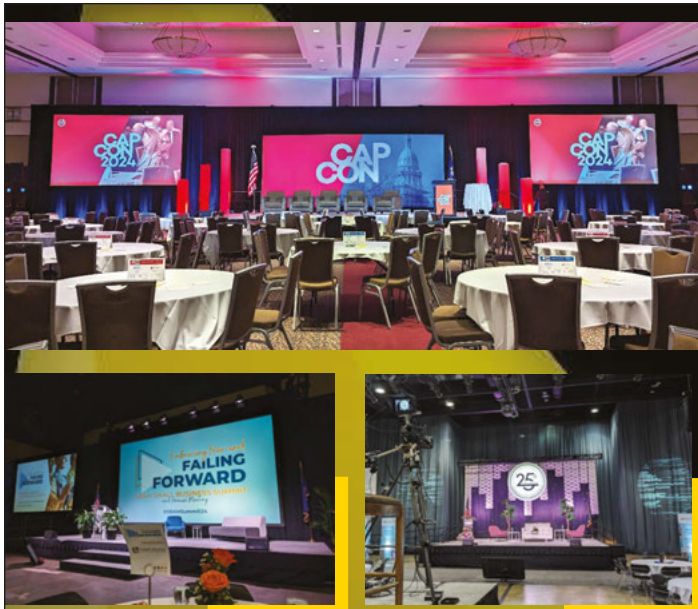
In closing, I tip my hat to outgoing Chair Lisa O'Connor, President of Publicom. Her dedication to the Chamber and this region has been significant, and I am thankful for the opportunity to build on her momentum. Looking ahead, I am proud to serve alongside an exceptional board of directors who share a deep investment in our community. Let's make 2025 a transformative year for the Lansing region—one defined by regional partnership, innovation, and growth. ●

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We'd like to offer a special salute to these great organizations who reached milestone anniversaries as Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce members this month. Thank you for your continued support throughout the years!

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Leadership Lansing Explores Local Government, Civility and Regional Impact

In the aftermath of the November election, the 2024-25 Leadership Lansing cohort had the opportunity to meet with several local elected officials to learn more about what they do and how it impacts citizens in the region. Though much of the media attention in the recent election focused on the high-profile races at the top of the ballot, it is the local units of government that provide services that have the greatest impact on our everyday lives.

The elected officials talked about how they got involved in local government, their largest challenges, how they work together across political and geographic boundary lines and how the loss of civility in politics and society is impacting efforts to shape good public policy. Panelists included Robert Showers, chair of the Clinton County Board of Commissioners, Delta Township Trustee, Fonda Brewer, and Lansing City Council member Jeffrey Brown. The panel was skillfully moderated by Steven Japinga, Senior Vice President for Public Affairs at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

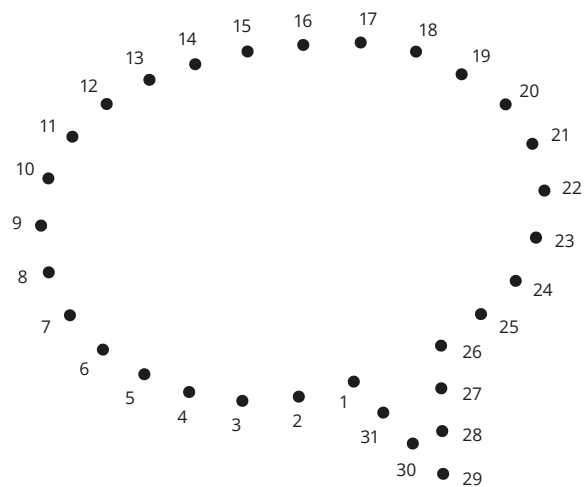
In keeping with the government theme of the November program, the Leadership Lansing cohort enjoyed a tour of the State Capitol including the recently opened welcome center, Heritage Hall. The cohort got a glimpse of Governor Gretchen Whitmer conducting a media interview.

Participants also enjoyed the opportunity to receive training asking powerful questions, designed to help develop their skills as a coach-leader. The day ended with the cohort breaking into project teams to determine the topic of their group presentations that will be made in April. The presentations will focus on

unique assets that help make the Lansing region the best place to live and work.

For more information about the Leadership Lansing program, please visit www.lansingchamber.org/leadership-lansing. ♦

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U.S. Chamber Program Fosters Transition from Military to Workforce

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Mike Creaser will end his military career soon with 15 years of service, specializing in counter-espionage and counter-terrorism. He went on deployment three times. He also earned two associate's degrees and a bachelor's degree. Yet until recently, Creaser didn't feel ready for his next mission: civilian life.

"The last time I was a civilian, I was an adolescent, and I was graduating high school," Creaser explained.

Through a career-skills program offered to U.S. service members, Creaser is receiving professional training so that he can work as a human resources executive for his family's business, Holt-based Capital City Janitorial LLC.

Creaser said the education in business management, documentation, and communication has shored up his confidence and helped him "get his feet wet" in a civilian workplace before his official military retirement in April.

The Department of Defense's SkillBridge program empowers service members to gain civilian work experience through industry training, apprenticeships, or internships during their last six months of military service.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes program is a Department of Defense-authorized SkillBridge provider. Hiring Our Heroes works with the U.S. Chamber's network of state and local chambers and partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to match military talent with host companies.

Together, the government and chamber entities are building a bridge to civilian employment for departing military personnel while helping the business community supplement its workforce.

"It's a great program and it's something that I'm very fortunate to be able to be a part of," Creaser said. "It's just not a lot of people know about it."

U.S. Army 1Lt. David Smitt, who has shared details about the SkillBridge initiative at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce monthly business roundtables, said host businesses get temporary employees whose salaries are paid by the DoD.

"The nice thing for private companies is they can have an intern for free for up to six months," Smitt said. "If it works out, ideally, it leads to a job; if not, then the service member gets some experience, and the company fills a role for a little while."

Military personnel nearing the end of their service might



Creaser

have served four years or decades, and job skills vary from those that translate directly to civilian workplaces to those that need some hands-on training to adapt. For instance, Hiring Our Heroes might place personnel with prior military experience in cybersecurity, satellite communications, machinery, aviation, or medical jobs.

Smitt said former military service members bring hard-earned experience to civilian jobs, including leadership skills, an ability to adapt to new situations, and the capacity to handle complex tasks under pressure.

"If there's one thing the military does pretty well is teach you how to manage stress and work with what you have to accomplish whatever your goal is," Smitt said. "Failure is not really an option."

To learn more about finding talent through the Hiring Our Heroes initiative, log on to www.hiringourheroes.org/employers. ♦

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Making Sense of the Dollars & Cents

What Michigan Businesses Need to Know About New Sick Leave and Minimum Wage Mandates

BY JENNIFER McENTEE

Michigan businesses have been in a holding pattern as lawmakers, labor unions, chambers, and trade groups have tried to reach an understanding about forthcoming changes to statewide minimum wage and paid sick leave directives.

As this issue of *FOCUS* is going to press, the Michigan Legislature is still in its lame duck session, during which many are advocating for amendments to 2018's Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act and the Earned Sick Time Act — put back into motion by the Michigan Supreme Court in its July 2024 *Mothering Justice v. Attorney General* ruling — to now take effect in February 2025.

The initiatives, as planned, would increase Michigan's minimum wage, ultimately eliminate the tipped wage credit, and change the parameters of the state's earned sick leave.

The mandates are expected to impact businesses of all sizes in all industries, through small businesses and those in the hospitality industry may need to make significant shifts in their operations to avoid penalties and maintain fair labor practices.

Experts in labor and employment law opine that businesses need to be prepared regardless of how the laws might be modified before February 2025.

Clifford Hammond, a member of Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC's Employers Services practice group in the Southfield and Lansing offices, said any pending changes to the minimum wage and sick leave acts might "sand some of the edges off."

"We don't know 100 percent, but we know that we're going to be paying more for wages. We know that we're

going to be giving employees sick leave, and it's going to be on a different timetable than what we have right now," Hammond said.



Hammond

Hammond recommends that his clients educate themselves about the latest labor and employment laws, particularly related to their specific businesses and industries. Then, they should seek the counsel of their accountant and attorney.

"With all these things, whether it's the Family and Medical Leave Act or the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Earned Sick Time Act, all these laws have a growing pain stage," Hammond said. "It sounds good, but then you get gray areas when you actually start. You get a system and a template in place, but then you start asking questions. 'OK, what if? What if this happens?' Do it before February 21st because you don't want to have a 'what if' question and do the wrong thing."



Mills



Helen Lizzie Mills, the labor and employment practice group leader at Okemos-based Fahey Schultz Burzych Rhodes PLC, said the onus is on businesses to understand and promptly implement the new state wage and sick time requirements.

"It's a commonly used phrase in our practice, our firm, and across the



Depositphotos

field of legal practitioners that 'ignorance of the law is not a defense.' So, if we pretend like we don't know, that won't cut the mustard," Mills said.

The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce and its partners in the local business community, including Choose Lansing, have worked to make sense of the new employment and labor laws through advocacy and education, including LRCC Policy & Regulatory Business Education Series webinars.

For employer resources, including frequent legal updates and an action center with ready-made emails to lawmakers, see www.lansingchamber.org/paid-sick-leave-minimum-wage-update.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW LAWS

The Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity's Wage and Hour Division has sought to explain the new Earned Sick Time Act and the Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act online with printable posters and "frequently asked questions" pages that caution the details are subject to change.

All Michigan employers of any size are covered by the ESTA, except for government employees or those excluded based on federal law, like railway workers already covered by the Railway Unemployment Act. Notably, the ESTA applies to work performed by employees physically located in Michigan, even if the employer is located somewhere else.

The business size matters when it comes to how earned sick time is accrued and used. Small businesses are described as employing nine or fewer employees. That changes if the headcount increases to 10-plus for 20 weeks or more in a calendar year, including part-time and temporary staff.

For small-business employers, their employees accrue a minimum of one hour of earned sick time for every 30 hours worked. They won't be paid for more than 40 hours of earned sick time in a calendar year, but can still use another 32 hours without pay in the same year.

Meanwhile, employees at businesses with a headcount of 10 or more accrue an hour of paid earned sick time for every 30 hours worked, but can use 72 paid hours each year. Salaried employees are assumed to work a 40-hour workweek.

Michigan's Minimum Hourly Wage

- Effective Jan. 1, 2024: **\$10.33**
- Effective Jan. 1, 2025: **\$10.56**
- Effective Feb. 21, 2025: **\$12.48**
- Effective Feb. 21, 2026: **\$13.29**
- Effective Feb. 21, 2027: **\$14.16**
- Effective Feb. 21, 2028: **\$14.97**

Source: Michigan Dept. of Labor & Economic Opportunity, as of early-Dec. 2024

Tipped Employees

As of Feb. 21, 2025, the minimum hourly wage rate of a tipped employee in Michigan will be **48% of the minimum hourly wage**, to increase in percentage each February:

- For 2026, tipped employees will earn **60%** of the minimum hourly wage rate.
- For 2027, it will be **70%**.
- For 2028, it will be **80%**.
- For 2029, it will be **90%**.
- As of Feb. 21, 2030, and beyond, tipped workers are set to earn **100%** of the minimum hourly wage rate.

Source: Michigan Dept. of Labor & Economic Opportunity, as of early-Dec. 2024

Earned Sick Time, By the Numbers

Under Michigan's Earned Sick Time Act, non-government employers will accrue **1 hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked**. At small businesses, employees can't use more than 40 hours of paid sick time in a calendar year; at larger businesses, the limit is 72 hours per calendar year.

FEATURE: MAKING SENSE OF THE DOLLARS AND CENTS

Under the ESTA, employers need to document the hours worked and the sick time earned, and keep those records for at least three years.

Hammond said many businesses will need to update their human resources policies and processes to reflect the ESTA, and inform employees how it works.

Business owners need to ask themselves, “Am I accumulating enough sick time to be compliant with the law? Am I using an accumulation system that allows people to take time off without being disciplined so that I’m in compliance? And am I asking for paperwork from people?” he explained.

Mills said business owners should review their employee handbooks and consult with specialists knowledgeable about their field to ensure they correctly implement the ESTA’s requirements.

“You should not be making any assumptions whatsoever about the scope of what that Earned Sick Time Act is imposing. You really need to sink your teeth in,” she said. “This statute is not designed to be useful or helpful or understanding of the employer obligations that already exist. It is not designed to be easy to administer. Its focus, perhaps understandably, is that it’s an employee-centered act.”

Hammond also cautions that the statute limits whether employers can ask employees to find someone to cover their shift.

“If you have very bare-bones staffing, it’s something you’re going to have to think through. Even for a larger company with over 50 employees, staffing is a big deal,” he said.

Michigan businesses with hourly employees are also closely watching the planned minimum wage schedule, with the minimum hourly rate to increase from \$10.33 to \$10.56 on Jan. 1, then to \$12.48 on Feb. 21. As the schedule is determined in the Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act, hourly wages would go up each February, hitting \$14.97 in 2028.

“You’ve got to start organizing yourself, knowing what the numbers will be on February 21st, and how you’re planning to allocate that and adjust your payroll,” Mills said. “This could be a big shock to the system.”

One of the bigger sticking points for business groups and restaurant owners is the IWOWA’s eventual elimination of the tip credit, which would bring the hourly rate for employees who receive tips from \$3.93 in 2024 to \$4.01 on Jan. 1, and then \$5.99 on Feb. 21. Through incremental increases each February, employers of tipped workers



would need to pay 100 percent of the standard minimum hourly wage rate in 2030.

“Changes to the tip credit or the elimination of the tip credit are so potentially damaging to the restaurant industry because it’s attacking the core structure that has worked so well,” Mills said.

Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association and the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce are among those calling for minimum wage increases that preserve the tip credit system.



Sellek

John Sellek, chief executive of Lansing-based Harbor Strategic Public Affairs, serves as the spokesperson for Save MI Tips. The advocacy group asserts that restaurant servers and bartenders make more in tips than standard minimum wage, and that eliminating the credit would mean smaller tips, higher menu prices, and fewer jobs in the hospitality industry.

“Servers and bartenders know there’s an implicit understanding of the system that’s in place now that allows them to be rewarded for far more than minimum

wage,” Sellek said. “You can see the mix of anxiety and fear and even rage that comes from the workers when they actually are presented with the ability to talk about this because they’re saying, ‘What the heck is going on here? We didn’t ask for this.’”

Sellek said the New York-based nonprofit One Fair Wage pushed for changes to the Michigan minimum wage that don’t align with the interests of the people it purports to help.

“On the surface, it was just going to change the minimum wage, but it also included buried in the details that it would wipe out the way our tipping system works today, and that’s just unacceptable to the workers themselves,” Sellek said.

A Save MI Tips rally at the Michigan State Capitol in September drew nearly 1,000 workers from throughout Michigan, he said. The advocacy group has also coordinated meetings with lawmakers so that tipped workers can share their personal stories.

“This line of work is essentially the most all-American, entrepreneurial type of work that you can have if you’re willing to work hard and hustle,” Sellek said.

GOING FORWARD

While uncertainty abounds about the Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act and the Earned Sick Time Act, labor and employment law experts emphasize that it’s vital that business owners make their concerns known to their state legislators, trade groups, and chambers.

“The chamber and all sorts of statewide organizations and associations are putting their hat in the ring to try to make an impact here, so get connected with groups that you feel are going to advocate strongly. Get

in contact with your own legislators to let them know, ‘I’m going to do my best to comply, but I need you to know how this is impacting me.’ It’s a really meaningful way to give communication,” Mills said. “There’s power in numbers.”

Mills said she recommends “intentional preparation but not panic.” Though the changes are big, they won’t cause instantaneous disruptions. For instance, not every employee will take 72 hours of paid time off right away; the paid sick time must still accrue over time.

Hammond also advises that businesses keep an eye on how federal labor and employment laws might shift after the U.S. Presidential Inauguration in January 2025.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen in the next year, but we have to monitor both the federal and the state and do what we do currently, which is make sure we’re in compliance with both,” Hammond said.

Businesses violating the state mandates are subject to investigation by the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity’s Wage and Hour Division, administrative fines, and orders to pay back any earnings withheld improperly. And that’s before the civil claims.

“There’s a lot of incentives here to do it right from an employer side because it could be costly,” Hammond said. “And there’s a lot of incentives for employees and their counsel to bring the claims because they can get paid pretty significantly. So there’s a lot of skin in the game for everybody to get it right.”

For more information on Michigan’s minimum wage and paid medical leave requirements, visit www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/ber/Wage-and-Hour. ♦



If you have very bare-bones staffing, it’s something you’re going to have to think through. Even for a larger company with over 50 employees, staffing is a big deal.

**Clifford Hammond,
Foster Swift Collins
& Smith PC**

Stay ahead of changes to Michigan’s Paid Sick Leave and Minimum Wage laws with support from the Lansing Regional Chamber members. Our member directory is your resource for connecting with trusted legal, CPA, and HR professionals who can provide expert guidance and keep your business compliant.

Visit lansingchamber.org to explore your options today!

Lansing Regional Chamber Members Among Michigan's Top Workplaces for 2024

In its 17th year, the Michigan Top Workplaces list created by the *Detroit Free Press* honors companies across the state that have demonstrated outstanding workplace cultures. Organizations with 50 or more employees were eligible to enter a program that identifies top places to work through a workplace culture survey. Administered by *Detroit Free Press'* research partner, Energage, the survey was sent to more than 2 million employees at more than 8,000 organizations in the past year. This year, 198 companies were named Michigan Top Workplaces, among the winners are several Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce members, marking a significant achievement for businesses in the region.



In the Large Michigan Top Workplaces category, Plante Moran, MSUFCU, Honigman LLP, Edward Jones, Panda Restaurant Group, and Fifth Third Bank were recognized for their exceptional workplace environments. These companies have earned praise for their employee satisfaction, strong leadership, and inclusive culture.

For the Midsize Michigan Top Workplaces, the list includes Dart Bank, Cinnaire Corporation, Michigan First Credit Union, KMG Prestige, and PFCU Credit Union, all of which have fostered environments that promote collaboration, growth, and employee well-being. Ayers Basement Systems, a non-member of the Lansing Chamber, was also recognized in this category, reflecting a diverse range of businesses that prioritize positive workplace cultures.

In the Small Michigan Top Workplaces category, Hungry Howie's Pizza, Kunz, Leigh & Associates, Origami Rehabilitation, and Raising Cane's were named among the top winners. These businesses exemplify how even smaller organizations can create dynamic, supportive workplaces where employees are encouraged to thrive.

"Being named to the 2024 Michigan Top Workplaces list reflects the incredible commitment of Lansing's business community to fostering positive, supportive environments," said Bridget Drzal, Vice President of Member Engagement at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce. "The Chamber is proud that so many of our members are leading the way, not only in business success but in creating cultures that prioritize the well-being, growth, and success of their employees."

These businesses are setting the standard for excellence, showing that a strong company culture is key to attracting and retaining top talent. With their success, they are paving the way for other organizations to follow, ensuring that Michigan remains a hub for businesses that value their people as much as their profits.

For a full list of the 2024 Michigan Top Workplaces, visit the *Detroit Free Press's* website. ♦



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Key Races in the 2025 Lansing & East Lansing Elections Will Shape the Future of Our Communities

As we look ahead to the 2025 local election cycle, the Greater Lansing region will see several key municipal races that will shape the future of both Lansing and East Lansing. These elections present critical opportunities for voters to engage in shaping the leadership of their communities.

CITY OF LANSING

The City of Lansing's ballot will include races for the mayor and four city council seats.

- Mayor **Andy Schor**
- Lansing City Council At-Large Members **Peter Spadafore** and **Jeffrey Brown**
- 2nd Ward Council Member **Jeremy Garza**
- 4th Ward Council Member **Brian Jackson**

These races will have significant implications for Lansing's continued focus on economic development, public safety, and infrastructure improvements.

CITY OF EAST LANSING

In East Lansing, the mayor and one city council seat will be on the ballot.

- Mayor **George Brookover**
- City Council Member **Dana Watson**

Both elections will influence East Lansing's trajectory as it balances growth, student life, and neighborhood preservation.

LANSING REGIONAL CHAMBER-POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The Lansing Regional Chamber-Political Action Committee (LRC-PAC) plays a key role in supporting pro-growth candidates throughout the region.

The LRC-PAC does not use membership dues for political purposes; all contributions are voluntary. Its mission is to endorse and support candidates who prioritize a favorable business climate, economic growth, and job creation in the Greater Lansing area.



As election season approaches, the LRC-PAC will continue its efforts to ensure that candidates who value collaboration, innovation, and sustainable development have the resources they need to succeed.

Stay tuned for more updates and candidate profiles as we approach this important election year. Make sure your voice is heard by participating in these local elections, as they have a direct impact on the vitality of our communities. ♦



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Members on the Move

NEW HIRES



Kitchen

Lansing-based graphic design and branding agency **Tandem Studios** is pleased to welcome **Marina Kitchen** as a graphic design intern for the Spring

2025 semester. She will focus on print graphic design, branding, and social media design and management. Kitchen is studying graphic communications at Lansing Community College.

Foster Swift Collins & Smith, PC welcomes new associate attorneys **Mackenzie M. Almassian, Patrick E. Quinn, James A. Ryan, and Charles R. Sarchet**. All four previously got their start at Foster Swift by



Almassian



Quinn



Ryan



Sarchet

participating in the firm's summer associate program in 2023 while finishing law school and were sworn in by Michigan Supreme Court Justice Brian K. Zahra in November.

Almassian will continue working in the Grand Rapids office as a member of the municipal practice group, where she will practice in municipal and public entity law, municipal litigation, and administrative law. Quinn joins the litigation practice group in the Lansing office. Ryan is an alumnus of Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin Law School and will also be joining the litigation practice group, focusing on commercial litigation, contracts, insurance law and defense, and no-fault litigation in the Southfield office. Sarchet rejoins the business and tax practice group in Grand Rapids, where he will assist with mergers and acquisitions, various tax matters, entity formation, sports law, and employment law.

LAFCU has expanded its team by adding **Danna Finney** as compliance officer and **Monica Roark** as accounts payable

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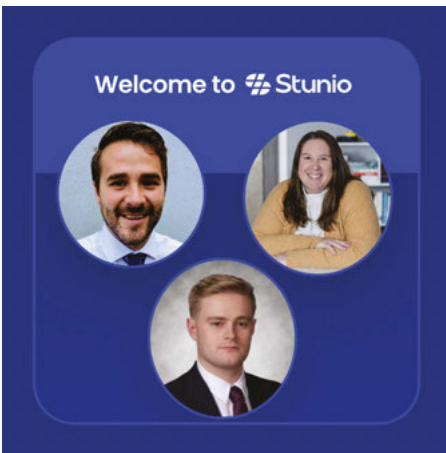


Finney



Roark

specialist. As compliance officer, Finney ensures LAFCU's policies and procedures comply with relevant laws and regulations. She analyzes new and pending legislation, recommends adjustments to existing practices, and coordinates with departments to implement necessary changes. Meanwhile, as accounts payable specialist, Roark will receive, process, and verify invoices, manage vendor relationships, and ensure timely payments by negotiating terms and resolving disputes. She will also handle administrative tasks within the accounting department, including posting accounting entries, processing mail, authorizing payments, and assisting with general ledger balancing and Visa statements.



Stunio is excited to welcome **Daniel Rials** as director of sales, **Amanda Hayhoe** as chief operating officer, and **Tim Kramer** as senior developer. Their expertise and passion for community-driven innovation will play a vital role as the organization relaunches its app and continues connecting college students with local businesses to solve their employment needs.

APPOINTMENTS

Builder **Aaron Hovestadt** of Kalamazoo has been elected 2025 President of the **Home Builders Association of Michigan**. The 2025 slate of elected officers for the 5,000-member statewide association also includes: First Vice President: **Karen J. Schroeder**, Home Builders Association of Greater Lansing; Treasurer: **Michael Tucker**, Home Builders Association of Northwest Michigan; Secretary: **Ben Templeton**, Home Builders Association of Southeast Michigan; Associate Senior Officer: **Michael Tribble**, Home Builders Association of the Great Lakes Bay Region and Immediate Past President: **Jeff Grantham**, Home Builders Association of Northern Michigan.

AWARDS



Umar Tahir, vice president of marketing, enterprise innovation, and digital assets at LAFCU, holds the Credit Union Times Luminaries Award during the ceremony in Orlando, Fla.

LAFCU was a finalist for the Credit Union Times Luminaries Award in the Innovation in Tech – AI/Cybersecurity/Mobile Banking category, recognizing the credit union's efforts to protect its operations and members from cybercrime. LAFCU's Shields Up! campaign educated and informed about 160 employees on the importance of safeguarding against cybercriminals and fraudsters. The campaign's effectiveness was demonstrated through quantitative data from a post-series quiz in which employees achieved an average score of 93 percent.



Lansing Community College student **Jacy Simon** and her mixed doubles partner **Miles Krajewski** won a silver medal in paralympic badminton at the Paris Paralympic Games. The pair made history by earning Team USA's first-ever paralympic badminton medal. Simon is from St. Johns, Michigan, and studies exercise science and kinesiology at Lansing Community College. The community college celebrated her in October with a victory parade and she signed autographs and participated in a Q&A session. Since returning home, she has received numerous honors and most recently served as the 2024 Grand Marshal of the Electric Light Parade at Lansing's Silver Bells in the City.



LAFCU was named one of the Best Credit Unions to Work For in 2024 by *American Banker*. This is the second time LAFCU has received the recognition, which highlights credit unions that excel in workplace culture, employee satisfaction, and overall business influence. LAFCU is among 30 credit unions nationwide recognized this year in the largest asset category, which includes credit unions with more than \$1 billion in assets.

Peak Performance Physical Therapy was recognized as the "Best Physiotherapist and Rehab Clinic" in Lansing by CommunityVotes Lansing 2024. The annual CommunityVotes Lansing program celebrates leading

businesses and organizations across various sectors. Votes from the local community determine the award. Peak Performance Physical Therapy provides a range of services, including sports injury rehabilitation, post-operative recovery, chronic pain management, and specialized orthopedic manual physical therapy. The business has five locations: Lansing, Okemos, Dewitt, Mason, and Grand Rapids.



Fraser Trebilcock
attorney **Douglas Austin** has been named the *Best Lawyers in America 2025* Real Estate Law "Lawyer of the Year" in Lansing. Only one attorney in each practice area in each community is identified as "Lawyer of the Year." Austin has more than 45 years of real estate law experience. In addition to being a shareholder at Fraser Trebilcock, he is the past chair of the firm's Real Estate Law department. The Best Lawyers designation is based on peer-review surveys. Austin has been listed for over 25 years; this is his second time being selected as a "Lawyer of the Year" for Real Estate Law in Lansing.

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Kelli Ellsworth Etchison

Kelli Ellsworth Etchison, LAFCU's chief marketing officer and chief diversity officer, has been named to *COLOR Magazine's* Top Chief Diversity Officers

POWERLIST. This special edition recognizes exceptional leaders shaping the future of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the country. Etchison's contributions at LAFCU include implementing DEI strategies that prioritize education and bias-free practices, and leading the formation of an employee-led DEI committee. From onboarding

new hires to training the board of directors, Etchison ensures that all members of the LAFCU team are engaged in DEI learning. Kelli's advocacy extends beyond her work at LAFCU. She has volunteered with organizations including the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission of Mid-Michigan and the YMCA of Metropolitan Lansing. She also helped establish East Lansing's Independent Police Oversight Commission and serves on Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's Black Leadership Advisory Council.



Publicom, Inc. won five national awards in the 21st Annual Service Industry Advertising Awards competition, with three entries receiving Gold Award distinctions. The recognized clients and projects, along with their SIAA categories and award distinctions, are Aging with Dignity – Publication – *Five Wishes Guide- Finishing Life Faithfully* (Gold Award); Liberty Source – Magazine Advertising- Single – *Defense Ad- Better AI Results* (Gold Award); Liberty Source – Logo/Letterhead Design – *DataInFormation Logo* (Gold Award); Smile America Partners – Special Video-More than 2 minutes– *My Why- Why I Live the Smile Way* (Merit Award) and Smile America Partners – Direct Mail– *DDS Recruitment* (Merit Award). The SIAA competition recognizes advertising excellence in the service industry.

COMPANY NEWS

PFCU Credit Union donated \$600 to Ele's Place Capital Region's Children's Grief Awareness Month campaign. Ele's Place is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing a safe and compassionate environment for children and teens



to navigate their grief following the death of a loved one. By making this donation, PFCU Credit Union reaffirms its commitment to community support and the well-being of young individuals facing difficult emotional challenges. ♦



SHARE YOUR COMPANY NEWS

LRCC members can submit a press release and photo about new hires, promotions, company recognitions or awards at lansingchamber.org/contactus and we will share it in our popular Members on the Move section.

Chamber in Action



Congratulations to **AXIOS HR** on their ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce! Since 1988, they have been passionately serving small to mid-sized businesses, building strong, lasting relationships with clients through personalized service and custom solutions. With their valuable HR expertise, they empower employers to support their workforce, fostering a culture that enhances both personal and professional well-being.



Congratulations to **Beltone Hearing Aid Center**, located at 3496 E Lake Lansing Road in East Lansing, on their ribbon-cutting ceremony! Beltone features a compassionate team dedicated to empowering individuals through their essential services. They offer free hearing screenings, personalized hearing aid fittings, and ongoing care.



Media Advantage celebrated their new location at 934 North Washington Avenue with a ribbon-cutting ceremony! After 15 amazing years, Media Advantage has finally found its forever home in Old Town, where they've spent months creating a vibrant collaborative space. Media Advantage is a full-service creative and marketing agency that provides effective, high-impact solutions to enhance your business and brand.



Panda Express celebrated the grand opening of its new location at 6270 Pennsylvania Avenue in Lansing with a ribbon-cutting ceremony! The first 88 guests received an exclusive Panda Express-branded t-shirt.

CHECK OUT THE LANSING JOB BOARD!

It's a one-stop shop for job opportunities in the Lansing region and allows LRCC members with the ability to post their job openings.

Learn more at lansingchamber.org



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