



Friday, June 13, 2008

## An Interview With Deb Cherry

### “Centerpiece”

**Q. What are some of the things the state can do right now to prepare for the aging population?**

A. I think some of the things Gov. Granholm has started with the Long Term Care Taskforce were a good first step. We started looking at how Medicaid policies and state policies have an impact on where elderly go in the system. It's geared toward nursing homes.

The creation of the Long Term Care Office was important, and I'm glad I got to be a part of that taskforce. The effort now is to increase the range of options that are available to people — assisted living, independent living — all of those things are important, but we need to vamp up our efforts.

Our Medicaid policies and the federal government's Medicaid policies really need to be reviewed and changed so that we recognize that these other realms of care are more respectful of the person and the citizen and are more cost effective. I think we're starting to do that here in this state.

The budget that the Governor proposed did show that shift. Unfortunately, we didn't go on with it in the Senate, but I'm hopeful that as we go on through the next few weeks it will refer back to that so that we're using dollars we're saving from nursing homes to go into alternative living arrangements.

**Q. Is there a danger of losing federal funds when states start reassessing those policies?**

A. We're doing what we can, but we really need to change the federal policy. We need to provide care for those who aren't necessarily available for Medicaid but can't pay for care on their own. We can't afford to do that on our own.

Right now when someone's in the hospital we figure out what's going to work within our system for that person, not what's best for the person. Now we have pilot projects that shift the focus from the system to the person and that's a much better way to do it.

*A Service of GCSI ... Voted Michigan's #1 Lobby Firm*

#### MANAGEMENT

Nell Kuhnmuench

Michael D. Hawks

Stephen E. Young

Kirk A. Profit

Kenneth Cole

Donald Van Singel

Brett Henderson

William Zaagman

Erik Hingst

Patrick Laughlin

Gary M. Owen

**Q. Will a cost savings result in this shift?**

A. Well, I don't know if there will be a cost savings, but what I hope is that more people get served. You don't take money out of the system, but we're shifting dollars so more people can get served in a way they prefer and that is better for them. The problem with expecting cost savings is that the need is so great.

**Q. Why should 19- and 20-year-olds receive healthcare under Medicaid?**

A. I think it's important for everyone to have healthcare. Nineteen- and 20-year-olds are often very, very poor. They're often in foster care or in a transitional period, and it makes really no sense to me to shift that cost to Medicaid, if they get really, horribly hurt or in health need, that shift goes to emergency care, and that's going to be more costly to the state and us as insurance carriers.

To me, the savings is not worth the cost in the long run. The Senate took that funding out, but I'm hopeful it will get put back in.

**Q. What top three bills would you like to get passed before you leave the Senate?**

A. Funding for 19- and 20-year-olds is on the top. I have a bill to require public financing for Supreme Court races. I believe very strongly that we need to do some election reform and this is to me one of the first steps. We spend way too much money in Michigan on our Supreme Court races. They become very partisan. To me, it's certainly not very judicial.

One of the hardest things about judicial races is that we're donating to them, but those are the guys that you go before in court. There's certainly a perception that you're going to listen to that person more because they've given you a donation to that campaign.

In terms of the community health budget, the more that I can do in both preventative kinds of care — Healthy Michigan is a good example of that — things like promoting healthy living behaviors, things I struggle with myself, I really would like to put more emphasis on that. I have a bill to require exercise in elementary school for kids.

In general I have more issues on election reform and on consumer protection that I would like to see. I would really love it if we could get a same-day registration voting day in the state before I leave. I'm not sure that will happen.

**Q. Though it's a couple of years out, have you thought about what you might like to do when you're finished with your term?**

A. I haven't thought a whole lot about it, other than I don't feel the need to run for something else. I've been in elected office now for 20 years. But, then again, I've learned also that you never say never. I know I want to be involved in policy and I know that healthcare's the area I want to be involved in the most.

**Q. Do you have any interest in going to Washington to pursue those issues?**

A. I haven't thought about it that much, but I would take whatever avenue came to me and would be most effective.

## ***GCSEye On The Capitol***

### ***Energy Bills Leave Senate Committee***

The House energy package that's been tied up in the Senate Energy Policy Committee, moved this week much to the surprise of the energy community.

The Committee moved the Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) reforms as well a Public Act 141, which would turn Michigan's electric industry into a more regulated market.

Before taking a vote on the bills, Sen. Cameron Brown (R-Fawn River Twp.) successfully added an amendment that breaks the tie bar between the RPS bills and the P.A. 141 bill.

### ***Airports Get Battle Torn Money***

The state's airports will get \$183 million for airport improvement programs that were up in the air due to legislative bickering over the Capital Outlay budget. The House this week agreed to legislation that appropriates federal money for the airport projects without the numerous university infrastructure projects they had previously insisted upon.

The House and Senate were arguing over whether to pass the airport funding separately from the Capital Outlay budget to get the money passed in time to capture federal funding. Had the bill not moved, airports would have lost \$163 million in federal funds.

The Senate and Gov. Jennifer Granholm wanted to separate the budgets, but the House was vying for an additional \$800 million in university project spending. Tuesday, the House gave up its fight and voted to pass the bill.

### ***Levin/Brewer Holding Off On Obama Endorsement***

Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) Chair Mark Brewer and U.S. Sen. Carl Levin (D-Detroit) are not ready to throw their support behind Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama.

According to Levin's spokeswoman, Kathleen Long, Levin wants to make sure all Michigan delegates are seated before giving Obama his blessing. Brewer is holding out because he's still "managing the delegate selection process."

The withheld endorsements indicate to pollsters and others that Obama still lacks key support within the Democratic Party.

## **The Week Ahead**

### ***Target Negotiations To Heat Up***

Administration, Senate and House officials began meeting this week behind closed doors to begin negotiations on how much money the state has to spend on the Fiscal Year 2009 budget. Known in Lansing as "target-setting," these negotiations are expected to begin in earnest this week.

Once the available amount of money is agreed upon, legislative leaders and the Budget Office begin negotiations on what will ultimately end up in next year's budget. For that reason these "target" meetings in the last several years have stretched somewhere between a couple weeks or the entire summer.

**Michigan Factoid:**

Detroit painter Lewis Thomas Ives died in 1894 before completing a commissioned portrait of President Grover Cleveland only to have the work finished by his son, Percy.

House Speaker Andy Dillon and the rest of the House, which has '08 election campaigning to get to, had hoped to get the budget settled shortly after July 4.

*A Service of GCSI ... Voted Michigan's #1 Lobby Firm*

**Disclaimer**

*This newsletter is a client service provided by GCSI. The news and views contained in this newsletter are based on the research and reporting of Michigan Information & Research Service, Inc (MIRS, [www.mirsnews.com](http://www.mirsnews.com)) and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions or strategic advice of GCSI. This newsletter is presented to you as one more resource for inside information and insights into state government happenings. For specific questions about politics, personalities, legislation, policy and strategies please always contact your GCSI lobbyist.*