

**POLITICS**

# Where Gretchen Whitmer's poll numbers stand as her term ends | Insider

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LANSING — Michigan voters across the political spectrum have soured a bit on Gov. **Gretchen Whitmer** as she prepares to leave office, but a narrow majority still approved of her performance, according to a [statewide poll](#) commissioned by The Detroit News and WDIV-TV (Channel 4).

Whitmer, a Democrat, is in her eighth and final year leading the state of Michigan. She couldn't run again this year because of term limits.

In an Aug. 31 through Sept. 3 poll of 600 likely general election voters, 51.5% approved of Whitmer's job performance while 43% disapproved. Her job approval number hasn't been that low in Glengariff Group surveys since 2021, the year after her shutdown policies inflamed Republicans during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a similar survey for The News and WDIV-TV in January, 60% approved of Whitmer's performance, while 38% disapproved.

"They've lowered somewhat with Democrats," said **Richard Czuba**, founder of the Glengariff Group, of Whitmer's approval rating. "And Republicans are becoming more focused in their opposition again, because an election is approaching."

Still, Czuba said it's unusual for a governor to leave office with approval numbers above 50%.

That wasn't the case with Republican former Gov. Rick Snyder, who was facing the fallout of the Flint water crisis in 2018, or Democratic former Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who was facing an economic nosedive in 2010, Czuba said.

"If I am leaving office after eight years and I'm above 50%, I'm thrilled with those numbers," Czuba said.

But Whitmer's job approval decrease has been across ideologies.

Among those who described themselves as "strong Democrats," 95% approved in January. That was down to 80% in the new numbers. Among self-described Republicans, 42% approved in January. That was down to 38% in the new numbers.

In recent months, Whitmer has been in a series of controversies involving her [close work with](#) Republican President **Donald Trump**, her support of [a massive data center for Oracle and OpenAI](#) in Saline Township and her decision to endorse U.S. Rep. **Haley Stevens** of Birmingham in the U.S. Senate primary. Stevens lost the primary to former Wayne County health official **Abdul El-Sayed**, who was Whitmer's closest rival in the 2018 Democratic primary for governor.

**John Sellek**, a public relations consultant and the CEO of Harbor Strategic Public Affairs, said Whitmer has benefited from having someone else to blame things on: Trump.

"Even as we see a small but noticeable erosion in her approval rating because people just get tired of you, most governors see improved attitudes in the years after they are off stage, which also bodes well for Whitmer's long-term historical standing as a politician," Sellek said.

**More:** [Read the full Detroit News/WDIV poll of Michigan general election voters here](#)

## Warren Evans says MEDC needs 'fat' cut off

Wayne County Executive **Warren Evans** predicts the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's days are numbered — or at least about to experience a "significant" housecleaning.

"I think MEDC, in my mind, is gone at the end of this administration. I just don't see that that's a vehicle that's working in terms of funding projects," Evans said Sept. 10 at the Downriver Community Conference in Taylor, a gathering of government and business leaders from across southern Wayne County.

Evans said there is "distrust" in the MEDC, hinting at a series of scandals at the state's economic development agency surrounding the administration of grants.

"I think it's important to have an organization," Evans said. "Maybe you rebuild it, maybe get rid of certain people. I don't know. I just think there needs to be a significant change."

At the very least, Evans said, the next governor needs to "cut some of the fat off of" the MEDC.

"I guess in politics there'll always be poor, so there's going to be some projects that don't make an awful lot of sense," Evans said.

Evans made the comments the same day the MEDC's executive committee [took the unusual step](#) of demanding the agency's leaders cough up a list of all active grants or contracts over \$250,000 to improve oversight of those transactions.

The MEDC is under scrutiny by Attorney General **Dana Nessel** for its administration of grants, including one that the Legislature earmarked in 2022 for one of the agency's then-executive committee members, **Fay Beydoun**, who [faces criminal charges](#) for allegedly misusing a so-called "[glass slipper grant](#)" for personal gain. Nessel, a Democrat, has repeatedly called for the MEDC to be [abolished](#).

**More:** [Campaign cash flowed as Fay Beydoun sought grant from state leaders](#)

**More:** [Fired Arab chamber director secretly rerouted \\$1.1M, sources say](#)

Evans was joined on a panel discussion with U.S. Rep. **Debbie Dingell** and **Curtis Ivery**, the longtime chancellor of Wayne County Community College District, which hosted the conference at its Trenton campus.

Dingell, D-Ann Arbor, was a little more cautious in her remarks about the MEDC.

"There are clearly issues right now with that agency, but we can't walk away from competing with other states," she said.

Ivery, the only unelected official on the stage, didn't hold back.

"I'd blow it up," he said of the MEDC.

"I'm not running for anything," added Ivery, generating laughter in the audience.

## Michigan Republicans focus in on education

The Republican candidates who will be on the top of Michigan ballots in November have emphasized education policy on the campaign trail this month, amid weak student reading scores in the state.

U.S. Rep. **John James** of Shelby Township, the GOP nominee for governor, used a Sept. 2 press conference to call on Whitmer to opt Michigan into the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit. That program enables donors to receive a tax benefit for contributing to nonprofits that grant scholarships to students to pay for education-related expenses.

Then, a week later, on Sept. 9, Republican U.S. Senate nominee **Mike Rogers** of White Lake Township met with reporters outside Cody High School in Detroit. Rogers said he wants to see phonics-based reading initiatives in every school in the state.

Rogers criticized Democrats for undoing a 2016 state law that would [have stopped some third graders from moving to the fourth grade](#) if they read a grade level behind their peers.

"Unfortunately, a few years ago, the Democrats took away the read by three, and they've just been passing these kids along," Rogers said. "I think that's maybe the biggest disservice to the next generation that I've seen in my life."

Earlier this year, [a Detroit News analysis](#) found Michigan had spent about \$1 billion over the last decade attempting to boost students' reading scores but the state's fourth-grade reading proficiency had fallen from 43rd in 2015 test results to 46th in 2024.

## Trump attacks 'Dingbat Dingell'

After U.S. Rep. **Debbie Dingell**, D-Ann Arbor, slammed President **Donald Trump** for renaming Lake Ontario, Trump went after the congresswoman on social media last weekend, raising her plea to him after the death of her husband, the late Rep. **John Dingell**.

"Upon his death, I gave Congressman John Dingell, the Royal Sendoff, MAXED OUT! His wife, Debbie Dingbat, called me and thanked me profusely, while crying uncontrollably. She couldn't believe I would do such a nice thing!" Trump [wrote](#) on his Truth Social platform.

"Since then, she says nothing but bad about your favorite President, ME! Every time I see that Third Rate Loser ripping me, I'm amazed, because I'm a loyal person, I don't do things like that but, that's OK — It's Politics. However, it shouldn't be that way!"

Dingell in response issued a fundraising appeal noting Trump's attack, saying he came after her "because I stood up to him."

"As usual, he hit below the belt and accused me of being disloyal," Dingell wrote. "I want to be clear — I'm loyal to America, my constituents at home, and the working men and women of this country."

Four days after Trump's social media attack on the six-term Michigan congresswoman, Dingell told a group of Wayne County business and government leaders she was trying to steer clear of the headlines.

"After the president of the United States has gone after you, you try to have a quiet day or two," Dingell said Sept. 10 at the Downriver Community Conference.

## Rabbis urge El-Sayed to shift stances on Israel

A group of Michigan rabbis and other Jewish leaders last week launched a petition demanding that Democratic Senate nominee **Abdul El-Sayed** change some of his positions and rhetoric about Israel in order to earn their support.

"This is a good faith effort to make our needs unmistakably clear, and to invite any candidate seeking public office — now or in the future — to engage, listen, learn, and grow," the [petition](#) reads. "We have the right to know, plainly, if those seeking our vote are willing to meet our baseline needs."

The founding signers include Rabbi **Aaron Starr** of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield and president of the Michigan Board of Rabbis, as well as Rabbi **Josh Whinston**, a progressive Reform rabbi at Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor and 13 others whose congregations collectively represent about 40,000 Michigan Jews, they said.

The new campaign describes its pitch as "not an ultimatum, but an invitation," presenting a list of five "non-negotiables" for El-Sayed, including condemnation of threats to Jewish safety from antisemitism, support for "Jewish sovereignty in Israel," a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians and welcoming "full participation in American political life" for Jewish Americans, including Zionists.

The group was responding in part to El-Sayed's refusal to affirm Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, his association with the controversial left-wing streamer **Hasan Piker** and his condemnation of spending by the pro-Israel lobby in the Democratic primary, in which El-Sayed faced the pro-Israel **Haley Stevens**, a four-term congresswoman from Birmingham.

They also pointed to his descriptions of Israel as "bloodthirsty" and "evil" and his remark after the attack on an Oakland County synagogue that "hurt people hurt people" — a comment he's since [apologized](#) for.

**More:** [Temple Israel welcomes congregants home six months after attack](#)

Whinston acknowledged in a call with reporters that El-Sayed has been reaching out to Jewish leaders in the community and has been trying to find a way to "bridge" their differences.

"I think he's trying to figure it out, but he hasn't figured it out yet. The apology that he offered ... it did not go far enough. It did not go far enough," said Whinston, who has spoken with El-Sayed privately.

The letter is not just an invitation to El-Sayed, Starr said, but to all political leaders and elected officials, particularly within the Democratic Party that most American Jews have "connected with" for generations.

Starr said many Michigan Jews feel "demonized" by violent rhetoric accusing Israel or the Israeli government of bloodshed, saying those kinds of comments "hit deep into language that has affected us for a thousand years."

"It's frightening. ... We have welcomed Dr. El-Sayed's attempts at trying to bridge between where he was and where he is. We hope that there will be another bridge between where he is now and where he can go in the future," Starr said.

"Frankly, I hope that Dr. El-Sayed, if he is elected to be our senator, or if Congressman Rogers is elected to be our senator, that they will stand up and that

they will condemn violent rhetoric against the Jewish people, violent rhetoric against Israel and its right to exist. That's what we're asking for."

**More:** [Michigan views on Israel split along partisan, generational lines, poll shows](#)

Asked about the petition at a Sept. 10 event, El-Sayed stressed that there's "so much" that he agrees with the Michigan Jewish community on, including the paramount question of safety "for all communities."

"I believe deeply in our responsibility to stand up and protect the safety of the Jewish community, like we protect the safety of the Christian community, the Muslim community, the Hindu community and the Sikh community. That safety is paramount to me," El-Sayed said.

"When it comes to our foreign policy, we're going to have to find out how we disagree agreeably. I have been absolutely clear that I do not want our tax dollars to be spent dropping bombs on other people to do things like apartheid or fight wars we have no business fighting or do genocide when it should be spent here to address our problems here."

## AFP Action launches new Senate ad campaign

The conservative group AFP Action is spending over \$1.45 million this month on an ad campaign to boost Senate GOP hopeful **Mike Rogers** and attack Democrat **Abdul El-Sayed**. Ads are running across connected TV, YouTube and YouTube TV, programmatic and on Meta platforms.

AFP Action has spent over \$9 million this year on Michigan's Senate race and over \$1 million since the Aug. 5 primary.

[One of the new spots](#) claims that socialism would make life more expensive, while depicting Rogers as "laser focused" on lowering costs. The [other](#) criticizes El-Sayed's single-payer healthcare proposal for banning private insurance and requiring "massive" tax increases.

"Michigan families are paying more for everything from groceries to gas, and Abdul El-Sayed's answer is more government, more spending, and more of your paycheck," AFP Action Senior Advisor **Tim Golding** said in a statement

## **Bouchard speaks at 'Trumpapalooza'**

Republican U.S. House candidate **Michael Bouchard** spoke at the GOP's Dallas midterm convention on Sept. 9, highlighting his military service and warning that "a storm is approaching" in Michigan politics.

"This time last year, I was deployed in Iraq on a counter-ISIS mission, and the day after I got home, I began my campaign," the [former Army paratrooper](#) said. "Now a storm is approaching that must be defeated before it leaves this country in ruins, like every other it has touched."

"This isn't political exaggeration. Socialism is on the ballot in Michigan this November. **Abdul El-Sayed** and my opponent **Christina Hines** have beliefs and policies that would tear at the very fabric of our country," he added, referencing the Democratic nominees for U.S. Senate and in Michigan's 10th Congressional District.

Bouchard went on to tout tax cuts passed under Republicans' [One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#) and said that Democrats, if they regain power in Washington, would reverse the cuts and raise taxes for working families.

Democrats, meanwhile, bashed Bouchard and his appearance at the convention.

"Michael Bouchard Junior falls in line with his party bosses instead of standing up for Michiganders," said **Katie Smith**, a spokeswoman for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, in a statement. "While costs skyrocket, Michigan families fall further behind, and voters are desperate for new leadership, Bouchard Junior continues to prove he'll only be more of the same."

The DCCC, Democrats' House campaign arm, has tried to tie Bouchard to Trump amid [low approval ratings](#) for the second-term president. In a press release, the

group pointed out that Bouchard told [Inside Elections](#) earlier this year he couldn't name any areas where he disagreed with Trump.

**More:** [Suburban Detroit Democrat launches first TV ad for US House campaign](#)

## Tweet of the Week

The Insider report's "Tweet of the Week," recognizing a social media post that was worthy of attention or, possibly, just a laugh, from the previous week goes to **Jason Cabel Roe**, a Republican political consultant in Michigan.

Roe, who's helping to advise Republican U.S. Rep. **Tom Barrett**'s reelection campaign, criticized Republican President **Donald Trump**'s promise of [\\$5,000 checks](#) for each adult in the country if the GOP maintains majorities in the House and Senate in the November election.

"One of the most ludicrous proposals I've ever seen. JFC," Roe tweeted on Sept. 10.

Trump contended that "tremendous economic success" made the so-called "dividend" checks possible after the midterm election.

**More:** [Trump faces MAGA backlash over \\$5K election offer: 'Flagrant bribery'](#)

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