

Friday, April 12

7:30-8:30 Breakfast in the Grand Ballroom

8:45-10:00

Summit Welcome and Candidate Introductions

Rural Messaging with Teresa Purcell of Rural Strong

10:30-12:00 Breakout Session 1

Rural Caucus 101

*Mark Ludwig &
Joe Gutowski*

What does the Rural Caucus do? Chair Mark Ludwig and Lobbyist Joe Gutowski will explain the purpose, mission, goals, and achievements of the MDP Rural Caucus.

Rust Belt Rising

Paul Kendrick

Paul will discuss what new research and examples from strong campaigns in the region tell us about how Michigan Rural Democratic efforts can be most effective. He will discuss how we can best talk about timely issues in 2024 to win Midwest voters.

Line 5

Anishinaabek Caucus

Andrea Pierce, Founder and Chair, will discuss how the Anishinaabek Caucus came to be. She will also discuss the shutdown and court case of Enbridge's Line 5 from an Indigenous point of view and other Native Issues that impact this community.

Party 101

Mona DeQuis

Learn all about the Michigan Democratic Party from who makes decisions and rules and bylaws to leadership, caucuses, county parties and clubs.

Project 83 Resources

*Bobby Anttila and
Kody Vitale*

Project 83 is our year-round Organizing Team that supports county parties, caucuses, and down-ballot candidates. Find out what resources are offered to your party or campaign.

How to Lead a County Party Panel

Mark Brewer, Jim Dulzo

Mark Brewer will lead a panel of county party leaders in a discussion of how to lead a county party with practical takeaways.

Youth Vote

Austin Marsman

In addition to the MDSCC, the MDP leadership consists of Chair Barnes, statutory officers and officers-at-large. Austin is a statutory officer. Elected in 2023 to serve as Youth Vice Chair, he works with the various youth-related caucuses of the MDP. Join him for an interactive session on engaging youth vote.

12:00-1:00 Lunch in the Grand Ballroom with Candidate Introductions

1:00-1:45 Polling with Celinda Lake

2:15-3:45 Breakout Session 2

Local Control Septic

*Richard Douglass, MPH PhD,
Nichole Keway Biber, PhD,
and Noah Socha*

This session will focus on political, public health, cultural and economic development issues inherent in the lack of uniform regulatory oversight of septic system waste management in Michigan.

Roadmap to Rural Michigan Wins

Dani Cook

Discover how to gain significant wins and move the needle in rural Michigan using data, effective messaging, and organizing strategies that work.

Primer on Running for Local Office

Valorie Troesch

This is a practical, nuts and bolts workshop designed to get rid of the fear of running for local office by providing the basic tools, skills, and knowledge needed for a strong and successful campaign.

Rural Strong

Teresa Purcell

Teresa will introduce the Rural Strong Network. Our mission is to strengthen rural communities and advance democratic values.

Youth Rural Organizing

Benjamin Orjada

Youth Caucus Chair Benjamin Orjada will lead a panel featuring Hunter Evans, Youth Organizer, Carlie Rose Hammond, AFL Youth Organizer to discuss the History, Why, and Who of youth rural organizing.

Contest Every Race

Zach Farmer

A brief rundown of the collaboration between the Michigan Democratic Party and the Contest Every Race program.

Legislative Updates

*Joe Gutowski and
MI Elected Officials*

Legislators discuss and take questions regarding legislation of importance to rural residents.

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4:00-5:30 Breakout Session 3

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Paul will discuss what new research and examples from strong campaigns in the region tell us about how Michigan Rural Democratic efforts can be most effective. He will discuss how we can best talk about timely issues in 2024 to win Midwest voters.

Winning in a Purple District

Joey Andrews

MI House Representative will outline the steps and data he used to flip his district and get elected as a Democrat.

Winning on a Shoestring

Kody Vitale and Alaynah Smith

Join Kody Vitale of the MDP and Midland County Commissioner Alaynah Smith as they discuss her winning campaign on a very limited budget.

Antrim Ads

Martha Davidson

Learn how we use Local advertisements to change rural Antrim County from ruby red to blue! See how our local ads supporting democratic values get the word out to democrats in rural areas that we are not alone.

Legislative Updates

Joe Gutowski & MI Elected Officials

Legislators discuss and take questions regarding legislation of importance to rural residents.

The Return of the Prodigal Democrats in the age of uncertainty

Dr. Ziggy Kozicki

This presentation will develop a strategy to bring back Democrats who live in suburban and rural areas who have in the past voted for Trump.

Direct Voter Contact

Mona DeQuis

We've all heard of the importance of Direct Voter Contact, but how do we do it? Mona will break down the different methods to speak directly to voters and how to have the most impactful conversations.

6:00 Dinner

6:30 Keynote Speakers

Senator Debbie Stabenow

SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Saturday, April 13

7:30-8:30 Breakfast in the Grand Ballroom

8:45-10:00 Summit Welcome

Dani Cook—Elections are Emotional: How ya Feelin'?

Mark Brewer—Rural Voters and the Future of the Michigan Democratic Party

10:30-12:00 Breakout Session 1

Youth Empowerment

Melina Sanchez

This discussion will focus on how we can use the unique perspective and skills of young voters to strengthen our county parties and how to empower young voters to turn out the vote.

Siting, The New Renewable Energy Law—Answering the Opposition

Peter Sinclair, Mark Ludwig & Joe Gutowski

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Nick Barns

Learn with the Black Outreach Director for the MDP how we can advocate in rural spaces for black community members.

VAN Overview and Best Practices

Sarah Rigney

MDP Data Director, Sarah Rigney, will discuss a broad overview of the Voter Activation Network (VAN) and best practices for MDP units.

Volunteer Recruitment

Mona DeQuis

Learn from Mona DeQuis from the MDP how to recruit volunteers for your county party and campaign and how to retain volunteers and keep them engaged.

County Party Fundraising

Carole Bleau

As Iosco County's chair, Carole has led very successful fundraising drives to fund a year-round office, train county party members, and support candidates.

Rural Strong

Teresa Purcell

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12:00-1:00 Lunch in the Grand Ballroom with Representative Elissa Slotkin speaking

1:00-1:45 Labor Panel

2:15-3:45 Breakout Session 2

Flipping the Script: Winning on Climate and Clean Energy

Victoria Stewart

In 2023, the MI Legislature passed the boldest action on climate change in state history with the Clean Energy & Jobs Act that will create good-paying jobs, reduce pollution, and lower our energy costs.

Community Building

Michael Fields and Michelle VanSlambrouck

Michael Fields from Gladwin County Community Builders and Michelle Lambrick, President of the Soup Project will discuss initiatives they have created to improve their communities.

The Democratic Creed

Bryan Watson and Dan McNeil

Answer voters' concerns using the values Democrats believe in and live by. Link values to actions that produce outcomes to make lives better. In this hands-on session, hold value-based conversations and make the Democratic Creed a high-impact outreach tool.

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Candidate Recruitment and Support

Mark Brewer and Valorie Troesch

What can county parties do to recruit down-ballot candidates? Now that they have filed, how can we support them?

VAN 101

Sarah Rigney

Learn the basic uses of VAN, from creating lists, cutting turf, and recording voter responses.

Legislative Updates

Joe Gutowski & MI Elected Officials

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Vote Common Good

Doug Pagitt

Pastor Doug Pagitt will present a session on faith voters, politics, and the common good—a growth opportunity for Democratic Candidates.

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MDP Data Tools

Sarah Rigney

Join MDP Data Director, Sarah Rigney, to find out what Data Tools are available from the MDP for county parties and candidates.

Affordable Housing

John Helge

This breakout will cover what is currently limiting Rural Affordable Housing and what steps you can take in your community to address the shortage.

County Party Compliance

Mark Brewer

This training is perfect for treasurers or those considering stepping into the role to gain confidence and keep your county party filings error-free.

Don't Just Organize: Be Effective

Dani Cook

Find out how to have engaging conversations that shift perspectives and bridge the gap with people who have opposing views even on tough topics.

The Threat of Christian Nationalism

Doug Pagitt

Vote Common Good is working through the lens of shared Christian faith to engage with people of all different political ideologies—even those they consider extreme—and create a dialogue with a path back from radicalism.

Labor Panel

Joe Gutowski

Join Labor leaders for a discussion on organizing in rural spaces.

6:00 Dinner

7:00 Keynote Speaker

MDP Chair Lavora Barnes

Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist

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