



Jenn Fiedler
MTA Communications Specialist

Rep. Mike Huckleberry (D-Montcalm Twp.)

As both a township resident, and the state representative of more than two dozen townships in Montcalm and Ionia Counties, Rep. Mike “Huck” Huckleberry believes that “the future of township government looks bright.”

Huckleberry, who resides in **Montcalm Township** (Montcalm Co.), attributes that bright future to pure economics. “Continued services offered at the nearest level will keep costs down,” he said, adding that the “desirability of local control” is also in townships’ favor. While he does recognize that regionalism and consolidation may be able to offer expanded services and lower costs to local governments, Huckleberry is quick to point out that such collaboration should be voluntary.

“When local governments work together to solve regional issues, everyone benefits,” he continued. “We keep local accountability, spread the costs over a wider user base and keep costs lower. I’d take it even a step further. One plan I support, Senate Bill 222 (by Sen. John Gleason, D-Flint), would allow greater flexibility among local governments and schools to share services. We should expand these opportunities to work together.”

Huckleberry was elected to his first term in the state House in November 2008. A Democrat, Huckleberry serves on a number of bipartisan caucuses and committees, and has been saluted by his colleagues for his non-partisan approach on the House Agriculture Committee, on which he serves as vice chair.

Huckleberry feels that the House Agriculture Committee can help grow Michigan’s economy, and says that the committee is a driving force, politically, behind this thriving business sector.

“Agriculture is very close to becoming our top economic sector in Michigan,” he said. “The shrinking manufacturing base and growing agricultural exports from the state are offering more job opportunities than can often be easily or quickly filled. Even urban areas of our state rely on our rich food harvest—the growth of farm markets and ‘Buy Local’ campaigns attest to that.

“In rural Michigan—like most townships—agriculture, food processing and agriculture-driven ‘green’ energy are creating jobs that won’t be exported. By promoting Michigan agriculture’s wide opportunities and products, we can continue to grow Michigan’s economy and deliver fresher, healthier foods to our citizens and our livestock.”

Keeping jobs—such as those created in the agricultural sector—in the state is one of the critical factors in turning around Michigan’s economy, according to Huckleberry, a small



Rep. Mike Huckleberry (D-Montcalm Twp.) ran for public office with hopes of bringing jobs to Michigan.

business owner, who has operated Huckleberry’s Restaurant in Greenville since 1991.

“Michigan, more than any other state, has been hit by job outsourcing,” he said. “We must make the transition to an economy based on jobs that are tied to our great, desirable location. We have the second most diverse agricultural harvest in the U.S., our Great Lakes destination as a tourism mecca is renowned and our growing renewable energy efforts can easily deliver to the country’s power grid. We should market our state’s capable and available workforce coupled with these tied-to-Michigan economic sectors.”

That dedication to bringing jobs back to Michigan is what inspired Huckleberry to run for statewide office. “For the past six years as a community activist, then a candidate, now a representative, I’ve fought for jobs,” he said. “I came to Lansing to fight for jobs, and I hope [the Legislature’s] legacy is that we got everyone back to work.”

Capitol Profile is designed to help the MTA membership become more familiar with legislators serving on House and Senate committees that tackle issues important to townships. Members are asked the same series of questions and their answers are the basis for each profile, which is compiled in cooperation and with the approval of each member.