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Rep. Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor

When she's not in Lansing serving the residents of the 53rd House District, Rep. Rebekah Warren is using her passport to travel to a foreign destination where she might be "relaxing on the beaches of the Yucatan, climbing the hills of Cinque Terre, or snorkeling in the Mediterranean waters off Melos," she said.

Although she enjoys travel, Warren is no stranger to Lansing. She previously served as legislative aide for two lawmakers and most recently served as executive director of MARAL Pro-Choice Michigan before being elected in 2006.

While her first year serving as a lawmaker focused on resolving Michigan's budget, and not on policy, Warren is looking forward to tackling issues important to her, including increasing accessibility and affordability of education, renewable energy, election reform, improving access to health care, and environmental protection. Serving as chair of the House Great Lakes and Environment Committee was a natural fit for Warren, with her strong desire to preserve the environment and natural resources in Michigan for the next generation.

When asked to outline her goals, she said, "As chair of the committee, I will continue to advocate for policies that help us protect our environment and maintain clean air and safe drinking water, protect our Great Lakes, reduce the amount of out-of-state and Canadian trash in Michigan's landfills, address the increasing threat of climate change and global warming, and reduce the threat to our health from toxic chemicals in our children's toys and other consumer products."

As the state and national economy lag, many question what it will take to revive Michigan. Warren believes investment is a key—investing in education, life sciences, bio-technology and renewable energy.

"We need to invest in 'place'—the main attractor of new workers," she said. "We need to enhance job opportunities for our citizens by attracting more service-economy jobs, investing in the life science and bio-tech industries, and investing in both the production of renewable energy and its components."

A popular theme for Michigan's recovery is regionalism and consolidation. Warren recognizes that some decisions are "inherently local," she said.

"Regionalism and consolidation offer some distinct benefits, and where we can cooperate, we should," Warren continued. "Our local units of government, however, are the laboratories of our democracy—they are the closest to the people, most flexible and able to creatively address their needs—and we should preserve and strengthen those characteristics."

Warren also believes the role of township government will likely increase in the future. "All levels of government in Michigan, but particularly township government, will continue to be asked to take on new responsibilities with few new resources,"



Rep. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor) hopes to be remembered as a legislator who "protected and fought for civil rights and liberties, education, and health care, who worked to re-energize the economy, and was dedicated to equal opportunity for all."

she said. "They will need to explore ways to use existing tools to address new challenges. Officials and staff will need to be trained in cutting-edge techniques and strategies."

Reflecting upon how she hopes to be remembered when her tenure ends, Warren wants to be known as someone who looked out for Michigan's residents.

"I would be honored if people would look back over my time in Lansing and remember me as someone who protected and fought for civil rights and liberties, education, and health care, someone who worked to re-energize the economy, and was dedicated to equal opportunity for all," she said.

Rep. David Robertson, R-Grand Blanc Chtr. Twp.

From serving on the Genesee County Board of Commissioners to appointments from Gov. John Engler to the Employment Security Board of Review and Joint Committee on Administration Rules, Rep. David Robertson's passion to serve his community and state remains strong.

In his final term in the state House, Robertson says his goals have remained consistent with the conservative philosophy since his first election. "I want to limit the size, scope and cost of government wherever possible," Robertson said. "The debate about government's role, our priorities and its costs is never-ending. I'm just trying my best to nudge state government in a more conservative direction."

As minority vice chair of the Great Lakes and Environment Committee, Robertson sees the committee's role as advancing sound public policy.

"Public policy in this area must be driven by sound science, rather than emotion, and must protect the rights of property owners," Robertson said. "It must also respect the role of local governments in this area. Passage of the Great Lakes Compact, for example, is essential. In protecting our environment, we must be sensitive to the burdens new regulations may place on local governments."

According to Robertson, protecting the environment is only one aspect of things that need to be done to help Michigan change its economic outlook. He firmly believes that the cost of government must be reduced to help this state "turn the corner."

"Taxes must be reduced," Robertson said. "Our regulatory burden is an enormous 'hidden tax' on our economy that destroys jobs, and forces job providers and citizens out of the state. Simply put, everything state government is currently engaged in must be re-examined through the prism of its effect on our competitiveness as a state, economic growth and job creation."

Robertson recognizes that numerous discussions are taking place regarding government consolidation, and believes this debate stems from the state's economic conditions and how state government pays for the services it provides residents.

"Recent discussion concerning regional government and consolidation stems from the budget debate," Robertson said. "We must reduce the cost of government in Michigan and find efficiency everywhere we can. It's not surprising that consolidation and regional government would be considered; however, the ultimate objective is cost effectiveness and accountability to the community being served. Working together, I am confident we can find solutions to these issues."

As these discussions continue, he doesn't see the role of townships changing.

"I believe townships will continue in the vital role they have always had in providing services to Michigan citizens," he said.



According to Rep. David Robertson (R-Grand Blanc Chtr. Twp.), his goal as legislator is "that for every day of my service, through my efforts, I make Michigan government work a little better for my constituents than it otherwise would have had I not been in office."

"I represent five townships—three charter and two general law—and they each provide necessary services to our common constituency."

As his service to the 51st House District and tenure in the state House draws to a close, Robertson is more concerned with service to residents than a legacy.

"Ultimately, my only goal as a legislator is that for every day of my service, through my efforts, I make Michigan government work a little better for my constituents than it otherwise would have had I not been in office," he said. "The best way to ensure oneself of a 'legacy' is to never concern yourself with leaving one."

Capitol Profiles are designed to help the MTA membership become more familiar with the chair and minority vice chair serving on House and Senate committees that tackle issues important to townships. Each member was asked the same series of questions and their answers were the basis for each profile. The profiles were compiled in cooperation and with the approval of each member.