

Governor John Engler
Republican Convention Speech

August 27, 1994

*******Final*******

"Making Michigan Number One:

There's No Stopping Us Now!"

Thank you all very much.

My friends, today marks a special anniversary.

It was four years ago today that Michelle accepted my proposal of marriage.

[present Michelle with flowers]

Who would have guessed four years ago, that in this campaign, Michelle would be in charge of getting out the vote!

Michelle and I are really blessed -- with children on the way and with wonderful families. In fact, when people ask me: How are you going to take care of triplets? Are you getting nannies?

I just say -- we've got grannies.

They're both here today -- Michelle's mom, Margaret, and my mom, Agnes.

I'm also blessed with many good friends and supporters, and with a Democratic opponent who makes even me look exciting.

My opponent reminds me of Walter Mondale. Remember him? He promised to raise our taxes.

Congressman Wolpe has spent his entire career raising our taxes.

Come Election Day, we're going to do to Howard Wolpe what Ronald Reagan did to Walter Mondale.

And when we beat Wolpe, we're going to win all the way up and down the ticket.

I tell you, we're going to elect Spencer Abraham and send a Republican to the U.S. Senate for the first time in twenty-two years.

Four years ago at the 1990 convention, I said:

“With Republicans in charge, Michigan will once again be a place where you can find work, raise your families and build your future.”

With Republicans in charge, that's exactly what we have done -- made Michigan a place with more jobs and better pay, and where more families are better able to live the American dream.

I stand here this afternoon -- proud of our party,
proud of what we have done, proud of the people of
Michigan.

[hold up the booklet]

Look at our record -- it is second to none.

[pause]

It is a record of promises made and promises kept!

We put Michigan on the right track.

We're going full speed ahead, and there's no
stopping us now!

When we embarked ^{ON OUR} ~~our~~ journey together, we
made our plans, set our sights high,
and vowed not to stop till we reached our goal --
making Michigan number one.

I remember the last campaign as if it were yesterday.

My Dad was still alive, and he was a source of advice, inspiration and strength.

Dad was a farmer. And like most farmers, he often talked -- sometimes complained -- about the things in life you can't control. Like the weather. The price of corn. The price of cattle.

But he taught me that there is one thing you can control. You can control your destiny if you work hard, never stop trying and always do your very best.

“Don’t ever give up,” he said. “Don’t ever shrug your shoulders and quit. Get up every morning, and do what it takes to get the job done right.”

“And when you become governor,” Dad said. “Don’t forget where you came from, and don’t ever forget who sent you there.”

[pause]

Dad, I remember.

In my Oldsmobile, I’ve traveled more than 200,000 miles all across this state.

I have visited every county every year.

I’ve made tough decisions, stood up to the special interests and done my best to put government back on your side.

I've stood at plant gates and shook hands with working men and women who get up before the sun -- day in and day out -- to work the line . . . bring home a paycheck . . . and provide for their kids.

And not one of them -- not one -- ever said to me: make government bigger . . . go easy on criminals . . . raise our taxes . . . bring back more welfare.

The people of Michigan gave me a job to do: get everybody working, get tough on crime, cut government spending and cut our taxes.

And that's exactly what we have done.

My fellow Republicans, I make this promise to you -- right here, right now -- in our second term, we'll finish the job. We will not turn back.

We're running against those liberals who would turn Michigan back -- back to more government and more welfare, back to higher unemployment and higher taxes.

My friends, I've got a message for the liberal, tax and spenders in the other party:

Michigan isn't turning back -- not now, not on my watch.

We've made Michigan number one in job creation.

We've made Michigan number one in reforming education.

And that's our plan for the future -- from schools to jobs -- to make Michigan number one in the nation!

I took this office to keep a promise -- a promise to change Michigan, to listen to people and to make the taxpayer's agenda my agenda for the future.

I promised we would cut property taxes -- and cut them we did.

That's a promise you can mark: PAID IN FULL!

A couple of weeks ago, at a Chamber of Commerce lunch in Oakland County, I got a gift from Dennis and Mary Jo Sights.

They were so happy with their property tax cut that they framed the bill.

[hold up the bill]

People all across Michigan have been saying to me: Governor, thanks for cutting my property taxes. Thanks for keeping your promise.

Homeowners aren't the only ones who are happy.

Young families are now able to become homeowners.

Business owners are benefiting from the lowest tax rates in two decades.

Retirees and senior citizens are benefiting from the elimination of state income taxes on most pensions, and lower property taxes are helping them keep their homes.

The bottom line? Hard working Michigan men and women are earning more and keeping more of what they earn -- a billion dollars more each year.

But our liberal opponents, who are big taxers and big spenders, have their eyes on your billion dollars.

reduce the need for government.

Just as I am committed to finding more ways to cut your taxes, they are committed to raising your taxes and taking your money back to pay for more welfare and bigger government.

Well, we're not giving it back to fund their fancy welfare schemes and costly bureaucratic boondoggles-- . . . not now . . . not on my watch.

We've already trimmed state government by more than 5,000 employees and eliminated a nearly \$2 billion deficit without raising taxes.

Over the next four years, we're going to hold the line on taxes and keep right on reducing the size and cost of state government.

The best way to reduce the size of government is to reduce the need for government.

That means giving people and communities the tools to solve their own problems.

And it means cutting taxes and getting government out of the way so that job providers can create work and people can go to work.

Thanks to what we have already accomplished, more Michigan men and women are working than ever before in state history.

My friends, there is no doubt about it -- jobs are up, incomes are up, spirits are up and Michigan is back!

[pause]

I remember my first job -- working on our family farm near Beal City.

I remember gettting up early every day,
feeding the cattle, doing my chores, working hard.
Then, I went to school.

It was expected. No one was excused. Everybody
pulled his own weight.

And that's the way it should be.

Everyone who can work, should work.

Everyone in society can contribute to society.

That's the fundamental principle underlying
welfare reform in Michigan.

From day one, we told single able-bodied adults
without children that they had to get off welfare and
get a job.

We ended general assistance welfare and we're not
bringing it back – not now, not on my watch!

Then we said to every aid recipient: If you're going to get a check, you've got to go to work.

First, that policy was voluntary. As a result, Michigan leads the nation in the number of parents on welfare who are working.

Now, my plan for the future will make work mandatory because I won't be satisfied until everyone is working.

Work isn't the only key, so is responsibility.

For example, deadbeat parents who don't pay child support are punishing innocent children and putting an unfair burden on taxpayers.

To stand up for kids and taxpayers, I have a simple plan: to sign up for welfare, the mother must identify the father of her children -- no name, no money.

When a man fathers a child, he ought to be man enough to find a job and support that child. And if he doesn't, everyone is going to know.

In Michigan, we have a warning for deadbeat dads: if you don't pay up, expect to show up on the front page of your local newspaper.

And for teenage dads, we have a special plan that leaves no room for excuses: No pay, no play.

That means no more football, no more pep band, no more after school activities. Your child will come first.

And isn't that where children should be?

That's what we are doing with our education reforms, putting our children first.

If we make our public schools the best in the world -- we can make sure every child has the skills to be independent and reach their fullest potential.

My friends, Michigan is already spending enough to provide our children a world-class education.

It's time they got one!

With charter schools and more competition, we will help Michigan students get what we pay for -- the best schools in the world.

But change is tough. Because the forces opposed to change are entrenched.

Listen to what one Democrat who is running for re-election to the State Board of Education said recently: "The idea of competition in education is foolish."

Well, when we elect Sharon Wise and Clark Durant to the State Board to fight for choice and quality in our schools, the Democrats will be the ones who look foolish.

Make no mistake -- the battle for choice is not over!

My friends, I have a message for our opponents and their special interest pals who oppose choice and think the status quo works for our children:

They're wrong and our kids deserve better.

With regard to another big education battle, let me say this: be assured that this Governor will continue to lead the fight against outcome based education.

Our schools won't be testing attitudes, values and beliefs, they'll be meeting tough, world-class standards.

When I'm done, OBE will stand for Only the Best Education.

And that's not all. Where the public school bureaucracy is too big and spends too much, my plan is to trim the fat, cut the overhead, and stop the waste.

We've got to spend less on administration and more on education.

Because when it comes to reforming education, Michigan is number one in the nation, and there is no stopping us now!

For Michigan schools to be the best in the world, they have to be the safest -- sanctuaries where children can learn and where teachers can do what they do best -- teach and inspire.

My plan is for our schools to focus on the basics -- reading, writing, arithmetic -- and real, old fashioned discipline.

No child should have to attend a bad school,
and no school should have to keep a bad kid --
a kid who brings guns or drugs to class.

Teachers ought to be able to concentrate on the
students in class who want to learn rather than be
distracted by the unruly ones who want to fight.

And students shouldn't have to be afraid that their
classmates might have guns and drugs in their lockers
instead of books and pencils.

My plan says: Bring a gun, you're done. Expelled.
No excuses. No exceptions.

We need to be tough for our children to be safe.

I want these young punks out of our schools and
communities sooner rather than later.

My plan gets them out and keeps them out.

Today's juvenile offender is more violent and less remorseful. But the punishment they receive is more lenient and less effective.

I will not tolerate letting young thugs and murderers laugh at their victims, scoff at the law, and then walk away scot-free on their 19th birthday.

It's time that Michigan built a special prison for these young criminals.

Because Michigan's families are fed up with the violent gangs and the killer kids who are terrorizing their children -- and so am I!

These lawbreaking punks with their pockets full of cash, their beepers and bad attitudes don't need a slap on the wrist or help building their self esteem; they need a cell and we need the key.

And for adults who rape and murder, we ought to lock'em up and throw away the key.

We've already eliminated "good time" for violent offenders and all convicted felons will have to serve their minimum sentences.

But that's not tough enough for the sick and twisted souls who kill our children and loved ones and who rape our mothers, wives and daughters.

A sentence of twenty years must mean twenty years. Life must mean life. That means no more parole -- no more getting out before the full sentence is served.

This plan is tough and it's right -- right for victims, right for families and right for Michigan.

I also think it's time we got tough on liberal judges -- judges who just don't get it!

Families who obey the law and want to be safe in their homes are tired of these judges who want to give convicts all the comforts of home.

Thanks to these liberal judges, our system of justice has been turned upside down.

Police get sued for doing their duty, while fugitives collect damages at taxpayer expense.

Families live in fear, while convicted criminals live a life of leisure.

Law-abiding citizens hide behind bars, while violent offenders walk our streets.

I've got a message for these liberal judges: We're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore!

We're gonna start by electing Judges Betty Weaver and Rick Griffin to the Michigan Supreme Court.

And I'm going to shake up our prison system just as I shook up our welfare system.

I'm going to take back control of our prisons, put the rights of victims and taxpayers first and put violent felons on notice -- the good times are over!

Do you know who stands up for these liberal judges? I'll give you one guess . . . Congressman Howard Wolpe.

He's not sure whether convicted killers should get color tv's in their cells.

He thinks it's fair for our kids to double bunk in state college, but it's not fair for criminals to double bunk in the state pen.

He's wrong. And Congressman Wolpe's Democratic colleagues were right when they said his record on crime was "pitiful." It is pitiful.

It would put families at risk.

It would set Michigan back.

And I won't stand for it.

When I need advice on fighting crime, I call a cop. Congressman Wolpe calls a social worker.

Since he was busy bouncing checks in Washington, Congressman Wolpe doesn't know that Michigan has already enacted more than 100 anti-crime bills -- the reform agenda I proposed more than two years ago.

Michigan is on the right track. We're making a difference in the war on drugs and crime, and we will not go back -- not now, not on my watch

My fellow Republicans, there is no doubt about it:
Michigan's families are better off today than they were
four years ago.

They're earning more, learning more, and living
better.

In just four years, we've come a long way, but our
journey is not done.

My friends, we cannot stop until Michigan is
number one -- number one in the world.

I've talked a lot about the number one this morning.
But you know, the number three has become pretty
popular around the Engler household.

Three cribs, three blankets, three bottoms to change
-- three of everything.

Soon, Michelle and I and our three little ones will
embark on a journey of our own -- a journey filled with
laughter and love, hope and happiness.

In case you haven't noticed, I'm pretty excited.

I've been thinking a lot about what it's going to
mean to me to be a father.

Like any father, I know I'd do anything for my
children to help them in life.

I want to make sure my children are the best they
can be.

And as governor, that's what I've always wanted for the children of Michigan.

I want every family and every child to be able to come with me and my family on our journey.

A journey together to a safer Michigan, a more prosperous Michigan with stronger families and more good paying jobs.

A Michigan that is second to none.

Thank you all very much and God bless.