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# 2018 Candidate Questionnaire

The Institute for Energy Innovation (IEI) is a Michigan-based non-profit that promotes the greater public understanding of advanced energy and its economic potential.

IEI's partner organization, the Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council (Michigan EIBC) is a business trade association representing over 100 companies in Michigan's growing advanced energy sector. Michigan EIBC serves businesses working in advanced materials, batteries and energy storage, biomass and bioenergy, energy efficiency, lighting, smart grid, solar, advanced mobility, and wind. Michigan EIBC's mission is to grow Michigan's advanced energy economy by fostering opportunities for innovation and business growth and offering a unified voice in creating a business-friendly environment for the advanced energy industry in Michigan.

Together, we are seeking the views of candidates for the Michigan legislature on energy issues. We plan to share your responses with Michigan EIBC member companies and the public at large so that voters can make an informed choice between candidates seeking to represent them in Lansing.

Please respond to this questionnaire no later than Wednesday, June 13, 2018. If you have any questions about any of the issues raised in this questionnaire, please email us at [iei@instituteeforenergyinnovation.org](mailto:iei@instituteeforenergyinnovation.org). Thank you for your attention, and best of luck in your campaign!

**Email address \***

Tom@VoteChoske.com

**Candidate Name \***

Tom Choske

**Committee Name \***

Tom Choske For Representative

**Committee Address \***

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**What seat are you running for? If applicable, please provide House or Senate district number and party. \***

State House District 6 - Democrat

## Reducing Energy Waste In Michigan

Energy efficiency and demand response remain the cheapest means of meeting Michigan's energy needs. According to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC), every dollar spent on energy efficiency programs in 2016 could be expected to yield \$4.29 in benefits to ratepayers. Michigan's 2016 energy laws maintained energy efficiency standards at 1 percent per year for all investor owned utilities through 2021. Michigan's 2016 energy legislation also lifted the caps on the amount of money utilities can spend on energy efficiency programs and provided enhanced incentives to utilities for these investments.

### 1. Do you support maintaining and strengthening Michigan's existing energy optimization standard? \*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

#### Comments:

I am very much in favor of increasing the standards to drive more savings for consumers and innovation within the industry.

Despite the clear economic and health benefits of energy efficiency upgrades for low-income customers, Michigan's low-income energy efficiency programs could be more effective. Michigan's utilities collect surcharges from all customers for energy efficiency programs, but do not spend an equivalent amount on programs for low-income customers. In addition, low-income customers are paying significantly more than their fair share for electricity when compared to other residential customers. These programs could be improved with increased funding, enhanced coordination with other programs for low-income customers and the creation of on-bill repayment programs.

**2. Do you support policies to improve the effectiveness of energy efficiency programs for low-income customers? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Comments:**

I support weatherization programs as a way to create jobs and help low-income folks with valuable home improvements that benefit them, the housing market, and our environment.

## **Providing Meaningful Market Access to Advanced Energy Businesses**

While Michigan utilities continue to emphasize their interest in advanced energy deployment, the best way to keep costs down and lower rate payer impact is to enable competition. In Michigan's 2008 energy statute, there was a provision commonly referred to as the "50-50 split," which required utilities to build 50 percent of the renewables required by the RPS and purchase the other 50 percent from third-party developers. This policy created competitive pressure for Michigan's regulated utilities, resulting in a lower cost for renewables and enabling Michigan to achieve its RPS ahead of schedule and at lower costs. However, this provision was removed in the 2016 energy legislation.

**3. Do you support reinstating the 50-50 market split for utility purchases of renewable energy? \***

- Yes
- No

- Unsure

**Comments:**

## Increasing Renewable Energy in Michigan

Enacted with broad bipartisan support in 2008, Michigan's renewable portfolio standard (RPS) required that 10 percent of electric generation come from renewable resources by 2015. Not only were our electric providers able to reach the benchmark ahead of schedule, but at a fraction of the cost. At the end of 2016, Michigan's RPS was increased to 15% by 2021. The law has spurred more than \$2 billion in economic activity and supported 40 thousand good-paying jobs. Despite strong support, the Legislature has considered proposals to either freeze or repeal the RPS, jeopardizing Michigan's economic and energy future.

### 4. Do you support maintaining Michigan's Renewable Portfolio Standard? \*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Comments:**

I'd like to maintain the RPS and increase the targets, going for 30% by 2030.

## Voluntary Renewable Energy Purchasing Options

Leading Michigan manufacturers like our mobility companies, furniture makers, and others are raising the stakes through their high renewable energy goals. For example, the technology giant Switch moved to west Michigan in 2015 due in large part to their ability to have all of their power sourced from renewables as a way of driving down energy costs, increasing their competitiveness, and fulfilling corporate responsibility commitments. Switch's vice president Adam Kramer stated that this was more important to their decision than Michigan's tax policy. Similarly, Michigan auto manufacturer General Motors recently announced a goal of 100% renewable by 2050, but barriers remain to meeting this goal. The frustration is felt by large companies, small businesses and residential ratepayers trying to obtain competitively priced renewable energy as well.

As part of the 2016 energy legislation, Michigan's electric utilities are required to develop voluntary green power pricing programs for commercial customers. To meet the needs of large customers, these renewable energy purchasing programs should be transparent, appropriately priced, allow customers to directly negotiate with developers, not cap enrollment, and lead to additional renewable energy development.

### 5. Do you support reforms that allow greater voluntary access to renewable energy for those companies, communities, and individuals that want to purchase it? \*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comments:

## Supporting Customer-Owned Electricity Generation

According to the Michigan Public Service Commission's 2017 Net Metering and Solar Program Report, there was a significant rise (28 percent) in solar projects in 2016. However, the net energy metering programs at Michigan's investor-owned utilities currently are limited to 1 percent of the utility's in-peak state electricity load. Customers are increasingly installing their own solar panels, especially in the Upper Peninsula, where electricity rates are higher. In fact, UPPCo has already met its 1 percent net metering cap and is not allowing any additional customers to join the program. It does not make sense to artificially limit a program that is popular to customers and benefits consumers, the grid, and the environment.

**6. Do you support lifting the cap on the state's net energy metering program? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Comments:**

Gains in the net metering program may also be disrupted by the requirement in Michigan's 2016 legislation that net metering be replaced by an equitable distributed generation tariff. Although many Michigan companies would prefer to retain net metering, any future distributed generation tariff needs to be equitable, easily explainable to customers and fully account for the benefits of distributed generation to consumers, the grid, and the environment.

**7. Do you agree that customer-owned solar energy systems should be fairly compensated for the value they provide to consumers, the grid, and the environment? \***

- Yes
- No



- Unsure

**Comments:**

## **Fair and Consistent Taxation of Renewable Energy Installations**

Uncertainty regarding the taxation of renewable energy chills investment and undermines efforts to increase deployment. Despite eliminating personal property taxes on commercial and industrial property, in some jurisdictions, solar PV installations on residential property are still subject to property taxes. Utility-scale wind and solar projects have their own set of taxation problems that increase costs and create confusion among local communities.

**8. Do you support efforts to increase consistency and certainty in the taxation of renewable energy projects? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Comments:**

## **Access to Capital**

A number of states are providing new and innovative pathways to capital for advanced energy projects, including state “green banks,” credit supports for energy improvements on residential properties using Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing programs, and the ability of utility customers to pay back loans for energy efficiency and other improvements directly on their utility bills. Each of these programs increases the capital available for energy improvements while lowering the cost of capital, helping to further reduce the costs of energy projects. These offerings are only beginning to appear in Michigan.

**9. Do you support efforts to expand the availability of innovative financing tools for advanced energy projects that help to reduce project costs and lower utility rates? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Comments:**

I've long been a supporter of Producer Tax Credits, dating back to my work in the US House of Representatives with then-Congressman Hansen Clarke.

## Fostering Energy Innovation

Michigan has a rich history of supporting energy innovation through energy-focused incubators and smart zones, funding programs like the Emerging Technologies Fund, state Centers of Energy Excellence, and other programs. However, many of these programs are limited in number or scope, while others are dependent on one-time funding opportunities for support. Providing a permanent funding source specifically targeted at growing energy innovation can help Michigan maintain its national leadership position and ensure that the energy technologies of the future are invented, commercialized and manufactured right here in Michigan.

**10. Do you support the creation of a permanent funding source to encourage energy innovation in Michigan? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Comments:**

## **Distribution Grid Modernization**

Much of Michigan's infrastructure, including the electricity grid, is in need of repair and upgrade. Modernizing Michigan's infrastructure means updating the grid so that the state is able to take advantage of an increasing amount of cost-effective distributed energy, advanced energy storage technologies, and electric vehicles. If planned for properly, this expansion of advanced energy technologies can create a more adaptable, resilient grid. Without a forward-looking strategy, however, the increased complexity of the distribution system threatens the basic dependability on which we all rely. This requires Michigan's utilities to develop more forward-looking distribution plans to take advantage of new technologies and non-wires alternatives that enhance reliability and resilience like storage and microgrids.

**11. Do you support new policies to modernize Michigan's grid by improving utility distribution planning and supporting non-wires alternatives? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comments:

## Advanced Transportation

Mobility, technology, and energy are increasingly interwoven as the transportation sector becomes more connected, more autonomous, and more electrified. Michigan, as the automobile capital of the country and as an early investor in advanced batteries, stands to play a key role in this transition. To enable this future, Michigan's policy and regulatory framework need to be aligned around automated, electric, and shared vehicles. This will require collaboration between state agencies, regulators, legislators, businesses, and other stakeholders to create the supportive policy framework necessary to expand the deployment of electric vehicles and competitive markets for vehicle charging. In addition, Michigan currently does not have any state incentives to enhance electric vehicle deployment. In fact, several current policies discourage electric vehicle ownership including registration fees that unfairly overcharge electric vehicle owners for their share of road maintenance.

**12. Do you support policies to align and improve Michigan's policy and regulatory framework to increase deployment of electric and autonomous vehicles in Michigan? \***

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Comments:

I believe we need more than just electric and autonomous vehicles - I support a comprehensive regional transit plan that integrates heavy rail, light rail, motorized, and non-motorized options.

