

Name: Greg VanWoerkom

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Office Sought: State Representative - District 88

Party: Republican

Have you ever been appointed or elected to public office?

Yes, I am currently serving my third term as State Representative.

Have you ever owned a business?

Yes, I am part owner of Wonderland Distilling Co.

Qualifications and experience that makes you the best candidate.

I have served as State Representative for three terms. During that time, I was the Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor and Economic Opportunity, and am currently the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Tax Policy. Last year, I was named the Small Business Association Legislator of the Year, for my work on childcare and economic development.

I have also served on various local boards including School Board President of Western Michigan Christian and on United Way of the Lakeshore. I am a small business owner and raising three children here on the lakeshore.

What do you believe should be the role of the office you are seeking?

The role of a state representative is to serve as a voice for their constituents. This means advocating for their needs, keeping them up to date on issues that might impact them, and protecting their ability to live, work, and raise a family here in West Michigan.

What do you believe are the top 3 issues facing Muskegon businesses and how can you address them?

I believe that the top 3 issues facing Muskegon businesses are the continually rising costs, the need for increased access to affordable childcare, and the poor economic environment for Michigan businesses.

It is clear that businesses and families are struggling with inflation. I voted for individuals, families, and retirees to keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets as government policies and excessive spending have contributed to rising costs.

In the childcare sector, I worked to create the Tri-Share program to expand access to childcare for working families. There are still steps we can take to improve upon this program and further policies we can enact to expand access to childcare for all Michigan families.

Michigan's population has continued to stagnate. This is in part due to our state's struggles in bringing high-paying jobs and the need for the creation of a better economic climate. As described below, I have worked on multiple plans to help address this.

How do you balance personal beliefs with problem solving for the public's issues?

There will always be some balance that has to be drawn between your beliefs and the many pressures of the position but at the end of the day, I've always approached the job as a means to improve the quality of life for the people of West Michigan and build a greater community here on the lakeshore so my kids will want to live and raise a family here.

I've worked across the aisle on many bi-partisan packages and will continue working to craft sound policy rather than focusing on the headline.

In what areas do you think you can make the most difference as an elected official?

I think that one of the areas I have made the most difference in as an elected official is the appropriations process. During my time as the Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, I worked to get funding for many projects such as the Muskegon Airport roof, Mona Lake watershed remediation and study, Muskegon Boys and Girls Club, etc.

However, there are still many other projects I have worked on outside of the appropriations process and I think this position has allowed me to work in many different sectors. This past term I worked closely on crime victims rights legislation, economic development legislation, etc.

How will you leverage Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce as a resource if elected?

I will continue to leverage the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce the way I have since I was first elected. The chamber has played an essential role in connecting me with businesses and keeping me up to date on anything that might impact our business community. These conversations have allowed me to better craft legislation and have greatly impacted my ability to serve our communities.

If elected, what are your top 3 priorities?

If re-elected, my top 3 priorities will be supporting Michigan businesses, expanding access to childcare, and supporting our schools.

I have been working on multiple plans to support Michigan businesses. Most recently, I have worked on a bi-partisan plan to provide support for startups in our state. I am also working on a bi-partisan plan to create a research and development tax credit for businesses.

As mentioned earlier, there is still important work to be done to expand access to childcare for all Michigan families and support our childcare providers. I think one area that needs to be looked at is funding for childcare facilities to assist with building and expansion.

With education, the government response to the pandemic has left our kids behind academically. I voted to get our schools open and provide resources like literacy coaches to get our kids back to where they need to be and ensure their futures remain bright.

Anything else you would like to share?