

**2018**  
**Michigan Farm Bureau Agripac Questionnaire**  
**Non-Incumbents Only**  
State Legislative Candidates

Name: Tom Choske

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Elective Office Sought: State House of Representatives - District 6

**1. Education:**

Michigan State University - Bachelors of Arts-International Relations and German,  
Specialization in Muslim Studies 2004-2008

University of Michigan – Dearborn, College of Business - Masters of Business Administration  
2015-2017

**2. Work Experience:**

Intern, Michigan State House of Representatives - District 15 - May-August 2005

Intern, Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) - Lansing Office - Aug-December 2005

Transition Team Volunteer, Bernero for Lansing - November-December 2005

Intern, Michigan State Senator Hansen Clarke - February-May 2006

Intern, US Foreign Commercial Service - Berlin, Germany - May-August 2006

Legislative Aide, Michigan State Senator Hansen Clarke - September 2006-May 2008

AdWords Account Associate, Google, Inc - June 2008-May 2009

Secretary, Young Democrats of Michigan - February 2009-February 2011

Senior Online Advertising Specialist, Brand Labs - June 2009-February 2011

Power To The People Volunteer, Hansen Clarke for Congress - March 2010-August 2014

Business Relations Representative, Rep. Hansen Clarke (D-MI-13) - February 2011-January  
2013

Search Marketing Analyst, Core3 Solutions - January 2013-October 2013

Co-Founder and President, Freshwater Transit - September 2012-October 2016

Account Manager, iProspect - October 2013-May 2017

Political Advisor, Brian Stone for Dearborn - January 2015-August 2016

Campaign Manager, Washington Youson for Greater Detroit - December 2015-August 2017

Political Advisor, Leslie Herrick for Dearborn - February 2017-November 2017

Associate Director, Reprise Media/UniversalMcCann - May 2017-January 2018

**3. Civic Activities:**

I'm proud to serve my community. I am a board member of:

- PartnershipUs (Co-Founder and Board Member)
- Detroiters Vote (Treasurer)

I'm also on the Citizens Advisory Committee for the M1-RAIL team, helping to advocate for inclusive developments in transit throughout the area.

I've been a lifelong Democrat, serving as:

- Precinct Delegate – Precinct 157, Detroit
- 13th District Democratic Party Organization – State Central Committee Delegate
- 13th District Democratic Party Organization – Communications Committee Chair
- At-Large Board Member, Young Democrats of Detroit

I'm a member in good standing of:

- Detroit Economic Club
- Detroit Young Professionals
- 13th Congressional District Democratic Party
- Young Democrats of Michigan
- Michigan Democratic Party
- Michigan State University Alumni Association
- James Madison College Alumni Association
- Transportation Riders United (TRU)
- Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan
- NAACP
- Detroit RiverFront Conservancy and Riv28
- Sierra Club
- American Civil Liberties Union

In volunteering my time to assist those in need, I serve at:

- Adopt-A-Child Christmas
- Gleaner's Community Foodbank
- Forgotten Harvest Foodbank
- Focus:HOPE Foodbank
- Life Remodeled
- PartnershipUs
- Michigan Youth In Government
- Stephen Siller Tunnel To Towers Foundation – Building For America's Bravest
- Detroit Economic Club – Young Leader's Career Readiness program

I also participate in events to raise awareness and help solve issues such as veteran homelessness, Multiple Sclerosis, and to advance cancer research, such as:

- Komen Race For The Cure

- American Lung Association Fight For Air Climb
- MS Society MuckFest MS
- Wounded Warriors Foundation – Tough Mudder
- Operation Gratitude – Merrell Down and Dirty Race

Some of my previous roles were:

Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority – Community Advisory Committee Board Member  
Secretary of the Young Democrats of Michigan 2009-2011

Columnist for The State News 2007-2008

Adviser to Spartans For Obama 2008

President of Spartans for Progressive Divestment 2008

President of Spartans for Richardson 2007

Detroit Young Professionals Leadership Team 2013

**4. Do you have military experience?**

No

**5. Do you currently hold a public office? If yes, how long have you held your current public office?**

No

**6. Past public offices held:**

N/A

**7. Other background information you would like to share:**

N/A

**8. What organizations are you involving in your campaign, and what groups have already endorsed your candidacy:**

We are proud to have the support of several community groups such as the Michigan Democratic Party Progressive Caucus and are working with a myriad of groups throughout the district to show voters that they can have a State Representative who truly Fights For Us.

**9. Please indicate the reasons you are seeking election and what your priorities for Michigan are:**

Serving our community has been my lifelong dream. From a young age, I've strived to live up to President Kennedy's famous quote, "to whom much is given, much will be required." My parents, both public school employees, taught me the value of hard work. Working as a Detroit Public School teacher for 30 years after serving in the US Air Force, my father exemplified dedication to service. With the support of the union, he and my mother were able to provide me with a good home, great education, and the passion to help others.

I've been honored to work on behalf of our region for years, fighting as a staffer in the State Legislature, US House of Representatives, and as a board member of PartnershipUs to make our community better. In my time working with great leaders like former Congressman Hansen Clarke, I helped fight against polluters who are destroying our neighborhoods and health,

against Republicans who wanted to bust unions and give handouts to big corporations, and against the scourge of illiteracy in our communities. My experience on the front-lines of the biggest battles in Lansing and Washington DC have prepared me to skillfully serve our community as State Representative.

Every single day I see the fantastic strength, resilience, and vibrancy of our community. Within the 6th State House District, we bring together people old and young, of diverse ethnicities and heritages, of many religions, of the cities and suburbs. We have world-leading industrial titans and a cornucopia of small businesses. We are one of the most diverse districts in the state, yet we are all united by our love for our region and our hope that we can do better for our children than we have had ourselves. This constantly inspires me to do better, to work harder, to help others see beyond the challenges and to see the hope and potential that exists throughout the area.

I see government as a beacon of hope, where we can come together to make a difference. I'm running to inspire hope and faith in our community that our State Representative Fights For Us!

As State Representative, I will fight for:

- Lowering insurance rates
- Fixing our roads and infrastructure while investing in public transit to create jobs
- Improving public education and stopping the privatization of our schools
- Fighting gun violence and reforming our corrections system
- Protecting our environment and ensuring affordable, clean drinking water for all
- Keeping people in their homes, fighting foreclosures and gentrification

**10. What do you consider the biggest problem facing Michigan residents and what do you feel is the best solution?**

Economic inequality leading to poverty is the biggest problem facing Michigan residents. While the economy has improved since the depths of the 2008 Great Recession, much of the 'improvement' has been concentrated in equities markets that primarily benefit the top 1% of earners. Real wages haven't increased at all in inflation-adjusted terms over the last 10 years, creating some of the worst economic inequality this nation has seen since the 1920's.

The solution requires action across education, infrastructure, the state's regulatory regime, and tax reform. I have laid out on my website a list of policies and actions I will support and take to

help end inequality and create a stronger, consumer-based economy for our state:

- I will work with businesses and the Department of Education to expand opportunities for job skills training for both school children and adults, ensuring that they can gain the soft-skills and technical know-how to compete for the jobs of the future. I will advocate for funding to continue the IT skills training program I helped pilot in 2011 with Congressman Hansen Clarke.
- I will work to ensure that Michigan becomes a livable wage state, with a \$15-per-hour minimum wage for all workers that is indexed to the Consumer Price Index.
- I will stand in solidarity with organized labor against all attacks on collective bargaining and will never give up the fight to repeal Right To Work.
- I will defend Prevailing Wage laws to ensure government projects are done by the highest-skilled and most competitive workers possible.
- The state shouldn't seek to balance its budget on the backs of retirees – I will continue to oppose all efforts to break union contracts and pension obligations for our retirees.
- I will fight to implement my Transit and Infrastructure agenda to help hire Michigan workers and grow our consumer base. By letting working people earn money, we can generate the demand that will attract and grow even more jobs.
- To pay for these investments, I will work with the Legislature to give strict scrutiny to all state-issued business tax breaks and end Lansing corporate welfare. I will also continue the fight to move toward a progressive state income tax.
- I will work to help improve energy efficiency to drive down energy costs and reduce pollution through funding weatherization tax credits for businesses & individuals, while partnering with organizations like Young Detroit Builders to ensure that our neighbors and children are the ones hired for these jobs.
- I will join with others in the legislature to spur investment by helping to support investment in new and early stage businesses by restarting the 21st Century Jobs Fund, which generated \$7 in investment for every \$1 spent, and will continue to fight for tax credits for Angel Investors.
- I will fight to bring more jobs to our community while improving our environment through making Michigan a leader in recycling technologies. I will work to make curbside recycling universal while bringing advanced single-stream recycling facilities to the area.

**11. What do you consider the biggest issue facing agriculture in your legislative district and in Michigan, and what do you see as the best solution?**

The biggest challenge facing Michigan agriculture statewide is that our transportation infrastructure is either deteriorating or non-existent. Many bridges and roads are in desperate need of repair. I will support transportation projects like the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal that will greatly benefit our state's economy and farming community. We need to invest in better roads and rails to allow farmers simple and cheap access to previously out of reach markets so they can sell their produce. We cannot afford to ignore our transportation infrastructure. Michigan has international boundaries, numerous bodies of water, and an extensive highway system, so there is no reason we cannot provide a nationally renowned transportation hub by building on what we have to benefit all of our state's industries.

## **12. What do you see as the proper role of local government for Agriculture?**

Local governments are the first line of defense for our farmers. Coming from a farming family, where my grandfather grew soybeans as his primary crop, I believe that local governments work best when they regulate zoning and settle access disputes as well as provide good education and infrastructure systems to support farmers. They should also coordinate with the state and federal government on environmental impact regulations to ensure that farmers can enjoy a sustainable environment in which to thrive for years to come.

## **13. What should be done to address our nation's infrastructure needs including roads, bridges, locks, dams, and broadband?**

Our region's transit and infrastructure are among the worst in the country, but we can seize this opportunity to make Michigan a national leader. The American Society of Civil Engineers, 21st Century Infrastructure Commission, Business Leaders For Michigan, Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, and other groups have laid out the blueprint for how to revolutionize our roads, electrical systems, water, and public transit networks. Together, we can reinvest in our infrastructure and once again make Michigan the first-in-class state, with the best roads, most comprehensive and innovative public transit systems, safe and durable electrical & water systems, and greenest power grid in the country.

- I will fight to implement the bipartisan recommendations of the 21st Century Infrastructure Commission, such as:
  - a. Creating a 'Michigan Infrastructure Council' to centralize information from across the state on the status of our infrastructure and to provide recommendations for its upkeep
  - b. Leveraging advanced database systems to improve
  - c. Replacing aging water systems, from drinking water to sewers, while investing in environmentally sustainable ways to manage stormwater.
  - d. Building a new lock in Sault Ste. Marie within the Soo Locks system.
  - e. Investing in cybersecurity and intelligent vehicle systems
- I will work to find ways to help Michigan reach the \$4 billion per year needed to upgrade our roads, water systems, and other infrastructure through:
  - f. Identifying and eliminating wasteful corporate welfare subsidies to big business
  - g. Identifying and eliminating wasteful government contracts, such as for IT systems that don't work
  - h. Push Michigan to have a progressive income tax so that the wealthy pay their fair share
  - i. Aggressively pursuing road work contractors who have failed to meet quality standards for previous road projects, seeking damages
- Private investors shouldn't be able to reap huge profits from public works. I will work to make utility rate increases, such as water rates, subject to state oversight to protect citizens.
- I will bring my experience in transit to bear, helping to improve coordination between the public transit providers in the RTA and supporting the growth of bus, light rail, and heavy rail systems throughout Michigan.

- I will defend Renewable Portfolio Standards, ensuring there is a strong market to support the development of new, green power generation and transmission technologies.
- I will support the growth of affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet access throughout our community. I will support programs like the Equitable Internet Initiative (EII) that help all people claim their right to access the Internet.
- I will, should the federal government not re-implement Net Neutrality laws, push for legislation to mandate that all telecom providers with state contracts adhere to the principles of Net Neutrality in Michigan, building on the efforts in Montana and other states to ensure the Internet is kept open for Michigan's small businesses.

**14. What do you see as barriers to Michigan's businesses finding and expanding markets for their products?**

The biggest barriers to growing markets for agriculture is our decrepit infrastructure. By investing in repairs and improvements to our road, rail, water, and air transportation systems, we can enable farmers to reach new markets more quickly and cheaply, making Michigan more competitive on the global stage.

**15. How would you support ways to spur agricultural processing growth?**

Agricultural processing is a key role that the businesses in my district play in our agricultural system. I believe the best way to spur growth is to grow incentives for Angel Investors to support startups, some of which are in the food space, work with the federal government to expand free trade zones to make our imports and exports of agricultural goods more efficient, and finally improve our infrastructure while supporting projects like the oft-delayed Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal.

**16. How can the State of Michigan assist agriculture in meeting its labor needs?**

As agriculture expands and develops, automation is replacing older, manual labor jobs. Investing in education, especially STEM fields and STEM-related vocational, is critical to ensuring our state is meeting our workforce needs in the 21st century. Working with university extension programs and 4H to further integrate agricultural education with STEM will also help to ensure our next generation of farmers is ready for the changing world of agriculture.

**17. Please tell us your opinion of vocational, career & technical education, and its role in providing a skilled labor force:**

The elimination of vocational and technical training from public school curricula over the past decade has devastated our state's economy. I support the reintroduction of these programs into our schools, funded by partnerships with private industries and labor organizations.

**18. What should be the role of the Land Grant University and the Cooperative Extension Service in the State of Michigan?**

As an alum of Michigan State University, protecting our Land Grant institutions is personal for me. I support the great work that our Extension services perform throughout the state in providing value-added services to farmers and helping to spread new best-practices to improve agricultural yields while also creating a more sustainable environment.

**19. What specific actions would you take to reform Michigan's regulatory system?**

I will join with fellow Democrats to ensure that a citizens oversight commission is created over the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), so that a tragedy like the Flint Water Crisis can never be swept under the rug again. I will push to ensure that Nestle pays its fair share to

extract Michigan drinking water and sell it to out-of-state customers. Finally, I will fight against hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, calling for an immediate ban on the practice and requiring all companies who have fracked to disclose exactly what chemical solutions were pumped into our ground.

**20. Within agriculture, what is the appropriate regulatory oversight for environmental management?**

Given the wide-ranging environmental impacts that agriculture, just like manufacturing and other industries, can have, what happens in one locality can cause problems for another that may be far away. Therefore, I believe that the state has the strongest role to play in providing regulatory oversight for environmental management. Regulations must be focused on the long-term environmental sustainability for all of our residents and recognize that, for example, a local wetland that may impede farming expansion plays a longer-term role in preserving our biodiversity that enables all our farmers to be successful over the long run.

**21. What is your opinion on the potential statewide ballot initiatives?**

I support the initiatives to regulate marijuana like alcohol, the Voters Not Politicians initiative to reform political redistricting, the ACLU's and coalition partners' initiative to improve voter access, and the initiative to mandate 30% of energy in the state comes from renewable sources by 2030. I do not support the effort to repeal Prevailing Wage.