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110th Congress
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEES:
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR

October 26, 2007

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Governor
The State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Granholm:

I appreciate your prompt response to my inquiry about the decision to allocate funding for a turtle barrier. However, I am exceedingly disappointed by your response. I can only conclude that I was not as clear as intended in my initial inquiry.

Michigan is in a state of economic emergency. I do not believe the decision to place the budgetary burden on the backs of Michigan's residents by adopting a \$1.35 billion tax increase on services and income in any way signifies a light at the end of the tunnel, or a reason to exhale. We may disagree on that.

Instead, I believe it is my responsibility as an elected Representative of the State of Michigan to continue to work toward moving Michigan from this situation. It is with that frame of mind I requested that you convene a working group to study whether changes in federal law with respect to greater flexibility with federal dollars would help Michigan better allocate federal funds from its budget.

Perhaps if the rules had allowed for the reallocation of those federal dollars to a different use, you would have still chosen to spend the money on a turtle barrier. That would have been a state call. I maintain, however, that exploring alternatives would be a worthwhile endeavor.

The \$1.35 billion tax increase passed by Lansing was spun as a last resort; therefore, the decision to allocate federal funding for a turtle barrier struck me, as it did many in Michigan's Second Congressional District, as a sufficient basis for further investigating the budget and initiating a broader discourse about the allocation of federal dollars to Michigan.

Furthermore, the federal government funds 31 percent of Michigan's budget, approximately \$13.4 billion. Regardless of whether I am included, I strongly believe that some combination of individuals from Lansing should engage those representing Michigan at the federal level to identify opportunities to provide you with greater flexibility in addressing our state's crisis.

I am prepared to send you draft legislation that I intend to introduce in the U.S. House of Representatives. The two bills add flexibility to transportation and education funding, respectively, and are examples of the possibilities I believe could be explored. I consider it merely scratching the surface



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of what can be accomplished with the benefit of multiple perspectives and cooperation between Michigan's federal representatives and Lansing. I believe it is an opportunity to look forward to new possibilities for economic development and creating job opportunities.

Your letter cites your testimony before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in May of 2003 as a prior successful attempt to request greater flexibility from the federal government.

It is now October of 2007, and Michigan ranks 50th in unemployment at 7.5 percent, putting the state 63 percent higher than the national average of 4.7 percent.

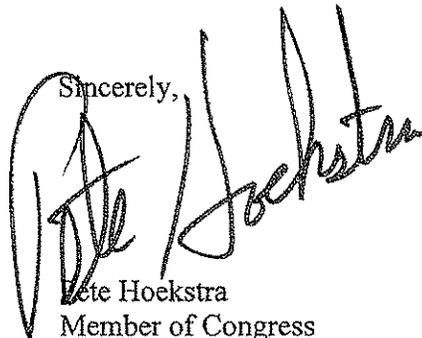
A recent study performed by the Milken Institute titled "Best Performing Cities 2007" ranks U.S. cities based on their ability to create and sustain jobs. Michigan cities did not fair well. The nine Michigan cities that are listed among the "Largest 200 Cities" rank between 184th and 200th place. The seven Michigan cities listed in the "Small 179 Cities" rank between 161st and 178th.

Approaching members of Michigan's congressional delegation and convening a dialogue about eliminating funding restrictions to provide you, rather than Washington, D.C. with the flexibility to determine Michigan's highest and best priorities would be appropriate.

I believe the answer to moving Michigan forward lies more in the hands of the people in Lansing than those of us in Washington. For states who are in the disappointing position of being at 125% of the national unemployment rate (currently 5 states would qualify) deserve to be freed from burdensome and perhaps expensive federal government mandates. I want to provide one more potential tool to turn around our state. !!

I hope that you will reconsider my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Hoekstra". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font. The first part of the signature is a large, looped "P", followed by "ete Hoekstra".

Pete Hoekstra
Member of Congress