



Sunrise in Michigan

A Government Transparency & Accountability Plan by Michael Brown

Throughout my public safety career, I have been subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. It's how it should be in our state government as well.

In state government operations there should be nothing to hide. My pledge to you is that every morning in Michigan when the government opens it will be accessible to its citizens. You should not need an attorney to request information from the government and to hold your government accountable.

The Governor's Office and the Legislature Will Be Subject to the Freedom of Information Act

Michigan's Freedom of Information Act must include the Governor's office and the State Legislature. Michigan is one of two states that exempts the Governor's office and State Legislature from FOIA requests. This allowed Governor Whitmer to hide much of what she was doing during the pandemic. We need full transparency in government and that should begin in the Governor's office and with our legislators. Whether or not the legislature acts to change the law, I will use my executive authority to ensure that the Governor's office and state departments fully respond to FOIA requests, and produce the requested materials and information.

Five to Fifteen Days to Produce Materials

Currently, a government entity must "respond" to a FOIA request within five days. A response is not actually producing material, and many agencies take their time producing requested materials – sometimes delaying for over a year. This must stop. Under my plan, government entities must produce the requested materials within five days, or fifteen days maximum if an extension is approved.

Closing Loopholes

Public agencies skirt existing law by involving attorneys in communications on issues. They then invoke "attorney client privilege" as a means of hiding discussions. Agencies will also cite "unwarranted invasion of privacy" as a reason to redact and hide information. We must clean up these loopholes to ensure that proper disclosure is being made.



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Zero Cost

FOIA requests made to the Governor's office, State Legislature and State Agencies will have zero cost to citizens. One of the ways bureaucrats get around FOIA requests is through excessive costs. No more. Departments currently have staff dedicated to FOIA requests. The taxpayers are already paying their salaries. Excessive costs passed on to requestors is punitive and meant to discourage people from requesting information they have a right to see. On the county and local level, a cap on fees will be implemented to prevent punitive costs.

Independent Appeals Board

We will establish an independent board made up of retired judges to review appeals of denied requests, delays and fees. There should be no reason that FOIA requests should end up in our courts costing both the requesters and government agencies.

Governor's Schedule Public

As Governor, my schedule will be public. No hiding. If I take a day to go deer hunting, you will know about it.

Reporting of Public Benefit to Private Entities

Any taxpayer money that flows to private entities will be disclosed along with the conditions under which the money was disbursed. No more sweetheart deals that are cut with businesses under cover of darkness. Under my administration we will ensure full transparency of the use of tax dollars.

Annual Report

An annual transparency report will be compiled to identify and correct problem areas.