



The Rotary Club of St. Joseph-Benton Harbor

# eWheel

Your Rotary News  
Straight  
To Your Inbox

**AUGUST 24, 2015**

Love was in the air as several Rotarians shared Happy Bucks in honor of anniversaries while Dwight Bowman serenaded us with the iconic love song *Unforgettable*. Even though many people might be feeling nervous about the tumultuous few days we've had with the stock market, nothing will stop Rotarians from celebrating fellowship and singing our signature song *Smile!*

## **UPDATE: GAS, ROADS, STEM & MORE!**

Our Rotary Club has the distinction of having many notable politicians among our ranks which helps us all stay knowledgeable on the issues that affect our community.

In the Michigan Senate, Senator John Proos represents the 21st district which includes Berrien, Cass and St.



Joseph counties. He was first elected in 2010 and was re-elected in 2014 and previously held the role of State Representative of the 79th district from 2005 through 2010.

Senator Proos is active in numerous committees including serving as vice chair of the Energy and Technology and Local Government committees and is a member of the Finance and Michigan Competitiveness committees. He is also a member of the Senate Appropriations committee and serves as chair of the Corrections and Judiciary subcommittees and is a

member of the Human Services subcommittee.

Today, Senator Proos provided us with a legislative update so that we may be informed beyond the 30-second sound bite we more frequently receive from the media.

### **Gas Price Update**

Last week, Southwest Michigan experienced an \$0.80 gas price increase due to a reported British Petroleum (BP) mechanical breakdown in an oil refinery in Whiting, Indiana. This is the largest increase since Hurricane Katrina hit a decade ago and oil prices spiked to around \$70 per barrel even though the current average price of a barrel of crude oil is around \$49. Senator Proos has urged Attorney General Bill Schuette to open an investigation so that consumers are not unduly paying the price when there's a disconnect between supply and demand and the price at the pump. Additionally, oil refineries in Illinois have decided to delay facility maintenance in order to help offset any issues with supply.



### **Michigan Roads Update**

Senator Proos expressed that prioritizing tax dollars must be in focus as it pertains to funding our roadways. In addition to the \$3.7 billion that is already being spent on roads this year, Senator Proos supported the 2015-2016 fiscal year budget that includes a 25% increase to direct road funding without an increase in taxes.

During Q&A, a question was asked about perceived wasteful spending as it pertains to the roads. The example given was the number of signs telling you you're on Business I-94 in a short span of road or the frequency with which road signs are replaced. Senator Proos explained that many of these projects are requirements that go along with Federal dollars received and are not decisions that are made by MDOT or Michigan legislators.

*Continued on page 3*

# Joke of the Week!



## Visiting Rotarians

Adam Mensinger from Niles-Buchanan



## Rotarians with Guests

Dwight Bowman brought his niece Victoria Bowman  
State Senator John Proos brought his Chief of Staff Rebecca O'Connell  
Christine Vanlandingham brought Pat Arter, Senior Volunteer Program Director at Area Agency on Aging

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

- 8/27 – Board Meeting at 7:30 AM at Area Agency on Aging
- 8/29 – Park Cleanup at Bobo Brazil on Main St. in Benton Harbor—watch your email for more details!
- 8/31 Meeting – Autumn Zick, Therapeutic Equestrian Center
- 9/7 – Labor Day – NO MEETING
- 9/14 Meeting – Ken Flowers and Dr. Bob Harrison, New Hanson Technology Center at LMC
- 9/21 Meeting – Dr. Patricia Quattrin, Benton Harbor Girl's Academy



**Dennis & Lynn Bowen**  
**Charles & Lorraine Jespersen**  
**Bob & Joan Judd**

With Debra Trapikas recently being appointed District 6360 Secretary, the e-Wheel could use some help. If you're interested in participating in any capacity, please contact Emily Hosinski at [emily\\_m\\_hosinski@whirlpool.com](mailto:emily_m_hosinski@whirlpool.com).

The Membership Committee is also looking for new members. Contact Dwight Bowman at [cndbowman@aol.com](mailto:cndbowman@aol.com) if you're interested in joining.

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## UPDATE (CONTINUED)

### Michigan's Reinvention

Currently, the Michigan unemployment rate is at 5.3%. This is the lowest it has been in 14 years! According to the Chicago Federal Reserve, the Michigan economy is the fastest growing in the Midwest. The private sector saw the most growth with professional and business services up 4.3%. Manufacturing came in second with an increase by \$2 billion over last year. The information industry is up 3.6%, trade/transportation/utilities are up 2.4% and education and health services are up 2%.



### Emphasis on STEM

STEM stands for Science - Technology - Engineering - Mathematics. Currently, there are many high-paying and essential jobs to be filled in Michigan but the workforce is often under-trained in these areas. To set Michigan students apart as they are pursuing educational or career opportunities, Senator Proos' legislation allows Michigan students to receive a STEM endorsement on their diploma by meeting additional, voluntary credits in science and math and taking coursework involving technology and engineering.

### Energy Policy

Nine power plants in Michigan have already been closed due to mandates from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Current legislation is a work in progress. A workgroup of business, utility,

environmental, consumer and state regulatory stakeholders have met to discuss this issue. The goal is to craft a next generation energy policy that provides flexibility to ensure the availability of clean, reliable and competitively priced energy for Michigan consumers and allows for state-level control of our energy future.

### Important Initiatives

Other important include the Parole Certain Sanctions Program which is designed to align with the evidence-based offender management principle of swift and certain sanctions. There are currently around 100,000 people under supervision in Michigan, either in prison or on parole. Senator Proos is seeking to decrease public risks to safety by focusing on the front end of the problem. This initiative will enhance public safety and offender compliance and provide a cost-effective alternative to incarceration.

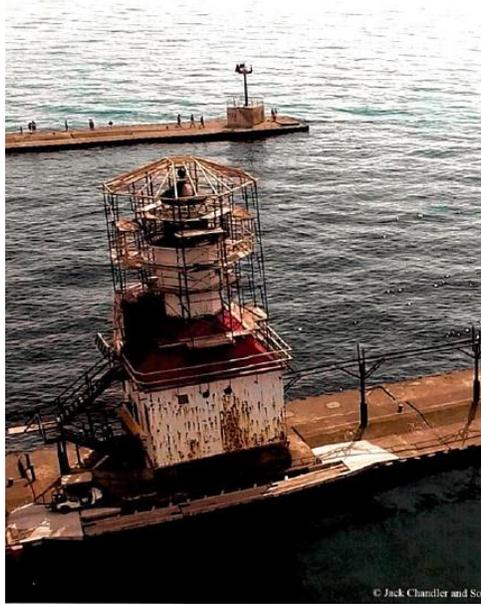
To reduce crop damage, legislation has been proposed to increase penalties on those who commit malicious acts against our agricultural operations with the intention of harming the food supply. To protect our credit, legislation has become law to allow individuals to place a "freeze" on their credit in order to protect themselves from identity theft and additional legislation is in the works that would require that credit reporting agencies to not downgrade credit scores because of an individual's request for a preapproval letter for a home loan.

In closing, Senator Proos took the opportunity to speak about a recent issue for which he's received some negative press - solar energy. Right now there are around 7 million energy consumers in Michigan and of these 7 million, only about 1,800 have solar power in their homes. Currently, if you are generating solar energy, you can sell that back to the energy company. Senate Bill No. 438 was introduced by Senator Proos in July of this year. The purpose of this bill is to promote the development and use of clean energy resources and the reduction of energy waste through programs that will cost-effectively diversify the resources used, provide greater energy security, encourage private investment and coordinate with federal regulations. Senator Proos expressed that he feels strongly that consumers should be able to request 100% green power from their energy provider and that he supports opportunities for these companies to create more green facilities based on consumer demand.

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# ST. JOSEPH LIGHTHOUSE REHABILITATION PHOTO UPDATE



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## WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE E-WHEEL?

Your weekly email is brought to you by Debra Trapikas and Emily Hosinski. If you have an announcement, a bit of news you wish to share, or a story you wish to see featured, please write one or both at [tawana53@aol.com](mailto:tawana53@aol.com) or [emily\\_m\\_hosinski@whirlpool.com](mailto:emily_m_hosinski@whirlpool.com). Thank you to Aaron Bradford for the wonderful photography!

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