

**QUARTERLY ISSUES  
AND  
PROGRAMS REPORT**

**WNEM TV5  
WNEM-DT  
BAY CITY/FLINT/MIDLAND AND SAGINAW**

**JANUARY 1 THROUGH MARCH 31, 2021**

## **PROBLEMS AND NEEDS**

### **OVERVIEW**

Based on WNEM's ascertainment of community leaders and from data gathered from community organizations, the highest-ranking problems and needs of the Bay City/Flint/Midland and Saginaw markets are:

1. Jobs/Economy
2. Crime
3. Weather
4. School/Campus
5. Politics

## **ISSUES AND PROGRAMS REPORT**

### **OVERVIEW**

The following is the quarterly “Issues and Programs” Report placed in the public file of WNEM at the open of business day April 10th, 2021. The report covers the period from January 1st through March 31st, 2021. The report is based on significant problems and needs determined by WNEM’s community ascertainments. Below each problem/need is a brief description of some news segments broadcast during the quarter designated to call attention to or address the problem or need.

**WNEM**

**BAY CITY/FLINT/MIDLAND AND SAGINAW**

**January 1 through March 31, 2021**

***DATE/PROGRAM    ISSUE /TITLE    SOURCE***

**1. JOBS & ECONOMY**

***01/19/2021 – 6:00p – State Economy & COVID – Local***

***Runtime: 1:25***

Governor Gretchen Whitmer is calling for both parties in the legislature to roll up their sleeves and get things done, as the state tries to get back on track with the economy. One of her requests includes permanently extending unemployment benefits from 20 weeks to 26 weeks. Governor Whitmer says to get the economy back to the way it was before the pandemic, it will require both federal funding and a Michigan COVID Recovery Plan.

***01/28/2021 – 10:00p – New FHA Mortgage Loan Policy – national***

***Runtime: 1:52***

A shift in federal policy makes it easier for Dreamers, U.S. residents with DACA status, to buy a home. These residents are now eligible for the loans backed by the Federal Housing Administration. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced the update last week. The new policy opens the field of mortgage options for Dreamers, giving them access to a wider variety of affordable, accessible paths to homeownership. An FHA loan requires only a 3.5% down payment and a minimum credit score of 580.

***02/02/2021 – 5:00p – Michigan Reconnect Program – Local***

***Runtime: 1:41***

Governor Gretchen Whitmer is kicking off the \$30 million Michigan Reconnect program with bipartisan support. Michigan residents can submit applications for the new scholarship initiative offering historic tuition-free opportunities. More than 4.1 million Michigan residents age 25 and older are eligible for earning an associate degree or skills certificate. More than 70 private training schools and 120 programs are awarding certificates in high-demand industry careers, including manufacturing, construction, information technology, healthcare, and business management.

**02/27/2021 – 6:00p – Reaction To COVID Relief Bill – Local**

**Runtime: 1:39**

The U.S. House voted to pass the nearly \$2 trillion COVID Relief package, and it now advances to the U.S. Senate. The “American Rescue Plan” is a comprehensive attempt to bring relief to those struggling from the pandemic. It includes a \$1,400 stimulus payment for those earning less than \$75,000 a year, and raises federal unemployment benefits up to \$400 a week. Rep. Dan Kildee (D) voted in favor of the relief package, saying families, seniors and small businesses need additional economic relief now. Rep. John Moolenaar (R) voted against the bill, saying the relief it provides isn’t focused enough on the pandemic. Democrats are pushing to have the relief bill passed before federal unemployment benefits expire on March 14<sup>th</sup>.

**03/02/2021– 6:00p – Restaurant Restrictions Lifted – Local**

**Runtime: 1:22**

As Michigan’s COVID-19 case count and positivity rate remains among the lowest in the nation, and 9<sup>th</sup> nationwide for vaccines administered, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced that restaurants and bars can begin operating at 50% capacity. Business owners are delighted by the news of the increase in capacity from the previous 25% limit. Many are hoping the governor’s announcement will convince more people to dine-in at their establishments, like they used to before the pandemic.

**03/04/2021 – 10:00p – Local Woman Victim Of UIA Fraud – local**

**Runtime: 2:04**

With widespread fraudulent unemployment claims in 2020, many unsuspecting victims are now being told to repay money or pay taxes on money they never received. Denise Bruckman of Owosso recently received a 1099-G asking her to pay back taxes on \$5,640. Bruckman was a legal secretary in the state Attorney General’s office but has long since retired. The UIA says anyone who believes they were a victim of fraud should protest it. The agency adds that the submission of fraudulent documents has slowed down the review of claims, and that claimants should be patient as the problems are addressed.

## **2. CRIME**

**01/04/2021 - 6:00p – Saginaw Police Address Crime – local**

**Runtime: 1:21**

The Saginaw Police Department is launching a new, proactive unit to better protect city neighborhoods. The two-officer unit will specifically address residents’ concerns regarding quality of life issues and the rising crime rate. The new unit intends to help take more criminals off the streets. Residents are asked to do their part by being the eyes and ears of law enforcement, to get crime numbers headed back in the right direction.

***01/07/2021 – 5:00p – U.S. Attorney Seeks Help From Public – local***

***Runtime: 1:26***

The FBI is asking for help in tracking down the individuals who violently breached the U.S. Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. According to D.C. Police, more than 600 people have been arrested, with six residing in Michigan. U.S. Attorney Matthew Schneider says investigators are gathering tips and collecting evidence to build their cases. Schneider adds that anyone who resorted to violence at the Capitol will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and is asking anyone with information regarding the identity of these individuals to come forward.

***02/08/2021 – 11:00p – Dog Groomer Accused Of Abuse – local***

***Runtime: 2:00***

A video that went viral on Facebook shows a dog groomer in Genesee County getting overly aggressive with a dog during a grooming session. The footage horrified viewers, prompting an investigation by the Genesee County Sheriff's Office. The groomer later posted an acknowledgement of the video and apology on Facebook, but was eventually charged with animal abuse in the case.

***02/10/2021 – 11:00p – Child Abuse On The Rise Amid Pandemic – local***

***Runtime: 1:21***

The number of child abuse cases has increased during the pandemic. The Child Abuse and Neglect Council of the Great Lakes Bay Region (CAN Council) says one reason is that parents are under a lot of stress, stemming from unemployment and financial hardships. Teachers are among the main reporters of abuse, but virtual learning has made it increasingly difficult to recognize the warning signs. Parents that are feeling overwhelmed are urged to seek help and can find a range of resources at the CAN Council.

***03/08/2021 – 11:00p – Clare County Man Allegedly Abuses Minors – local***

***Runtime: 1:53***

A Clare County man is accused of abusing three minors, including a three-year-old. 29-year-old Nathaniel Tessner of Harrison is a convicted sex offender for crimes committed in the military in Tennessee. The FBI says the suspect used social media apps to entice his victims. According to court documents, Tessner lured one victim on the phone chat app Kik in 2017, then used WhatsApp and Skype to continue communication. The victim was 14 years old when the abuse started, and it continued for three years. Investigators say Tessner forced the girl to engage in bestiality, as well as sex acts with a three-year-old and another male victim while recording the moments.

***03/22/2021 – 5:00a – President Asks Congress To Pass Hate Crime Act – national  
Runtime: 1:25***

Asian-Americans have been shaken by the shootings in Atlanta, and a rising tide of hate sparked by the coronavirus pandemic. President Joe Biden wants Congress to pass a COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which he says will speed up the federal government's response to the rise in violence and discrimination against Asian-Americans. The president visited Georgia, where shootings targeting spas in the Atlanta area left eight people dead this week, including six women of Asian descent. Calls are now growing for hate crimes to be filed against the suspect.

### **3. WEATHER**

***01/24/2021 – 10:00p – Climate Refugees – national  
Runtime: 6:29***

The Camp Fire of 2018 became California's deadliest and most destructive wildfire in the state's history. It destroyed roughly 95% of the town of Paradise, driving people from their homes. Those families became climate refugees, defined as people forced to flee by fires, floods and hurricanes made worse by the changing climate. It's leading to a migration away from coastal areas and regions where extreme weather is becoming common.

***01/26/2021 – 5:00p – Snowy Weather Good For Business – local  
Runtime: 1:35***

The recent snowfall is creating a boom in business for snow removal companies. A lack of snowfall this winter has been tough on these businesses, that are happy to see the snow continuing to fall. With more snow in the forecast for the upcoming weekend, things are looking up for the remainder of the winter season.

***02/19/2021 - 6:00p – Weather Delays Vaccine Shipments – Local  
Runtime: 1:52***

Extreme weather sweeping through the central and southern plains is impacting vaccine deliveries across the nation. According to FEMA, 15 states are experiencing weather-related impacts to vaccination sites. In a press release, the MDHHS says vaccine shipments from Tennessee were halted for several days, causing a significant backlog on the delivery of the Moderna vaccine. Health departments in mid-Michigan haven't experienced any delays yet, but say they are prepared for any that arise.

***02/22/2021 – 5:00p – Warming Ice Dangers – local***

***Runtime: 1:33***

The U.S. Coast Guard is warning that ice conditions are deteriorating rapidly amid warming temperatures. The Coast Guard is urging anyone ice fishing with shanties to tell someone where they are going and make sure to label the shanty. They also suggest keeping an open line of communication at all times, and keeping a cell phone on them in case they need to call for an emergency.

***03/11/2021 – 6:00a – Great Lakes & Climate Change – local***

***Runtime: 4:08***

According to new research from Climate Central, maximum ice coverage on the Great Lakes has reduced 22% on average compared to 50 years ago. Researchers say rising temperatures are the main culprit for this declining trend. Compared to 1970, the average winter temperatures in the TV5 viewing area are now 3-to-4 degrees warmer, resulting in more above-average temperature days, fewer nights below freezing, and a rising trend in our lowest temperature recorded each winter. Less ice along shorelines could also lead to further coastal erosion.

***03/25/2021 – 11:00p – Detecting A Tornado - Local***

***Runtime: 3:56***

A line of tornadoes that swept through Shiawassee and Genesee counties in March of 2019 wreaked havoc on communities, leaving a path of destruction in their wake. However, improvements to early-warning systems may soon be coming. A team of scientists at the University of Mississippi are working on a way to make tornadoes easier to detect. They believe using ultra-low sound waves could help with tornado detection in real time, providing additional lead time on tornado warnings and giving people more time to prepare and seek shelter.

#### **4. EDUCATION/SCHOOLS**

***01/08/2021 – 11:00p – Prepping For In-Class Instruction – local***

***Runtime: 1:17***

By March 1<sup>st</sup>, Governor Gretchen Whitmer wants students to be able to return to in-person learning at schools in some form. It's a goal she has set alongside guidance from the state's health department. Bay City Public Schools says the district is planning to return to the classroom ahead of that schedule. The decision is receiving overwhelming support, but online learning will remain an option. Other districts in Mid-Michigan have signaled they will forgo a return to in-person learning until all staff has been vaccinated.

***01/12/2021 – 10:00p – The Fauci Effect On Medical Schools – national***

***Runtime: 1:48***

More students are applying to medical schools in recent years, and data from the Association of American Medical Colleges shows the number of students applying for the 2021 academic year is up 18% from last year. The Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine has seen a nearly 50% increase in applications alone. Medical schools are now working to increase class sizes. Dozens of new schools have also opened to try to address the physician shortage projected for the coming years.

***02/03/2021 – 11:00p – Adding Days To School Year – local***

***Runtime: 1:54***

The pandemic has proven that schoolwork from behind a screen can be a big challenge. Students fell behind early due to technology deficiencies experienced by many districts. To help students catch up with lost learning, state superintendent Michael Rice is asking lawmakers to consider extending the school year beyond the standard 180 days. The request has garnered mixed reaction from superintendents in mid-Michigan. If enacted, the change wouldn't take effect this year.

***02/18/2021 - 10:00p – Do Kids Need Snow Days? – local***

***Runtime: 1:59***

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new debate among schools, parents, and child health experts. With students now capable of learning from home, could traditional snow days be a thing of the past? School superintendents say while the idea is possible, it's unlikely to become reality given the immediate nature a snow day is intended for. Remote learning typically requires some notice to give students and teachers time to prepare the necessary technology.

***03/06/2021 – 11:00p – Rally For Return To Classroom – local***

***Runtime: 1:37***

Hundreds of parents, students and educators gathered on the lawn of the state Capitol to rally for a complete return to in-person classes. Supporters of the "Save Our Kids, Open Our Schools" movement say mental health is being neglected. Some parents advocated for their children who are experiencing mental health issues from the extended periods of remote learning. Other parents advocated for their children who were falling behind academically. While Governor Gretchen Whitmer set a March 1<sup>st</sup> goal for all schools to offer some form of in-person learning, those who attended the rally demand a 100% return to the classroom.

***03/20/2021 – Saturday AM – CDC Guidance For Schools – local***

***Runtime: 1:46***

The CDC is easing up on COVID-19 guidelines by reducing social distancing requirements from 6 feet to 3 feet. The new guidelines also no longer recommend plastic partitions in between desks. The President of the Carman Ainsworth Education Association fears the new guidelines were implemented without input from educators, and says schools already struggle to maintain the previous guidelines. There is also concern that the shift in guidelines will create a ripple effect, eventually leading to less mask wearing and other potentially hazardous behavior.

## 5. POLITICS

***01/13/2021 – 11:00p – House Impeaches Trump – national***

***Runtime: 1:52***

The U.S. House voted to impeach President Donald Trump on a single charge of incitement of insurrection for the deadly rampage at the U.S. Capitol. The historic vote marks the first time in U.S. history a president has been impeached twice. Ten Republicans broke with President Trump and voted to impeach, but most stood by him. To convict, 17 U.S. Senate Republicans would need to vote against President Trump.

***01/20/2021 – 11:00p – Biden Turns to First 100 Days – national***

***Runtime: 1:33***

President Joe Biden is getting a running start on his first 100 days in office. The president moved to repeal the National Emergency declaration; halting emergency funds used to build former President Donald Trump's wall at the southern border. President Biden wants to preserve the Dreamers program and give legal status, and a path to citizenship, to an estimated 11 million people on day one. He also signed an executive order rejoining the Paris Climate Accord. In the war against COVID-19, the president aims to have 100 million Americans vaccinated in his first 100 days in office.

***02/01/2021 – 5:00p – SOS Benson On Voter Accessibility – local***

***Runtime: 1:44***

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Assistant Secretary of State Heaster Wheeler announced the state's legislative agenda for elections. Wheeler says advancing accessibility includes ballot applications mailed to registered voters every federal election cycle. Ballots would be counted if postmarked by Election Day. It also involves establishing in-person voting before Election Day and making Election Day a state holiday. The Secretary of State's office is also pushing to allow the processing of absentee ballots up to two weeks before Election Day, as well as provide an extra week after Election Day for county canvassers to review results.

***02/11/2021 – 6:00p – State Budget Proposal – local***

***Runtime: 1:49***

Governor Gretchen Whitmer says her budget plan aims to expand skills training, provide childcare for families, rebuild infrastructure, and help small businesses. The total cost of the governor's plan would be \$67.1 billion. A significant amount of one-time funding is available because of the increase in federal aid and Michigan's role in managing the pandemic. \$14.7 billion would go towards the School Aid Fund. \$360 million would be dedicated to permanently maintaining a direct care wage increase of \$2 per hour.

***03/15/2021 – 11:00p – Nessel Says No To Nursing Home Investigation – local***

***Runtime: 1:51***

Dale Zorn is among eight state senators pushing for an investigation into Governor Gretchen Whitmer's handling of COVID-19 patients in nursing homes. Senator Zorn questions why sick patients were sent to places with vulnerable populations instead of diverting them to temporary hospitals. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Michigan has recorded more than 5,500 deaths in nursing homes, which is a little more than 35% of all COVID-19 deaths statewide. Governor Whitmer has defended her policies as scientifically sound. Attorney General Dana Nessel issued a four-point response, denying the request.

***03/29/2021 – 11:00p – Group Calls On GOP Chairman To Resign – local***

***Runtime: 2:03***

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious is calling on Michigan Republican Party Chairman Ron Weiser to resign following comments he made towards Michigan's top elected officials. The controversy began after Weiser called Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel, and Secretary of State Joselyn Benson "witches" who should be ready for the burning at the stake. The comment came after he jokingly referred to assassination as a way of dealing with two Michigan congressmen who voted to impeach former President Donald Trump after the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection on Capitol Hill. Weiser has since apologized, but the Michigan Catholic Sisters are calling for his removal.