

# 2005

## ANNUAL REPORT



# CRC

CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL  
OF MICHIGAN

# CITIZENS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF MICHIGAN

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## Letter From the Chair & President

In late 2005, CRC commissioned a survey aimed at determining the perception of the Council among a range of CRC stakeholders. We wanted to know the perceived strengths, weaknesses and reputation of the organization in order to better calibrate the future direction we will take. The results of the survey have also provided excellent data for use in implementing the 2006 vision and plan for the Board as articulated at our December '05 Board meeting.

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public policy

What we found was that CRC is held in almost universal high regard by those who deal with public policy in Michigan. Comments from interviewees characterized CRC as a “unique” organization, “vitally important,” with a “sterling reputation” for dispassionate, unbiased research. CRC was described as a “bright light” shining in the dark recesses of public policy.

Significantly, an overwhelming majority of those surveyed responded that not only is CRC needed, that need is growing. Criticisms, such as they were, tended to reflect frustration that CRC research does not extend to enough issues.

We are acutely aware of the importance of providing the Citizens Research Council with the resources it needs to provide the citizens of Michi-

gan with the factual analysis they need to assess state and local government policies. As one of the survey respondents said:

“No one provides the kind of neutral, dispassionate, objective commentary on issues that CRC does. So, in my opinion, no, they have no competitors.”

It is clear, then, that in a polarized political environment, in which the truth often is submerged in partisan rhetoric, CRC has an enormous responsibility to help policy makers, the media, and citizens find the truth.

In 2006, the Council will celebrate its 90<sup>th</sup> year and will be making a concerted effort to assure that we can discharge this responsibility for years to come and continue to shine a “bright light” on public policy in Michigan.

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## About the Citizens Research Council

**T**he Citizens Research Council is a privately funded, not-for-profit public affairs research organization. The objective of CRC is to provide factual, unbiased, independent information on significant issues concerning state and local government organization and finance. The Research Council believes that the use of this information will lead to sound, rational public policy formation in Michigan.

As a result of the objectivity of CRC, it is often the only organization that can address controversial issues in a credible fashion

The hallmark of the Citizens Research Council is timely, reliable information researched in an independent, nonpartisan manner. The Research Council does not lobby, support or oppose candidates for public office, or take positions on ballot issues. As a result of the objectivity of CRC, it is often the only organization that can address controversial issues in a credible fashion.

### CRC Core Values

The single most distinguishing attribute of the work of the Citizens Research Council is credibility. Credibility is achieved and maintained over time by adherence to three principles: accuracy, objectivity, and independence.

**Accuracy** CRC staff strive to assure that every fact and every statement in a Research Council report is accurate and reliable in every respect. It

is recognized that one small error in an otherwise well-researched report can cast doubt on the entire report and that a succession of such errors can destroy the credibility of the organization.

**Objectivity** Although many issues considered by the Citizens Research Council have political undertones, CRC analyses are noted for their balanced, unbiased approach to such issues. The Citizens Research Council attempts to analyze and reflect as many responsible points-of-view as possible in the conduct and presentation of its research results.

**Independence** The Citizens Research Council attempts to define and represent the broader public interest in any given issue. The Research Council was not established to represent any special interest. Its value is derived in large measure from its independent stance on issues of public importance.

Over the years, the Citizens Research Council has adhered to these three principles and has maintained a high degree of credibility with public officials and citizens and has become the most respected voice on state and local government organization and finance in Michigan.

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## Research Highlights

In 2005, the Citizens Research Council focused on some of the most critical issues confronting Michigan. Reports released include an analysis of Certificate of Need program and an analysis of K-12 public school capital financing. A compendium of local services from 467 counties, cities, villages and townships was collected and organized on the CRC website with an accompanying summary report. The newly updated *Outline of the Michigan Tax System* was released and an analysis of local ballot issues from the 2004 General Election.

In short, CRC continued to build on its reputation of providing policy makers and opinion leaders with independent, nonpartisan information necessary to affect sound government decision making.

## CRC Reports

*Certificate of Need Program* The Michigan Certificate of Need (CON) program has been the subject of heightened debate and review in recent years. The CRC Report released in February, 2005, *The Michigan Certificate of Need Program*, described the CON program by detailing its legal history, summarizing the review standards by which applications are accepted or denied and examining current issues.

*Adequacy, Equity and Capital Spending in Michigan Schools: The Unfinished Business of Proposal A* This publication reported that big disparities remain in capital needs among the state's 553 school districts and estimated the value of unmet capital needs in the Michigan public school system at approximately \$8.7 billion. That amounts to about \$5,000 for every student enrolled in Michigan's public schools. This CRC

## Update on Michigan Retired Teacher Pension and Health Care Benefits

In September 2004, CRC published a report titled, *Financing Michigan Retired Teacher Pension and Health Care Benefits*. It contained projections of the contribution requirements local school districts can expect to pay in the future for cash pensions and retiree health care. Projections indicated that contributions, as a percentage of total payrolls, can be expected to approximately double in the next 15 years, unless changes are made in the benefit structure. The report also identified changes in the system for consideration by policy-makers interested in reducing future cost increases.

The analysis was performed because school districts and other system members frequently expressed the need for projected contribution requirements for budget planning purposes. CRC was aware that the effects of the stock market crash in 2001 and 2002 would continue to drive contribution requirements for cash pensions up until near the end of the decade, and the cash disbursement method of funding retiree health benefits assured continuing increases in contribution requirements into the foreseeable future.

After the report's release, presentations were made to statewide associations in the school community and other organizations involved public school policy-making. In January 2005, at the invitation of the chair of the Senate Education Committee, a briefing on the report's findings was provided by CRC staff to the committee. Following that presentation, interest was expressed by members of the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives in changes in both the cash pension benefits as well as retiree health benefits. Although no legislation passed by the end of 2005, House Bill 4947 which would amend both cash pension benefits and retiree health benefit for new employees, is likely to continue to receive consideration in 2006.

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Report was the product of a collaborative research project conducted by the Citizens Research Council of Michigan and the Education Policy Center at Michigan State University. Financial support for the project was provided by the W.K. Kellogg, Skillman, and Frey foundations.

## CRC Memorandums

### *Catalog of Local Government Services in Michigan*

Early in 2005, the Citizens Research Council of Michigan engaged in a project to analyze the financial problems and the service delivery methods of Michigan's local governments. A CRC Memorandum, *Catalog of Local Government Services in Michigan*, summarized the findings of a survey sent to 670 county, city, and village governments in 24 Michigan counties to better understand how local units deliver services.

The *Catalog* reported information about the services delivered by each of the 467 local governments that responded to the survey and about current examples of intergovernmental cooperation, interaction among the local units and the counties, special authorities that have been created to provide services, and instances of local governments relying on private providers for service delivery. The project was supported by grants from the C.S. Mott, Earhart, Frey and Gilmore foundations and the Community Foundation for Muskegon County.

## CRC Note

### *Local Ballot Issues in the 2004 General Election*

A CRC Note reported that almost three-quarters of the 459 ballot issues faced by Michigan local voters in November 2004 involved taxes with the remainder consisting of various issues pertaining to local governance. Of the 349 tax

issues, 220 (63%) were approved, but the approval rate varied widely depending on whether the tax was a new levy or a renewal and what the tax was to support. CRC analyzed the 459 ballot issues - 49 county, 127 city, 269 townships, 10 special authority, and 5 public school district - in the 2004 general election. (Note: the number of ballot issues discussed in the paper added up to 460 - one city issue is counted twice because it encompasses a governance and tax question)

## Recent Publications

### CRC Memorandums

- 1079 Catalog of Local Government Services in Michigan
- 1077 Proposal E: Form of Governance for the Detroit Public Schools
- 1076 State Ballot Issues on the November General Election Ballot
- 1075 Michigan Hospital Finances: Fiscal Years 1998-2002
- 1074 Medicaid Eligibility
- 1073 The Problematic Fiscal Year 2003-04 State Budget
- 1072 Medicaid Health Care Services
- 1071 Medicaid - What It Is and How It Works
- 1070 Organization of State of Michigan Education Functions

### CRC Reports

- 338 The Michigan Certificate of Need Program
- 337 Financing Michigan Retired Teacher Pension and Health Care Benefits
- 336 Employment Trends in State Government, FY1966-FY2003
- 335 Organization of State of Michigan Education Functions

### CRC Notes

- 2005-01 Local Ballot Issues in the 2004 General Election

### Joint Report with Michigan State University

- Adequacy, Equity and Capital Spending in Michigan Schools: The Unfinished Business of Proposal A

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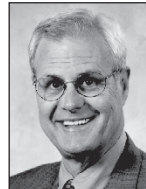


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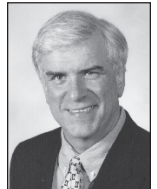


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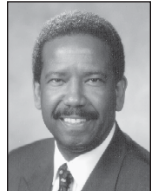
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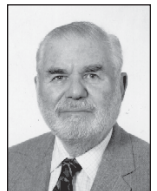
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## Research Highlights, Cont.

### 2006 Research Agenda

CRC will continue to monitor the State's structural budget deficit and prepare publications when appropriate and continue to address groups interested in this issue. Two major projects were started in 2005 and are anticipated to be completed in 2006 including the analysis of alternative ten-year economic scenarios on state spending policies and further analysis of local government response to financial pressures. CRC will also prepare analyses of issues placed on the statewide ballot at the General Election in November 2006.

*Analysis of Alternative Ten-year Economic Scenarios on State Spending Policies* In 2005, CRC and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research began a comprehensive analysis of the Michigan economy and state and local government finance. By the end of 2005, base data collection for revenues and expenditures for 1994 through 2005 was almost completed as well as initial economic projections from 2005 to 2015.

In 2006, CRC plans to release a report that will review the past decade and scenarios ten years into the future. Projections of government finance will be based on the economic projections and will include governmental revenues and expenditures. Publication of this analysis is expected to shape the election-year debate concerning the economy and government finance.

*Local Government Response To Fiscal Pressure* CRC started a multi-phased project regarding opportunities for interlocal cooperation in 2005. Phase 1 of the project was completed in 2005 and surveyed 467 local units of government in 24 Michi-

gan counties to determine how local services were delivered. The CRC Memorandum, *Catalog of Local Government Services in Michigan* summarized the findings of this survey.

The final phases, to be completed in 2006, will 1) analyze state law and the role of the state in facilitating intergovernmental cooperation and 2) require another survey to gather information about the fiscal pressures affecting local governments in Michigan. Surveys will be mailed to 130 local government units to identify the nature and extent of the structural fiscal problems facing local governments in Michigan, both in terms of revenue constraints and expenditure pressures.

## CRC News & Events

### CRC Budget Presentations and Forums

Since 2001, CRC has closely monitored the structural budget problem facing the State of Michigan and has kept this issue in front of policy makers, the media and citizens through periodic CRC Memorandums and by giving presentations.

In 2005, CRC's Director of State Affairs, Tom Clay, responded to over 70 requests for presentations and other speaking engagements address-

### Get CRC Reports Instantly

Most CRC reports are now published only online, although hard copies will be supplied on request. You can access them immediately on the CRC website if you sign up for CRC's E-Mail Update Service. To do this, go the CRC website, [www.crcmich.org](http://www.crcmich.org), click on the "E-Mail Update Service" tab and follow the directions. Or call us at (734) 542-8001. We will then send you e-mail notification of new CRC publications as soon as they are posted on the website.



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ing this important issue. A sampling of the groups that took part in the presentations are listed in the box below.

In addition to responding to requests for presentations, CRC conducted two forums addressing what continued to be Michigan's most critical issue: Michigan's structural budget deficit. The purpose of the forums was twofold: to disseminate information on the nature and severity of the structural deficit issue and to introduce to selected public and private sector guests the work of the Citizens Research Council.

The first forum took place before the Kalamazoo Rotary Club on February 7, 2005, at the Radisson Plaza Hotel & Suites in Kalamazoo. Sponsors for the event included the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation. An audience of close to 300 heard CRC's Director of State Affairs, Tom Clay, talk about Michigan's structural deficit.

The second forum, held at UM-Dearborn, was organized as a discussion of Michigan's structural deficit and the resulting challenges for the state's economy. The program featured a presentation by CRC's Tom Clay and was followed by comments from experts and community leaders, including: Ahmad Chebbani, American Arab Chamber of Commerce; Jonathan W. Clement, Health Alliance Plan; and UM-Dearborn economics professor, Bruce Pietrykowski. The program was sponsored by the Forum for Innovative Leadership, a collaboration of UM-Dearborn, The Henry Ford, and the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce; the UM-Dearborn Business-Education Roundtable; and CRC.

## Presentations on Michigan's Structural Budget Deficit

During 2005, CRC staff gave over 70 presentations summarizing CRC's findings of the state structural budget deficit. A sampling of the groups that took part in the presentations is as follows:

Lansing Rotary	Lansing
East Lansing Kiwanis	East Lansing
Southfield Foundation Budget Forum	Southfield
Kellogg Foundation Budget Forum	Battle Creek
Detroit Renaissance Board	Detroit
Michigan Building Trades Council	Sault Ste Marie
Education Reform Initiative	Grand Rapids
State Employees Retirement Association	Lansing
Benton Harbor Area Schools	Benton Harbor
WNMU Public Radio	Marquette
Upper Peninsula Education Legislative Forum	Marquette
Michigan School Business Officials	Gaylord
Jack Lessenberry Show (radio)	Ann Arbor
Michigan Non-Profit Association	Lansing
Michigan Federation for Children and Families	Traverse City

## Eighty-ninth Annual Meeting

The 2005 Annual Meeting of the Citizens Research Council was held at the Detroit Athletic Club in Detroit, Michigan on September 27, 2005, and, by all accounts, was a huge success.

The meeting began with a panel discussion on the *Future of Michigan's Economy* which included comments from Dr. Randall W. Eberts, Executive Director, W.E. Upjohn Institute and Dr. Saul Hymans, Senior Economist, RSQE, University of Michigan. The panel was moderated by Dr. Rebecca M. Blank, Dean, Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan. The presentations focused on the dire straits of the Michigan economy. Following the annual business meeting, David L. Hunke, President and Publisher, Detroit Free Press, addressed the participants.

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## CRC News & Events, Cont.

### Thanks to Annual Meeting Sponsors

The 2005 Annual Meeting would not have been a success without the participation of our sponsors. Sponsors of the event include: Platinum--LaSalle Bank; Gold -- DaimlerChrysler Corporation; and Silver--Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Michigan, Comerica Incorporated, DTE Energy Company, General Motors Corporation, Kelly Services, Inc., Masco Corporation, and National City Bank of Michigan/Illinois. Thanks to all for your generous support.

### Officers, Directors and Trustees Elected

At the September 27, 2005, Annual Meeting, the Citizens Research Council elected officers of the Board of Directors for the coming year. Elected Chairman, **Kent J. Vana**, Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt & Howlett LLP; Vice Chairman, **Eugene A. Gargaro, Jr.**, Masco Corporation; Treasurer, **Jeffrey D. Bergeron**, Ernst & Young LLP; and Presi-

dent & Secretary, **Earl M. Ryan**. Two additions were made to the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting. The CRC board welcomes new directors **Jerry E. Rush**, ArvinMeritor, Inc. and **Nancy M. Schlichting**, Henry Ford Health System.

Also at the September 27, 2005, Annual Meeting, the Citizens Research Council selected officers of the Board of Trustees. Elected Chairman, **Patrick J. Ledwidge**, Dickinson Wright PLLC and Vice Chairman, **Mark A. Murray**, Grand Valley State University.

Several additions were made to the CRC Board of Trustees including: **David G. Frey**, Frey Foundation; **Eugene A. Gargaro, Jr.**, Masco Corporation; **Paul C. Hillemonds**, DTE Energy Company; **David L. Hunke**, Detroit Free Press; **David C. Sharp**, The Flint Journal; **Sam Logan**, Michigan Chronicle; **Leslie E. Wong**, Northern Michigan University; and **Douglas B. Roberts**, IPPSR-Michigan State University.

### CRC Trustee Reception

The first-ever Trustee Reception was held on December 1, 2005, at the Bloomfield Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The purpose of the reception was to bring together members of the CRC Board of Directors, the trustees and staff. The meeting featured a presentation by Tom Clay, CRC Director of State Affairs, on Michigan's structural budget problem.

CRC plans to bring our trustees together in 2006 again as a way of building inclusiveness among the Board of Trustees, directors and staff. Many things can be shared, ranging from exciting new research projects to the new branding activity underway to raise CRC statewide visibility.



David L. Hunke, President and Publisher, Detroit Free Press, gave an upbeat talk at the CRC Annual Meeting on reasons to talk about Detroit.

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## CRC Hosted GRA/NTC Conference

In July, 2005, CRC hosted the combined conference of the Governmental Research Association (GRA) and the National Taxpayers Conference (NTC) in Ann Arbor. GRA, established in 1914, is a national organization of individuals professionally engaged in government research. NTC is a private, nonprofit corporation whose members are the full-time chief executive officers of statewide associations devoted to the pursuit of objective and unbiased analysis of public finance issues in their states.

Conference sessions addressed issues ranging from budgeting strategies to adapting tax structures to an evolving economy to trends in the evolution of state/local responsibilities for collection and funding of government services.

## CRC Branding Activities

In 2005, CRC retained Publicom, Inc. to undertake a broad-based brand analysis and evaluation of CRC's brand image to help increase awareness of CRC in Michigan. A survey of CRC stakeholders was conducted to gain a better understanding of the organization including its strengths, weaknesses and reputation. Findings from these interviews include that there is agreement among the stakeholders as to what CRC is and what purpose it serves; CRC is held in high regard with respect to reputation, independence, thoroughness, timeliness and objectivity; and there is general agreement that CRC is needed, and that need is growing.

As a result of the analysis, areas were identified that require CRC to develop strategies to strengthen its brand image. While CRC is very well known among its supporters and in policy circles in Lansing, it lacks brand awareness among

the larger population and among some key stakeholder groups. The goal of the branding process is for CRC to gain higher visibility and to establish more effective communication with legislators and business leaders. Success in these areas will result in an increase in CRC fund raising efforts.

Revised branding concepts were developed by Publicom, Inc., reviewed by the CRC Board of Directors and implementation steps will begin in 2006. It is anticipated that efforts to develop materials and communication strategies to improve CRC's brand image will be a high priority for CRC throughout 2006.

## CRC Recruits Campaign Leadership

CRC's Development Task Force, established in 2004 to enhance CRC fund development activities, recommended to the CRC Board of Directors that CRC undertake a 5-year development plan. The Task Force worked throughout 2005 to develop the fund raising plan, identify strategies, and recruit campaign leadership. The campaign will be headed by two groups of volunteers that were recruited in 2005: Campaign Co-Chairs and Campaign Cabinet.

Campaign Co-Chairs are **Alfred R. and Ruth Glancy, Frank M. Hennessey, and Amanda Van Dusen**. Campaign Cabinet members include: **Jeffrey D. Bergeron; Deborah I. Dingell; David O. Egner; W. Frank Fountain; Eugene A. Gargaro, Jr.; Allan D. Gilmour; Paul Hillegonds; John S. Jackoboice; James B. Nicholson; Donald R. Parfet; Philip H. Power; S. Martin Taylor; and Kent J. Vana.**

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