

2026 Michigan Defense Economy Candidate Questionnaire

State Offices: Michigan House, Michigan Senate, and Governor

• November 2026 General Election • theDRDC.org

Return no later than September 14, 5pm Return to: info@thedrdc.org

Candidate	John James	Office sought	Governor
District	Statewide	Party (if applicable)	Republican

Why this matters

Michigan's defense and aerospace ecosystem is both a national-security asset and an economic engine. It connects military installations and commands, federal civilian expertise, prime contractors, thousands of suppliers, universities, skilled trades, engineers, and dual-use innovators. Decisions made in Washington and Lansing directly affect readiness, industrial capacity, high-wage employment, and Michigan's ability to compete for future missions and investment.

DRDC independently prepared this questionnaire using its defense-focused economic-development expertise and review of publicly available state, federal, regional, and industry data. Source citations document the underlying figures; they do not indicate participation in, sponsorship of, or endorsement of this questionnaire by any cited organization.

DRDC's Michigan defense economy snapshot

\$30 billion	Approximate annual statewide defense-and-aerospace economic activity.[1]
166,000+ jobs	Michigan jobs supported across defense and aerospace.[1]
75% regional share	Southeast Michigan—the region represented by DRDC—accounts for approximately 75% of Michigan's defense economy.[8]
4,000+ + 900	More than 4,000 defense suppliers and 900 aerospace suppliers.[1]
\$7.2 billion	Direct federal defense spending in Michigan in FY2024: \$5.0B in contracts, \$1.5B in payroll, plus other spending.[2]
23,700 personnel	FY2024 DoD footprint: about 854 active-duty, 10,000 civilian, and 12,900 Reserve and Guard personnel in Michigan.[2]
6,000+ people	Detroit Arsenal's Michigan-based workforce, supporting Army ground-systems acquisition, research, contracting, logistics, and sustainment.[3]

17 assets

Military commands, organizations, and installations statewide, including Detroit Arsenal, Selfridge ANGB, Camp Grayling/NADWC, Alpena CRTC, Fort Custer, and Battle Creek ANGB.[1]

DRDC analysis: how the ripple effect works. Federal contracts and payroll first support direct jobs and purchases. Contractors then buy from Michigan subcontractors and service providers (indirect effects), while workers spend wages in local communities (induced effects). The widely cited \$30 billion figure is a broad economic-impact estimate; it should not be treated as a formal multiplier applied to the \$7.2 billion FY2024 spending figure because the source years and definitions differ.

Michigan primes and the supplier network

Publicly available information reviewed by DRDC identifies major defense and aerospace employers with operations in the state, including General Dynamics Land Systems, BAE Systems, American Rheinmetall, GM Defense, GE Aerospace, SAPA Transmission, AM General, RTX/Raytheon, Oshkosh Defense, RENK America, Saab, and many others. Published project examples include:

- American Rheinmetall: 450 new Michigan jobs announced with a \$31.7 million expansion in 2025; the company reports more than 1,500 employees across its multistate U.S. footprint.[6]
- Saab: 70 new high-paying jobs announced with a \$75 million Grayling Township manufacturing facility.[7]
- Macomb County alone received more than 4,800 defense contract actions worth \$3.2 billion in 2024.[4]

Michigan does not publish a current, standardized Michigan-only employee count for every named prime. Accordingly, this questionnaire uses the state's 166,000+ supported-jobs total and clearly labeled state-announced project commitments rather than mixing incompatible or stale company headcounts. These examples are not additive employment totals.

Instructions to candidates

Please answer every question. Check the applicable response and provide the requested concise explanation, action, funding level, and timeline. "Support" without a specific action or timetable may be interpreted as a general statement rather than a measurable commitment. Unless otherwise noted, please limit each narrative response to 150 words.

All questionnaires received by the stated deadline will be published verbatim and simultaneously on the DRDC website and shared through DRDC's social media channels, industry forums, and relevant news outlets. Candidate responses will be published without editing, analysis, or evaluative commentary by DRDC.

This is each candidate's opportunity to speak directly to Michigan's defense and aerospace community—in their own words.

Returned by: Greg Brock

Date: September 14th, 2026

State candidate questions

1. Will protecting and expanding Michigan's defense and aerospace economy be a stated priority in your first term?

☒ Yes—top-tier priority ☐ Yes—important priority ☐ No ☐ Undecided

Identify the priority level and one statewide outcome you will pursue.

Protecting and expanding Michigan's defense and aerospace economy will be a top priority of my administration, just as it has been for me during my service in the U.S. Congress. I served eight years in the U.S. Army and flew Apache helicopters in combat in Iraq, so I understand firsthand that military readiness depends on a strong defense industrial base.

In Congress, I have fought to strengthen Michigan's defense assets, particularly Selfridge, and built relationships across the military, Congress, federal agencies, and defense industry that I will bring to the Governor's office.

Michigan has unmatched advantages: world-class manufacturing, engineering talent, strategic military installations, the Great Lakes, and an international border. My statewide goal is to make Michigan the premier state for defense manufacturing and military readiness by protecting existing missions, winning new ones, expanding federal defense investment, and creating more high-paying defense and aerospace jobs.

2. Will you support dedicated state leadership and reliable funding to protect and grow Michigan's defense and aerospace economy?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Conditional—explain

Describe the state functions you believe are most important—such as business attraction, company assistance, workforce development, policy advocacy, or coordination—and the funding or accountability you would support.

Michigan needs dedicated leadership that understands the defense industry, the business world, and how decisions are made in Washington. As a combat veteran and member of Congress, I have relationships across the federal government, military, and defense community that can immediately be put to work for Michigan.

My administration will coordinate federal advocacy, military mission protection, business attraction, workforce development, infrastructure, and assistance for Michigan companies seeking defense contracts.

I support reliable funding where it advances a clear strategic objective, but I do not support blank-check corporate subsidies. State investments must have measurable outcomes and accountability, including missions protected or gained, federal dollars leveraged, contracts won, private investment

generated, and jobs created or retained. Michigan should compete primarily through lower taxes, faster permitting, reliable energy, skilled workers, strong infrastructure, and a results-focused government.

3. What will you do to protect Detroit Arsenal, its workforce, its Army mission, and the Michigan businesses that depend on it?

Identify the state actions you would take—such as advocacy, workforce support, infrastructure, research partnerships, or coordination with federal officials—and provide a timeframe.

Detroit Arsenal is critical to Army modernization, Michigan's defense economy, and the manufacturers and workers supporting the warfighter. Protecting it requires a Governor who understands the military and can effectively advocate for Michigan at the federal level.

As an Army combat veteran, former Apache pilot, and member of Congress, I understand both the mission and the federal decision-making process. I will use my relationships with military leaders, Congress, federal agencies, and the defense industry to advocate for Detroit Arsenal from day one.

Within my first year, my administration will establish regular coordination among Army leadership, Michigan's congressional delegation, manufacturers, universities, workforce partners, and local officials. A key part of that effort will be working with Michigan's congressional delegation to protect and grow the federal contracting dollars flowing through TACOM and ensure more of those investments support Michigan manufacturers, suppliers, and workers.

We will identify opportunities to expand missions, address infrastructure and workforce needs, strengthen research partnerships, and ensure Michigan is competing for opportunities before decisions are made—not reacting after they are gone.

4. Will you support state investment and policies that protect and expand Michigan's military bases, training centers, and testing facilities?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Conditional—explain

Identify the actions you would support for assets such as Selfridge, Camp Grayling, Alpena, Fort Custer, or Battle Creek and how you would judge whether the investment is successful.

My record at Selfridge demonstrates how I will approach every Michigan military asset. In Congress, I helped secure \$451.9 million in the House-passed FY2027 National Defense Authorization Act for Selfridge, building on my work to bring the F-15EX and next-generation tanker missions to the base and ensure it is prepared for the future.

As an Army combat veteran and former Apache helicopter pilot, I understand that readiness requires investment before the mission arrives. As Governor, I will bring that experience—and my relationships across Congress, the military, and federal government—to Selfridge, Camp Grayling, Alpena, Fort Custer, Battle Creek, and other strategic assets. I have already written to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth advocating for Fort Custer to be designated as a site for the Golden Dome missile defense initiative, and I will continue fighting to bring new missions and defense investment to Michigan. At Camp Grayling, I support hardening facilities, upgrading security, and protecting sensitive training and military operations from foreign espionage threats, including threats from China.

That same commitment extends to the Soo Locks, a vital national security, economic, and supply-chain asset. In Congress, I introduced the bipartisan Soo Locks Security and Economic Reporting Act of 2023, requiring the Departments of Transportation and Defense, in coordination with the Coast Guard, to assess security deficiencies at the Locks, examine the economic and supply-chain consequences of a disruption, and recommend improvements to strengthen their resiliency.

I will work alongside Michigan's congressional delegation to ensure our installations are positioned to compete for new missions and federal investment. I will measure success by missions gained and retained, federal investment leveraged, readiness and security improvements, and jobs supported. Michigan will compete to win the next mission, not simply fight to keep the last one

5. How will you help Michigan manufacturers enter the defense market or win more defense work?

Describe the practical assistance you would support—such as help with federal requirements, cybersecurity, quality standards, workforce needs, or introductions to larger contractors—and identify one measurable goal.

Michigan already has one of America's strongest manufacturing supply chains. Our job is to help more Michigan companies turn that expertise into defense contracts.

My administration will help small and mid-sized manufacturers navigate federal contracting, cybersecurity requirements, quality standards, certifications, workforce needs, and connections with prime contractors. We will also strengthen partnerships among manufacturers, universities, military installations, and research institutions to move Michigan technology into defense applications.

That builds on my work in Congress supporting resilient domestic supply chains and advanced manufacturing through the Promoting Resilient Supply Chains Act.

I know manufacturing from both sides—as a Michigan business leader and as a combat veteran who depended on American-made equipment. My measurable goal will be to increase both the number of Michigan companies participating in the defense supply chain and the value of federal defense contracts awarded to Michigan businesses during my first term.

6. What state tools will you support to attract new defense companies and help existing Michigan defense employers expand?

Address the types of incentives, available sites, infrastructure, permitting assistance, research partnerships, or other support you favor, along with safeguards for public funds.

Michigan should compete for defense investment based on fundamentals, not by writing the biggest corporate subsidy check.

My administration will lower taxes, streamline permitting, ensure reliable and affordable energy, strengthen infrastructure, develop shovel-ready sites, and build the skilled workforce defense employers need. We will also support research partnerships and targeted infrastructure assistance when they provide a clear strategic benefit.

My experience growing a Michigan business taught me that companies need predictability and a government that treats them like customers, not obstacles.

Any direct state assistance must include transparency, measurable job and investment commitments, performance requirements, and clawbacks when companies fail to deliver. For defense projects, we should also consider their strategic value to Michigan and national security. The goal is not simply to attract individual projects; it is to build an environment where defense manufacturers can invest, expand, and remain in Michigan for decades.

7. What will you do to develop and retain the workers Michigan's defense industry needs?

Address skilled trades, engineers, veterans, National Guard families, colleges, universities, apprenticeships, or other workforce approaches, and state at least one measurable goal.

Michigan cannot lead America's defense economy if we continue losing engineers, machinists, welders, technicians, and skilled tradespeople to other states.

My workforce plan includes a Retention and Relocation Worker Tax Credit for shortage occupations and a 100% tax credit for employers providing scholarships and training in high-demand fields. We will expand apprenticeships, strengthen career and technical education, and better align colleges and universities with the needs of defense, engineering, manufacturing, cybersecurity, and skilled trades.

As a veteran, I also want military training and experience translated more efficiently into civilian credentials and careers so veterans and Guard members can continue serving Michigan's economy.

My administration will set measurable goals to increase defense-related apprenticeships and technical credentials, fill critical workforce shortages, and retain graduates in Michigan. Our objective is simple: train Michigan talent, keep Michigan talent, and attract skilled workers back to Michigan.

8. Will you support the Michigan National Guard through competitive member benefits, updated facilities, employer support, and policies that improve recruitment and retention?

☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Conditional—explain

Identify the benefit, policy, or investment you would champion and when you would act.

Having worn the uniform, I understand that Guard recruitment and retention ultimately come down to how we treat service members and their families. My experience as an Army combat veteran and Apache helicopter pilot also uniquely prepares me to serve as Commander-in-Chief of the Michigan National Guard. I understand the demands we place on our service members, the importance of readiness, and the responsibility that comes with leading those who wear the uniform.

During my first budget cycle, I will compare Michigan's Guard benefits, facilities, education assistance, family support, and recruitment and retention programs with those of competing states and address areas where Michigan is falling behind.

I will prioritize facility modernization tied to readiness and future missions, strengthen partnerships with employers of Guard members, and improve pathways from military service into Michigan careers in aviation, engineering, cybersecurity, manufacturing, health care, and skilled trades.

This will be part of my broader "Fortress Michigan" plan to maximize Michigan's unique role in America's national security and border security strategy. We will recruit and support defense manufacturers, strengthen the industrial base that supplies our warfighters, invest in our military installations, and position Michigan to compete for the missions and defense jobs of the future.

My work securing the future of Selfridge demonstrates that commitment. Michigan's Guard members should know they will have a Governor who understands their service because I have lived it—and who will fight to ensure they have the missions, facilities, resources, and support they need to succeed.

9. If you currently or previously held public office, what specific actions have you taken to support Michigan defense missions, employees, installations, or companies?

List legislation, appropriations, budget actions, advocacy, convenings, or development projects and the result. If none, state "None."

I served eight years in the U.S. Army and flew Apache helicopters in combat in Iraq. In Congress, I have made protecting Michigan's defense assets—especially Selfridge—a major priority.

I have advocated for the F-15EX fighter and next-generation tanker missions and testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the urgent need to fund preparations at Selfridge. I have helped build bipartisan, bicameral support so Michigan speaks with one voice, and I have fought for hundreds of millions of dollars in federal investment associated with Selfridge's future.

I have also worked to strengthen domestic manufacturing and critical supply chains through the Promoting Resilient Supply Chains Act.

These efforts have given me relationships across Congress, the military, federal agencies, and the defense community. As Governor, Michigan will benefit from those relationships immediately—we won't start from scratch.

10. What will you accomplish within your first 100 days and first 12 months to advance Michigan's defense economy?

Provide one action and deadline for each period. Gubernatorial candidates should also identify the lead agency or senior official; legislative candidates should identify the committee, bill, budget item, or caucus action they will pursue.

First 100 days: I will establish a Governor-led Michigan Defense and Aerospace Strategy and designate a senior official to protect military missions and grow Michigan's defense industrial base. We will immediately convene military installations, manufacturers, universities, workforce leaders, local communities, and Michigan's congressional delegation.

First 12 months: My administration will implement a statewide plan to protect existing missions, compete for new missions, increase Michigan's share of federal defense contracts, expand the defense manufacturing

supply chain, and develop the workforce needed for next-generation defense production.

We will measure missions gained or protected, federal investment leveraged, contracts awarded to Michigan businesses, private investment, and jobs.

As a combat veteran, former Apache pilot, business leader, and member of Congress, I already have relationships throughout the federal government and defense community. I will put them to work for Michigan on day one.

Sources and data notes

1. **State of Michigan, published defense-and-aerospace industry figures and FY2025 strategic report.** <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/industries/defense/>
2. **U.S. Department of Defense, Michigan State Fact Sheet (FY2024).** https://www.repi.mil/Portals/44/Michigan_StateFacts_1.pdf
3. **U.S. Army TACOM, “Serving at the Detroit Arsenal”.** <https://tacom.army.mil/about/detroit-arsenal>
4. **Macomb County Planning & Economic Development, A&D Intel Quarterly (March 2025).** <https://www.macombgov.org/node/53/news/intel-quarterly-march-2025>
5. **State of Michigan, “Reimagining the Arsenal of Democracy” (July 2025).** <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/news/2025/07/reimagining-the-arsenal-of-democracy-how-michigan-leads-the-defense-industry/>
6. **State of Michigan, American Rheinmetall expansion announcement (Sept. 2025).** <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/press-releases/2025/09/rheinmetall/>
7. **State of Michigan, Saab Grayling facility announcement.** <https://www.michiganbusiness.org/industries/defense/>
8. **Detroit Regional Defense Coalition, Southeast Michigan regional defense-economy analysis.** <https://theDRDC.org>

Interpretation note

DRDC compiled, reviewed, and contextualized these figures as part of its independent defense-economic-development work. Counts are rounded and reflect the most recent authoritative or publicly reported figures located as of August 17, 2026. “Defense economy,” “defense and aerospace,” “suppliers,” direct federal spending, and economic impact are not identical measures. The questionnaire keeps those measures separate to avoid double counting or implying a model-derived multiplier that the cited sources do not establish. Citations identify original public sources and do not imply that any cited organization participated in, sponsored, approved, or endorsed this questionnaire.

Candidate certification

I certify that these responses reflect my positions and commitments as of the date signed and may be published verbatim.

Signature: John James

Date: 09/14/26

Printed name: John James

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