

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	_Mark Tisdell_____	Office sought	State Rep_____
District	55_____	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: _____ date: _____ Questions: _____

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.

Michigan is blessed with a large representation of engineers and a history of defense industry manufacturing. No reason to deny these advantages

now. _____

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 to be the easiest state in the US to open and operate a business, of any kind. We are a cold state, with uncompetitive CIT rate high electricity costs, and underperforming public schools. We have a lot of work to do.

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.

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.

Michigan's location on a significant US asset, the Great Lakes, and proximity to—and huge border—with Canada represent significant risks. Selfridge, Camp Grayling, and other Michigan defense assets must be protected and expended.

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.

I will work closely with our Caucus leadership and, hopefully, a Governor with significant military experience, to ensure the US Defense Department and associated vendors see Michigan as an obvious, necessary, and attractive environment with building upon of strategic defense posture.

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.

Corporate incentives, in my opinion, must be built around four components: 1. Any grants must be reimbursement grants through filed for through state and US tax forms. 2. Grants will be overseen by the Treasury Department. 3. Any surplus grant dollars (likely limited if issued as reimbursements) must be transferable so all businesses can participate. 4. Any Michigan business that enacts the described activities, defense industry or not, must be eligible for the reimbursement grant benefits.

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 is already well-positioned to incorporate broad involvement in defense industry needs. President Trump has identified our historic role in defense manufacturing. We must ensure that the permitting processes and tax structures are competitive and, ideally, superior to any state in the nation. I listed the cold, expensive, underperforming schools challenges above. We can't do anything about the average January temperature, but all the issues can and must be addressed.

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

X Yes ☐ No ☐ Conditional—explain

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

Support of our National Guard personnel, bases, and assets is often met with additional federal support / benefits. Maximizing National Guard development and presence is simply maximizing federal investment within our state.

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."

_My caucus has consistently supported active duty, veteran , and disabled veteran benefits—including spouses—from my first day in office in Jan 2021. Whether it's been employer / employee issues, health benefits, property tax advantages, or seeking higher education. We have been supportive 100% of the time.

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.

Much of my first 100 days of the next term will be determined by which party controls the House and who sits in the Governor's seat. My caucus has a significant number of exceptional military veterans as members. I look forward to working with them, hopefully as Finance Chair, to pass meaningful legislation built upon our long history as the arsenal of democracy.

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: Mark A Tisdell_____ Date:
_9/10/26_____

Printed name: Mark A Tisdell_____

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