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Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City

Born and raised in Traverse City, Sen. Jason Allen, representing the 37th Senate District, has a passion for northern Michigan and serving those around him.

From 1999 through 2002, Allen served in the Michigan House of Representatives. He is currently in his second and final term in the Michigan Senate.

As chair of the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee, he is working to raise the profile of tourism in Michigan. "Tourism is an economic engine for this state, not just a source for photos and memories of Michigan's beauty and resources," Allen said. "I am extremely pleased to chair the Commerce and Tourism Committee, both for the impact it has on northern Michigan and the opportunity it gives me to work with my very talented Senate colleagues and staff on important programs."

In addition to promoting our state's assets through tourism, Allen believes that state and local governments must make Michigan friendly to job-providers.

"We need to continue working on a business-friendly economic climate with fair, but expedient, regulation," Allen said. "I continue to be discouraged when I hear that locating a major manufacturing plant in Michigan took 84 state and local governmental approvals and consumed months to accomplish, when in comparison a similar plant was located in South Carolina with one week of paperwork and approvals."

For much of this legislative term, regionalism and consolidation of local government have continued to be the buzz topic in the capital city. Allen says he expects these types of discussions to continue, but he "will only support voluntary consolidation, and will strongly oppose any state mandates that go against the better judgment of local township officials and the impact on the local residents," he said.

"Township government is critically vital to the future of this state," he continued. "I've always maintained that not only are all politics local, but services to local residents are best administered and maintained on a local basis. During my career as a state legislator, I have had the good fortune to meet hundreds of dedicated township officials from throughout northern Michigan. I continue to be impressed with the insights they give me on local issues that impact state policy, and their wise guidance and counsel helps me understand issues."

With just under three years left in his Senate term, Allen is focusing his attention on "listening to the constituents in my district and working hard to pass programs that are in their best interest," he said.



Sen. Jason Allen and Senate colleagues introduce a comprehensive package of bills designed to help Michigan veterans and their families.

"I came to Lansing to represent the interests of the people of my legislative district and of northern Michigan. I remain committed to working with the three other state senators whose districts are north of Clare and making sure our voice is heard on important public policy."

This husband and father of two girls says when he leaves the Legislature, he hopes he will have made Michigan better.

"I want to be satisfied that I represented my constituents fairly, that I heard all sides on the issue and, most importantly, that my actions helped make the state a better place for my daughters to grow up," he said.

Sen. Hansen Clarke, D-Detroit

Growing up as an only child in Detroit's lower east side, Sen. Hansen Clarke has overcome adversities to become an effective senator for the 1st District in Wayne County. As a visual artist and a lawyer, Clarke has the unique ability to combine art and logic when addressing difficult issues facing his region and our state.

"We need to invest in our future," Clarke said. "The governor was right when she said that we need to lay the foundation now for our future. This foundation needs to be built to support the growth of the people of Michigan, giving them the education necessary to achieve great things, investing in our state's infrastructure, protecting our environment, and refocusing our efforts to attract tourists to Michigan through promotion of downtown redevelopment, and highlighting the diversity of our communities and townships."

Although there are no townships in his Senate district, Clarke understands how this form of government impacts local residents and the state.

"I see townships as a vital part of our mission to serve Michigan citizens," he said. "The state should empower townships to provide more direct services to their citizens through a more intelligent revenue sharing program."

"Regionalism should be a key focus of our future policy," he added. "By combining resources, townships have the ability to do things they could not do alone."

Shifting to consolidation of services, Clarke said, "We in Lansing need to remember that the government works for the people, so any movement to consolidate at a large level must come from the citizenry, rather than the Legislature."

Serving as minority vice chair of the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee means a great deal to Clarke. "What we work on every day [in this committee] helps Detroiters to redevelop the community and attract new businesses," he said. "It's great to know that what you work on here will help someone out there get a new job, or let someone know about the cool things our state has to offer for their business or their vacation."

Helping people is a passion of Clarke's. Raised by a single mother—his father passed away when he was only eight years old—Clarke learned the results that can come from hard work and encouragement. When Clarke was attending Cornell University on an art scholarship, his mother passed away. Her influence on his life remains today, and Clarke is in the process of setting up a scholarship fund—the Thelma Clarke Opportunity Program—to help send disadvantaged inner-city youth to a college preparatory school.



Sen. Hansen Clark speaks to his constituents during a Sudan Town Hall Forum in Detroit.

Clarke says this is one way he can give back to society. "That's what makes this country so great," he said. "We have an opportunity to invest in one another."

As Clarke nears the end of his time in the Michigan Senate, he wants to remain accountable to his constituents. "I don't let the politics get in the way of me doing my job and fulfilling my responsibilities to the people who elected me," he said. "I want to set an example of service for Detroiters to expect from their legislators."

Capitol Profiles are designed to help the MTA membership become more familiar with the chair and minority vice chair serving on House and Senate committees that tackle issues important to townships. Each member was asked the same series of questions and their answers were the basis for each profile. The profiles were compiled in cooperation and with the approval of each member.