



State: Michigan

Core Constituency/Target Audience:

Working families



ABOUT

We The People Michigan (WTPM) is an organization that works to build and strengthen multi-racial, working-class community organizing infrastructure across Michigan in order to build shared vision for our state and work toward governing power. WTPM launched in the summer of 2017, focusing first on building deep relationships in a wide range of rural, urban, and suburban communities across the state, from the Keweenaw Peninsula to the city of Detroit. They are focused on 1) building rigorous, disciplined, organizing capacity in communities across the state; 2) developing a strong proactive narrative and people's agenda rooted in communities; and 3) uniting Michiganders across identities and geographies and engaging people to build collectively toward economic and racial justice. WTPM's long-term goal is to build a robust organized base of multi-racial working class people that recognize a linked fate across many communities in Michigan and is advancing a statewide strategy to contend for governing power in Michigan.



WTPM works to build multi-racial, working class alliances statewide to develop and advance a proactive progressive agenda. Their People's Agenda – ratified at their first statewide convening in July 2018 by leaders, activists and organizers from across Michigan – envisions a state that is safe and sustainable, where all people have dignity, our democracy is protected, and we acknowledge our history and work to heal past harms. WTPM believes our communities' fates are linked and we must work together across geography and identity to realize our vision. In order to achieve this, they focus on collective capacity over aggregated individual action (i.e. building leadership and clear organizing structure versus simply mobilizing turnout for elections, protests, etc. without sustained organizing and leadership development); and they are committed to deepening a political analysis that explicitly links economic and racial justice.

WEBSITE: wethepeoplemi.org

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/wtpmi/

TWITTER: [@WeThePeople_MI](https://twitter.com/WeThePeople_MI)

INSTAGRAM: [@wethepeople_mi](https://www.instagram.com/wethepeople_mi)

DONATE: secure.actblue.com/donate/sd003-mi-wtpm



LEGISLATIVE WORK

WTPM is working to educate legislators and decision makers about people's needs across Michigan. They are fighting for educational and racial justice, affordable and safe housing, drivers licenses for all, and to hold utility and energy companies accountable. WTPM is showing legislators these issues are important by hosting town halls and information sessions with their communities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2024, We The People Michigan engaged in robust leadership development of leaders from migrant communities in Southwest Michigan, West Michigan, Northern Michigan, and Detroit. That work included Migrant Electoral School, where fellows learned the skills and principles of community organizing, the electoral process, and team building. They had 13 leaders graduate from Migrant Electoral School in 2024.

Furthermore, each of their Honeycombs (organizing teams) has been deeply engaged in one-on-one leadership development, core team development, and strategy. Each core team is tasked with creating a strategy that is anchored to a larger vision of WTPM. Core teams meet weekly or biweekly to refine strategy, develop their political analysis and education, practice tasks (meeting facilitation, recruitment, and power mapping), and build a team that sees WTPM as their political home.

For 2024 voter education, WTPM knocked on 50,000 doors of BIPOC and working-class people in Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids, and Wyoming. They talked to voters about the importance of participating in the democratic process and sharing resources about registration and other key voting information. They also sent 5,700 forms for voter registration to BIPOC and working-class unregistered voters in Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids, Marquette, Southgate, Traverse City, and Wyandotte. Additionally, they ran four ads across Meta and Youtube, talking to viewers about the importance of voting and participating in the democratic process.

ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE

We The People Michigan currently has five teams focused on issues across the state:

1) People Power Program (PPP): WTPM team in SE Michigan is focused on utility accountability where DTE continues to fail its customers. Furthermore, PPP works to build Black-Arab alliances between Detroit and Dearborn and to build the leadership of folks across the region.

2) Waasamowin: WTPM team in the Upper Peninsula, Waasamowin, has been engaging Native and white working class communities to build rural power in an area often neglected by the state government. They've learned that UPPCO, WE Energies, and other utilities are owned by investment firms, and that means they're driven to create profit for others, not take care of our community or the planet. These utilities have been using their profits to buy political influence and rig the system in their favor. Waasamowin is creating solutions to intervene in the current energy system and pave the way for the future we deserve.



3) YES Fresh Start: WTPM team in Benton Harbor knows that we pull through by pulling together. After years of emergency management and neglect, the YES Fresh Start team, in collaboration with organizers across the state, helped to eliminate \$12.5 million of school debt for Benton Harbor schools that was included in a \$114 million statewide package erasing school debt for several majority Black school districts. YES Fresh Start continues to fight for education and racial justice in Benton Harbor.

4) Los Ñeros: This team is located across Michigan, but especially in West Michigan, Northwest Michigan, and Southeast Michigan, and they are fighting for drivers licenses regardless of immigration status in Michigan. In the past two years, the Los Ñeros team has built over 15 committees of over 500 key leaders in rural and urban communities across the state that have held dozens of town halls, hundreds of community meetings, and consistent mobilizations to Lansing to educate elected officials on the importance of this issue. While they have not won access to drivers licenses yet, there has been an explosion of leaders and bases across the state organizing their communities and educating elected officials on this issue.

5) Home Team: WTPM's work on affordable housing grew in 2023, with the launch of their housing organizing team, the Home Team, which has built bases in Detroit, Southfield, Lansing, Kalamazoo, and Traverse City, where the housing crisis is particularly severe. They have been organizing a base of renters, houseless, and under-housed community members who are educating each other and their communities on their rights as tenants. And, a number of local core teams in Kalamazoo and Lansing are also organizing apartment buildings so organized renters can collectively push landlords for better living conditions.

STATE BRIDGES SPEAKER



Maria Ibarra-Frayre

Maria is the Co-Executive Director for We the People Michigan. She immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico when she was nine years old, and grew up Southwest Detroit and Dearborn. Maria has been fighting for immigrant justice for over a decade, including organizing with undocumented immigrant youth, deportation defense, and building mutual aid systems that center the leadership of women of color.

Maria graduated from the University of Detroit Mercy with a degree in English, and has a Masters of Social Work from the University of Michigan. In her free time Maria likes drinking expensive tea, playing with her puppy, Coriolis, and trying to publish her poetry.

MICHIGAN FAST FACTS

- **Current Control:** Divided Government
- **Gubernatorial Election:** 2026
- **Length of State Senate term:** 4 years
- **Length of State House term:** 2 years
- **Redistricting:** An independent redistricting commission draws Congressional and state legislative maps

