



State seal



State flag



State bird, American robin (Turdus migratorius)



State game mammal, White-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus)



State flower, Apple blossom (Malus domestica)



State reptile, Painted turtle (Chrysemys picta)

Key Facts and State Symbols

Governor	Gretchen Esther Whitmer (D)
Lieutenant governor	Garlin Gilchrist II (D)
U.S. senators	Deborah Ann Greer Stabenow (D) Gary Charles Peters Sr. (D)
State capital	Lansing
Date of statehood	January 26, 1837 (26th state)
Name before statehood	Michigan Territory
State nicknames	Great Lake State; Wolverine State; Water Winter Wonderland
State motto	If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you (Si quaeris pensinulam amoenam circumpice)
Demonym	Michigander; Michiganian; Yooper (Upper Peninsula residents)
Largest City	Detroit
Highest Point	Mount Arvon (1,979 feet)
Lowest Point	Lake Erie (571 feet)
Time Zone	Eastern (most of state); Central (four Upper Peninsula counties)
State bird	American robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>)
State fish	Brook trout (<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>)
State flower	Apple blossom (<i>Malus sp.</i>)
State fossil	Mastodon (<i>Mammut americanum</i>)
State game mammal	White-tailed deer (<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>)
State gem	Isle Royal greenstone (<i>Chlorastrolite</i>)
State reptile	Painted turtle (<i>Chrysemys picta</i>)
State soil	Kalkaska sand
State song	“My Michigan”
State stone	Petoskey stone (<i>Hexagonaria percarinata</i>)
State tree	Eastern white pine (<i>Pinus strobus</i>)
State wildflower	Dwarf lake iris (<i>Iris lacustris</i>)

Locator Map



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An Introduction to Michigan State Government

Organization

Michigan state government contains three branches: legislative, judicial and executive.

Legislative Branch

The legislative power of the State of Michigan is vested in a bicameral (2-chamber) body comprised of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The Senate consists of 38 members who are elected by the qualified electors of districts having approximately 212,400 to 263,500 residents. Senators are elected at the same time as the governor and serve 4-year terms concurrent with the governor's term of office. Terms for senators begin on January 1, following the November general election.

The House of Representatives consists of 110 members who are elected by the qualified electors of districts having approximately 77,000 to 91,000 residents. Representatives are elected in even-numbered years to 2-year terms. Legislative districts are drawn on the basis of population figures obtained through the federal decennial census.

The state legislature enacts the laws of Michigan; levies taxes and appropriates funds from money collected for the support of public institutions and the administration of the affairs of state government; proposes amendments to the state constitution, which must be approved by a majority vote of the electors; and considers legislation proposed by initiatory petitions. The legislature also provides oversight of the executive branch of government through the administrative rules and audit processes, committees, and the budget process; advises and consents, through the Senate, on gubernatorial appointments; and considers proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States. The majority of the legislature's work, however, entails lawmaking. Through a process defined by the state constitution, statute, and legislative rules, the legislature considers thousands of bills (proposed laws) during each 2-year session.

Judicial Branch

The Michigan Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the state, hearing cases appealed to it from the Court of Appeals. In addition to its judicial duties, the Supreme Court is responsible for the general administrative supervision of all courts in the state. The Supreme Court also establishes rules for practice and procedure in all courts. The Supreme Court consists of seven justices: the chief justice and six associate justices. The justices are elected to serve eight-year terms. Every two years one justice is selected by the court as chief justice. Although justices are nominated by political parties, they are elected on a nonpartisan ballot. A candidate for the Supreme Court must be a qualified elector, licensed to practice law in Michigan, and at the time of election must be less than 70 years of age.

The Supreme Court is Michigan's court of last resort. Each year, the Supreme Court receives over 2,000 applications for leave to appeal from litigants primarily seeking review of decisions by the Michigan Court of Appeals.

The Supreme Court's authority to hear cases is discretionary. The Court grants leave to those cases of greatest complexity and public import, where additional briefing and oral argument are essential to reaching a just outcome.

Each justice is responsible for reviewing each case to determine whether leave should be granted. Cases that are accepted for oral argument may be decided by an order, with or without an opinion. These orders may affirm or reverse the Michigan Court of Appeals, may remand a case to the trial court, or may adopt a correct Court of Appeals opinion.

Cases come before the Court during a term that starts August 1 and runs through July 31 of the following year. The Court hears oral arguments in Lansing beginning in October of each term. Decisions are released throughout the term, following oral arguments.

Michigan Court of Appeals

The Michigan Court of Appeals is one of the highest volume intermediate appellate courts in the country. It was created by the 1963 Michigan Constitution and heard its first cases in January 1965. Generally, decisions from final orders of a circuit court, as well as some probate court and agency orders, may be appealed to the court as a matter of right. Other lower court or tribunal decisions may be appealed only by application for leave to appeal, i.e., with permission of the court. The court also has jurisdiction to hear some original actions, such as complaints for mandamus or superintending control against government officers or actions alleging that state law has imposed an unfunded or inadequately funded mandate on local units of government.

The Court of Appeals started with only nine judges originally. The number of judgeships steadily increased through legislation over the years to accommodate the court's growing caseload—to 12 in 1969, to 18 in 1974, to 24 in 1988, and to 28 in 1993. Due to decreased filings in recent years, the size of the court was reduced in 2012 to 24 judges, which is to be achieved through attrition over time.

The judges of the Court of Appeals sit state-wide, although they are elected or appointed from one of four districts. The districts and their office locations are as follows: District I is based in Detroit, District II is based in Troy, District III is based in Grand Rapids, and District IV is based in Lansing. Hearings are held year-round before three-judge panels in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. There is no courtroom at the Troy location. Hearings are also scheduled in Marquette and in a northern Lower Peninsula location in the spring and fall of each year for the convenience of the parties and their attorneys.

in those areas. Judges are randomly assigned to panels to sit in all courtroom locations so that a variety of judicial viewpoints are considered. At least two of the three judges on a panel must agree on the ruling in a case for it to be binding. Like most appellate courts, the Court of Appeals observes the principle of *stare decisis* so that the holding in an earlier decision serves as binding precedent in a later appeal. When a panel expresses its disagreement with a prior opinion, the court rules provide a mechanism by which a special seven-judge “conflict panel” may be convened to resolve the conflict between the earlier opinion and the later decision. MCR 7.215(J). Decisions of the court may generally be appealed by leave application to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Circuit Court

The circuit court is the trial court with the broadest powers in Michigan. In general, the circuit court handles all civil cases with claims of more than \$25,000 and all felony criminal cases (cases where the accused, if found guilty, could be sent to prison). The family division of circuit court handles all cases regarding divorce, paternity, adoptions, personal protection actions, emancipation of minors, treatment and testing of infectious disease, safe delivery of newborns, name changes, juvenile offenses and delinquency, juvenile guardianship, and child abuse and neglect. In addition, the circuit court hears cases appealed from the other trial courts or from administrative agencies. The friend of the court office is part of the family division of the circuit court and handles domestic relations cases where minor children are involved.

In addition, there is a Court of Claims for filing cases against the State of Michigan in which a claim for money damages is made. As of November 12, 2013, the Court of Claims is part of the Michigan Court of Appeals. The Court of Claims is a specialized court that handles only claims over \$1,000 filed against the State of Michigan or one of its departments.

There are 57 circuit courts in Michigan. Circuit court judges are elected for six-year terms.

District Court

The district court is often called the people’s court. More people have contact with the district court than any other court. The district court handles most traffic violations, all civil cases with claims up to \$25,000, landlord-tenant matters, most traffic tickets, and all misdemeanor criminal cases (generally, cases where the accused, if found guilty, cannot be sentenced to more than one year in jail). In addition, small claims cases are heard by a division of the district court. In Michigan, a few municipalities have chosen to retain a municipal court rather than create a district court. The municipal courts have limited powers and are located in Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Park, and Grosse Point Shores/Grosse Pointe Woods.

There are approximately 100 district courts in Michigan. District court judges are elected for six-year terms.

Probate Court

The probate court handles wills, administers estates and trusts, appoints guardians and conservators, and orders treatment for mentally ill and developmentally disabled persons.

There are 78 probate courts in Michigan; probate judges are elected for six-year terms.

Friend of the Court Bureau

The Friend of the Court Bureau (FOCB) was established to provide circuit courts across the state with management assistance in operating local friend of the court (FOC) offices, including development of local policies and procedures.

Executive Branch

In addition to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, Michigan’s voters elect two other executive branch officials statewide—the Secretary of State and the Attorney General. While candidates for the governor’s office are chosen in the August primary election, candidates for the others are nominated at the regular year between presidential elections (voters cast one vote jointly for Governor and Lieutenant Governor). An amendment to the constitution adopted by the voters in 1992 limits these elected executives to two terms (eight years). This limitation applies to terms if office beginning on or after January 1, 1993. The 1963 Constitution requires that all permanent agencies or commissions, except universities, be assigned to one of a maximum of twenty principal departments. The principal departments are:

Agriculture and Rural Development

The mission of the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development is, “Assure the food safety, agricultural, environmental, and economic interests of the people of the State of Michigan are met through service, partnership and collaboration.”

Attorney General

The attorney general is the lawyer for the State of Michigan. When public legal matters arise, he renders opinions on matters of law, and provides legal counsel for the legislature and for each officer, department, board, and commission of state government. He provides legal representation in court actions and assists in the conduct of official hearings held by state agencies.

Civil Rights

The Department of Civil Rights, in implementing the mission of the commission, secures the full enjoyment of civil rights guaranteed by law and the constitution through the elimination of discrimination. This is accomplished through the investigation and resolution of complaints of discrimination; outreach and education programs designed to promote voluntary compliance with civil rights laws; mediation; referral; crisis intervention; anti-hate crime programming; and the dissemination of information which explains citizen rights and responsibilities provided in a legal framework.

Alpena Phelps Collins Airport

The city of Alpena lies on the northwest shore of Thunder Bay, eight miles from the open waters of Lake Huron. Lake Huron and Thunder Bay lie at an elevation of 580 feet above sea level. Generally, the land slopes up westward from the lakeshore to 689 feet at the airport. Farther to the west and southwest the land becomes higher and more rolling. A range of hills with tops 1,000 to 1,350 feet lies northwest to southeast about 25 miles southwest of the station.

Summer showers moving from the southwest weaken and sometimes dissipate as they approach Alpena. Winter storms often bring winds with an easterly component. Precipitation from these is increased by moisture and instability picked up from Lake Huron and by forced upslope flow.

The normal wintertime storm track is south of the city, and most passing storms bring snow. Rain, freezing rain, and sleet are uncommon, but not unknown, in winter. In summer, most storms pass to the north, often bringing brief showers to the area, but occasionally, heavy thunderstorms with damaging winds occur. The Great Lakes modify most climatic extremes. Precipitation amounts are distributed evenly throughout the year. The lake effect is most pronounced in early winter, before ice forms. Minimum temperatures during this season are higher than would be expected at this latitude.

Summers in Alpena are warm and sunny. Brief showers usually occur every few days, often falling on only part of the area. Hailstorms average less than one a year. During prolonged heat waves the highest temperatures in Michigan often occur in the forest area southwest of Alpena. Winter months are cloudy and marked by frequent snow flurries. Storms bring heavier snowfall. Snow cover is sufficiently deep and persistent to provide good protection for grasses and winter grains.

The climate along the immediate Lake Huron shore is semi-maritime and lacks the temperature extremes experienced just a few miles inland. Maximum temperatures near the lake shore average 1.6 degrees lower than those at the airport, minimum temperatures average five degrees higher. Afternoon lake breezes which are strongest in the late spring and early summer cause lake shore maximum temperatures to average 3.6 degrees lower during the month of May.

Freezing temperatures have occurred as late as late June and as early as late August. Principal crops in the area are hay, potatoes, berries, and apples.

Prevailing winds are from the northwest except during May and June when southeast winds predominate. Southeast winds are common in the afternoon during all the summer months.

Alpena Phelps Collins Airport Alpena County Elevation: 688 ft. Latitude: 45° 04' N Longitude: 83° 35' W

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean Maximum Temp. (°F)	27.3	29.6	38.3	52.5	64.9	74.9	79.8	77.4	69.4	56.2	43.4	32.1	53.8
Mean Temp. (°F)	19.4	20.4	28.7	41.7	52.6	62.2	67.5	65.6	57.9	46.3	35.8	25.1	43.6
Mean Minimum Temp. (°F)	11.3	11.2	19.0	30.9	40.3	49.5	55.3	53.7	46.5	36.4	28.3	18.1	33.4
Extreme Maximum Temp. (°F)	52	65	80	90	93	103	102	102	94	90	75	65	103
Extreme Minimum Temp. (°F)	-28	-25	-17	-7	21	29	37	30	25	16	-6	-18	-28
Days Maximum Temp. ≥ 90°F	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	6
Days Maximum Temp. ≤ 32°F	21	18	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	15	68
Days Minimum Temp. ≤ 32°F	30	27	28	18	5	0	0	0	1	11	21	29	170
Days Minimum Temp. ≤ 0°F	7	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	18
Heating Degree Days (base 65°F)	1,409	1,254	1,120	694	389	137	40	65	230	574	868	1,229	8,009
Cooling Degree Days (base 65°F)	0	0	0	2	13	61	125	91	25	3	0	0	320
Mean Precipitation (in.)	1.65	1.30	1.87	2.46	2.63	2.55	2.95	3.25	2.86	2.58	2.10	1.76	27.96
Maximum Precipitation (in.)*	3.3	3.2	4.4	4.1	8.3	8.4	7.2	6.3	7.1	6.5	7.4	4.4	35.2
Minimum Precipitation (in.)*	0.2	0.1	0.3	1.2	1.0	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.4	21.4
Extreme Maximum Daily Precip. (in.)	1.41	1.51	1.85	1.22	2.11	1.55	2.59	2.01	1.54	3.44	1.58	1.28	3.44
Days With ≥ 0.1" Precipitation	5	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	67
Days With ≥ 0.5" Precipitation	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	17
Days With ≥ 1.0" Precipitation	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Mean Snowfall (in.)	21.4	18.0	11.0	na	na	na	na	na	trace	0.4	8.0	19.3	na
Maximum Snowfall (in.)*	44	33	36	13	4	0	0	0	trace	4	35	46	146
Maximum 24-hr. Snowfall (in.)*	16	11	17	11	4	0	0	0	trace	2	15	16	17
Maximum Snow Depth (in.)	28	37	28	na	na	na	na	na	trace	1	12	26	na
Days With ≥ 1.0" Snow Depth	29	27	21	na	na	na	na	na	0	0	7	20	na
Thunderstorm Days*	< 1	< 1	1	2	4	5	7	6	4	1	< 1	< 1	30
Foggy Days*	10	9	13	12	13	14	14	17	16	14	14	12	158
Predominant Sky Cover*	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR
Mean Relative Humidity 7am (%)*	81	80	82	80	78	81	85	90	91	86	84	83	83
Mean Relative Humidity 4pm (%)*	67	62	59	53	51	53	54	59	61	62	68	72	60
Mean Dewpoint (°F)*	13	12	20	29	40	51	57	56	50	39	29	19	35
Prevailing Wind Direction*	WNW	WNW	WNW	WNW	ESE	SE	WNW	SW	W	WSW	WNW	SW	WNW
Prevailing Wind Speed (mph)*	10	9	10	10	9	8	8	7	7	8	9	8	9
Maximum Wind Gust (mph)*	53	54	54	60	53	58	53	60	45	47	56	54	60

Note: (*) Period of record is 1959-1995

Detroit Metropolitan Airport

Detroit and the immediate suburbs, including nearby urban areas in Canada, occupy an area approximately 25 miles in radius. The waterway, consisting of the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers, Lake St. Clair, and the west end of Lake Erie, lies at an elevation of 568 to 580 feet above sea level. Nearly flat land slopes up gently from the waters edge northward for about 10 miles and then gives way to increasingly rolling terrain. The Irish Hills, parallel to and about 40 miles northwest of the waterway, have tops 1,000 to 1,250 feet above sea level. On the Canadian side of the waterway the land is relatively level.

Northwest winds in winter bring snow flurry accumulations to all of Michigan except in the Detroit Metropolitan area while summer showers moving from the northwest weaken and sometimes dissipate as they approach Detroit. On the other hand, much of the heaviest precipitation in winter comes from southeast winds, especially to the northwest suburbs of the city.

The climate of Detroit is influenced by its location with respect to major storm tracks and the influence of the Great Lakes. The normal wintertime storm track is south of the city, which brings on the average, about three inch snowfalls. Winter storms can bring combinations of rain, snow, freezing rain, and sleet with heavy snowfall accumulations possible at times. In summer, most storms pass to the north allowing for intervals of warm, humid, sunny skies with occasional thunderstorms followed by days of mild, dry, and fair weather. Temperatures of 90 degrees or higher are reached during each summer.

Local climatic variations are due largely to the immediate effect of Lake St. Clair and the urban heat island. On warm days in late spring or early summer, lake breezes often lower temperatures by 10 to 15 degrees in the eastern part of the city and the northeastern suburbs. The urban heat island effect shows up mainly at night where minimum temperatures at the Metropolitan Airport average four degrees lower than downtown Detroit. On humid summer nights or on very cold winter nights, this difference can exceed 10 degrees.

The growing season averages 180 days and has ranged from 145 days to 205 days. On average, the last freezing temperature occurs in late April while the average first freezing temperature occurs in late October. A freeze has occurred as late as mid-May and as early as late September.

Detroit Metropolitan Airport *Wayne County* Elevation: 632 ft. Latitude: 42° 13' N Longitude: 83° 21' W

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	YEAR
Mean Maximum Temp. (°F)	32.1	35.1	45.4	58.7	69.9	79.2	83.3	81.3	74.1	61.2	48.6	36.3	58.7
Mean Temp. (°F)	25.3	27.7	36.6	48.7	59.4	69.0	73.3	71.8	64.2	51.9	41.1	29.9	49.9
Mean Minimum Temp. (°F)	18.4	20.3	27.8	38.7	48.8	58.7	63.3	62.2	54.2	42.5	33.6	23.5	41.0
Extreme Maximum Temp. (°F)	64	70	81	87	93	104	102	100	94	90	75	69	104
Extreme Minimum Temp. (°F)	-21	-15	-4	10	29	38	44	38	33	20	12	-10	-21
Days Maximum Temp. ≥ 90°F	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	3	1	0	0	0	12
Days Maximum Temp. ≤ 32°F	16	12	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	43
Days Minimum Temp. ≤ 32°F	28	25	22	7	0	0	0	0	0	3	14	25	124
Days Minimum Temp. ≤ 0°F	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Heating Degree Days (base 65°F)	1,224	1,048	874	488	210	36	3	8	102	408	709	1,081	6,191
Cooling Degree Days (base 65°F)	0	0	0	7	41	162	267	225	83	8	0	0	793
Mean Precipitation (in.)	1.95	1.98	2.37	2.96	3.31	3.55	3.31	3.18	3.25	2.53	2.70	2.49	33.58
Maximum Precipitation (in.)*	3.9	5.0	4.5	5.4	6.2	7.0	6.0	7.8	7.5	4.9	5.7	6.0	42.6
Minimum Precipitation (in.)*	0.3	0.1	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.5	21.0
Extreme Maximum Daily Precip. (in.)	1.59	2.28	1.69	3.58	1.78	2.59	4.34	2.51	3.71	2.02	2.30	1.45	4.34
Days With ≥ 0.1" Precipitation	6	5	6	7	7	6	7	6	6	5	6	6	73
Days With ≥ 0.5" Precipitation	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	20
Days With ≥ 1.0" Precipitation	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	5
Mean Snowfall (in.)	12.3	10.1	7.3	1.8	trace	trace	0.0	0.0	trace	0.3	1.5	9.8	43.1
Maximum Snowfall (in.)*	30	21	16	9	trace	0	0	0	0	3	12	35	75
Maximum 24-hr. Snowfall (in.)*	11	8	8	5	trace	0	0	0	0	3	6	18	18
Maximum Snow Depth (in.)	24	18	9	6	trace	trace	0	0	trace	1	3	12	24
Days With ≥ 1.0" Snow Depth	17	12	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	45
Thunderstorm Days*	< 1	< 1	2	3	4	6	6	5	4	1	1	< 1	32
Foggy Days*	12	11	13	11	12	12	13	17	15	15	14	14	159
Predominant Sky Cover*	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	SCT	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR	OVR
Mean Relative Humidity 7am (%)*	80	79	79	78	78	79	82	86	87	84	82	81	81
Mean Relative Humidity 4pm (%)*	67	63	58	53	51	52	52	54	54	55	64	69	58
Mean Dewpoint (°F)*	17	18	26	35	46	56	61	60	53	42	32	22	39
Prevailing Wind Direction*	WSW	SW	WNW	WSW	WSW	SW	SW	SW	SW	SW	SW	SW	SW
Prevailing Wind Speed (mph)*	14	14	14	14	13	10	9	9	10	12	13	13	12
Maximum Wind Gust (mph)*	66	64	64	66	61	94	71	69	54	52	58	61	94

Note: (*) Period of record is 1958-1995