

# PROTECT OUR WATER CHANGE THE CLIMATE

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VOICES OF MICHIGAN'S MOST  
IMPACTED COMMUNITIES



**MICHIGAN  
LEAGUE OF  
CONSERVATION  
VOTERS**

# SYLVIA ORDUÑO

DETROIT, MI

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“It is imperative to ensure that we are emphasizing end-users, especially those who are most vulnerable to water challenges and climate change conditions. We must understand the immense cost of continuing to do nothing. Presidential candidates must put our water concerns at the forefront.”

SYLVIA ORDUÑO

Sylvia Orduño is a resident of Detroit where she is involved in frontline community groups, including the People’s Water Board Coalition, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and Water Is Life Alliance. Recently, she was appointed to the state of Michigan’s first Advisory Council for Environmental Justice, which was created to ensure perspectives from impacted communities are included in state decision making. She is also a Region 5 member of the EPA’s National Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

As water shut offs in Detroit spiked 44% last year, totaling 23,473, Sylvia’s current focus is on water affordability, sanitation and public health. She believes it’s important for more people to understand the connection between climate change and water systems as they are interconnected, and that the impacts of climate change exacerbate water insecurity and drinking water quality issues.

Sylvia is concerned about recent proposals to weaken the Clean Water Act and the impacts they would have on maintaining water systems that are critical sources of drinking water. For Sylvia, putting affected residents at the forefront of decision making is critical.

She believes anyone running for president must make among their top priorities protecting our water sources, assisting people impacted by water shutoffs and improving drinking water sources.

# THERESA LANDRUM

DETROIT, MI

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“Come to Detroit. Come to zip code 48217. Candidates must talk to the communities directly impacted by the effects of pollution and climate change. Just because a candidate says they are with us on climate change doesn’t mean they don’t need to sit down with frontline impacted communities. Show people they matter.”

THERESA LANDRUM

Theresa Landrum is a community leader who lives in Zip Code 48217 in southwest Detroit, Michigan’s most polluted zip code. A longtime community activist, she is a member of multiple organizations, including Frontline Detroit, the Sierra Club, Clean Air Council, Detroit Climate Strike Coalition and the original United Citizens of southwest Detroit, a community organization formed in the 1950s to promote clean air and public health for Detroiters.

With large industrial polluters in her backyard, like the Marathon Oil Refinery, a coal-fired power plant and AK Steel, Theresa’s community has felt the impacts of pollution firsthand. Zip Code 48217 has some of the highest asthma rates in the state, caused by excessive pollution and industry.

In the fallout of the Flint Water Crisis, Theresa believes we should be on our guard when it comes to issues impacting our air and our water. She works to put pressure on the government to be more transparent on contaminated sites and pollution.

# SANDY WYNN-STELT

BELMONT, MI

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“Here in Michigan of all places, we should have safe and clean water to drink. It’s time for our leaders to step up and protect our water. Any candidate running for office in 2020 should make safe, clean drinking water a top priority.”

SANDY WYNN-STELT

In 2017, Sandy learned that her water had been contaminated with Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a group of man-made chemicals that have been linked to health problems including cancer, thyroid conditions, auto-immune diseases and reproductive challenges.

After the discovery, Sandy had her blood tested. The results came back finding her blood contained 750 times the national average for PFAS. The source? A contaminated site across the street from her house where Wolverine World Wide dumped its waste from a tannery nearby.

She has suffered from health complications, including symptoms linked with exposure to PFAS in health studies, such as thyroid problems and gout as well as cysts and other issues. Her husband, Joel R. Stelt, passed away at 61 from liver cancer in March 2016.

This experience battling PFAS contamination compelled Sandy, who by trade is a clinical psychologist, to dedicate her time advocating for protections against PFAS and justice for those who have been exposed to these toxic chemicals. She has testified before Congress, urging lawmakers to set a national drinking water standard for PFAS and has shared her story with media and elected officials.

For Sandy, strong drinking water protections at the federal level are essential. She believes this election presents a critical opportunity to elect a president who will make protecting our drinking water a top priority. Cleaning up contamination and protecting our water are Sandy’s top issues when she goes to the polls in March and November.

# JOSH GOTTIEB

KALAMAZOO, MI

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Josh Gottieb is a physics teacher at Kalamazoo Central high School. He has used his position to empower students to take action on climate change. Last year, Kalamazoo Central high School declared a climate emergency, making it the first school in Michigan to do so. He is the recipient of the U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan 2019 Green School Champion Award for his work to engage students on sustainability and work to move Kalamazoo Public Schools to energy efficiency to reduce emissions. His goal is to achieve a 30% reduction in emissions across Kalamazoo Public Schools over the next 10 years.

“If we really want to make a difference, we have to set our goals higher. We must do the small things, but we need to set large goals individually and collectively. Those seeking higher office must make climate change a top issue. They must be bold, recognize the urgency of this crisis and have real plans to tackle climate change.”

JOSH GOTTIEB

Josh became engaged on educating and raising awareness of climate change because he believes it is an emergency. He works to organize young people, members of the community and elected officials to urge them to think powerfully and creatively to find ways to contribute to real solutions. He sees the passion in his students and their understanding of the breadth of climate change. His students are motivated to act and make a difference to protect our planet for the future.

# MARY LOU GRAHAM

SAUGATUCK, MI

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“We need to elect government officials at all levels who will accept the impacts of Climate Change and are willing to take on the challenges we all face in trying to slow down and possibly neutralize our increasingly unstable weather patterns by greatly reducing our outputs of CO2 and methane. We owe this to our younger generations for a decent quality of life.”

MARY LOU GRAHAM

Mary’s life has been shaped and guided by her relationship with the eastern shore of Lake Michigan and its now imperiled dunes. She’s always loved and been most at peace there, but did not appreciate the values of the waters and dune ecology until she spent considerable time traveling internationally to wilderness destinations. Wilderness was planted in her core by the expanse of the Lake, dunes and forest which surrounded her family in Southwest Michigan.

The Lake’s waters were her second home- swimming, recreating and boating - but she enjoyed being in the water as much as on the water. She remembers the high lake levels first showing up in the early 50’s when she was 11 and erasing dunes and clearing out her “windy weather” retreat which included a swing set and about 30’ of boardwalk and stairs. The next incident was in 1986, which took away the next set of stairs to the beach and 40’ of boardwalk.

Then came the other issues: alewife fish, Zebra and Quagga mussels and algae. The algae continues to worsen as the water continues to warm and there are no fish to consume the algae. In recent memory, after swimming she has found it necessary to take a shower to remove the stench from just wading through the algae at shore. This is water which historically she never had any hesitation about drinking! Drone video shows endless dark clumps of algae lying on the Lake bottom right after the ice thaws. The high water levels driven by the normal cycle and enhanced by climate change are making access to the lake for recreation very challenging.

# BOB SUTHERLAND

GLEN ARBOR, MI

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"We are seeing the impacts of climate change right now here in northern Michigan. We cannot continue to repeal crucial protections for our air, our land and our water. We need bold action and leadership now to tackle the climate crisis."

BOB SUTHERLAND

Bob Sutherland owns Cherry Republic, a food store born in northern Michigan that sells more than 200 products made from cherries with six locations across the state. As a prominent northern Michigan business owner, Bob understands the importance of Michigan's Great Lakes, majestic dunes and beaches – and the need to protect them.

Bob is an advocate for our Great Lakes and northern Michigan way of life because he believes it's right. With multiple locations in northern Michigan that rely heavily on a thriving tourism and agriculture industry, Bob is seeing the impacts of climate change firsthand.

Record high lake levels have caused erosion of Michigan's dunes and beaches. Extreme weather and abnormal climate patterns have led to excessive rainfall and humidity causing extra work and expenses for cherry farmers, on which Bob's business depends. He is experiencing the inherent connection between our water and Great Lakes and the climate crisis.

It's Bob's belief that the business community has a significant responsibility when it comes to the protection of our air, land and water and the fight against a changing climate. Business owners should use their platforms to take a stance and ensure leaders know why protecting our air, land and water is so important.

That's why he's using his platform to challenge all candidates seeking the office of the presidency to make tackling the climate crisis a major plank of their campaigns. For Bob, empty rhetoric doesn't cut it. He wants to hear specifics for how candidates will work to tackle this crisis that threatens the beauty of his home and his livelihood.

# SYLVIA MCCULLOUGH

INTERLOCHEN, MI

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“We have to push back against lawmakers and those in office who deny global warming. We must make sure they get behind programs and policies to encourage clean energy to tackle the climate crisis and protect our water. We must work together with the rest of the world to solve this problem.”

SYLVIA MCCULLOUGH

Sylvia McCullough is a resident of Interlochen in northern Michigan. She is co-chair of Indivisible Traverse City and is a board member of the Straights of Mackinaw Alliance. She is a former educator and taught social studies for years. She is deeply involved in local progressive groups, including the Grand Traverse Democrats communications team, encouraging people to write about political issues and communicate with local press.

Living in northern Michigan surrounded by hardwood and evergreen trees, Sylvia sees the impacts climate change is having to the native ash, beech and oak trees with the spreading of disease and pests.

Sylvia lived in Arizona for 35 years, and a major reason she moved back to Michigan, where she grew up, is because she’s seen firsthand how the temperatures and weather continue to get more extreme in that region, threatening the water resources.

Living so close to Lake Michigan, Sylvia believes Michigan’s Great Lakes, rivers, lakes and streams are critical to our economy and who we are as Michiganders. For her, water is life. She wants candidates to make protecting our water from corporate interests and big polluters a top priority.

# BALI KUMAR

DETROIT, MI

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“Transitioning to clean, renewable energy will not only help us mitigate climate change, but it will also help create local, well-paying jobs. Green-collar jobs are the jobs of the future. We need leaders who recognize this opportunity to build our economy while protecting our air, land and water for future generations.”

BALI KUMAR

Bali Kumar is a resident of Detroit and Chief Executive Officer of Lean & Green Michigan, the statewide administrator of the PACE financing program that assists commercial property owners in financing renewable energy, water conservation, and energy efficiency upgrades to their properties.

Bali’s company helps nonprofits, businesses, apartment buildings, hotels, and other commercial properties finance clean energy and water conservation upgrades that help them save money while reducing their carbon footprint and eliminating waste. Working in the clean energy space, Bali sees firsthand the potential for jobs building and installing the clean energy and energy efficiency technologies of the future. For example, PACENation estimates that for every \$1 million in PACE financing, 15 jobs are created.

Through public-private partnerships like Lean & Green Michigan, the government can play a big role in the advancement of clean energy. It’s programs like PACE that help property owners small and large do their part to reduce emissions and promote cleaner air and water in a fiscally responsible manner.

Bali wants to see candidates for President set bold and smart plans for the inevitable transition to clean energy. He has seen the growth in jobs and the impact clean energy has on Michigan’s economy and believes there is much room to grow this sector nationwide with the right leadership.