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## **Ann Marston: Tsunami's hit; time to rebuild**

The tsunami in Michigan is not a wall of water, but unrelenting tax cuts and public service cuts in the name of economic stimulus that have hit Michigan repeatedly over the last decade.

Do the third or fourth or fifth round of waves fix the damage done by the first onslaught? Absolutely not. They wreak more havoc and result in more damage.

State operating funds have been slashed, resulting in massive budget cuts to state and local services and staff. At the state level, departments have been cut to the point where their ability to successfully achieve their missions is in serious jeopardy. Children are not being effectively educated or protected, and thousands of Michigan residents, many of whom are working full-time, low wage jobs, have no health insurance.

At the local level, there are 1,600 fewer police due to reductions in state payments to local units of government.

The state's credit rating has been downgraded (meaning it costs the state more to borrow money because it is judged to be a poorer risk). In a recently released statement by Standard and Poor's, Michigan is the only state to have a negative outlook.

It's time to start the reconstruction of Michigan. The first phase must be the generation of adequate, stable and fair revenues to support public services in Michigan.

We must change our tax structure to capture those parts of the economy that are growing most rapidly - the services sector and the very, very wealthy, who have been the major benefactors of the tax cuts

If there are doubts about the need for, and benefit of, quality public services, I would challenge you to answer how Michigan becomes a better place to live and conduct business if:

- We reduce support for education.
- We reduce the number of people who have access to health care.
- We don't protect our children.
- We don't maintain our infrastructure.
- We do not support the commitments made to our citizens.

There is a need for change in the delivery of many services in this state, but these changes cannot be accomplished overnight. Proposals to restructure the delivery of state and local services must be thoughtfully considered to avoid unintended consequences and to ensure that the resulting service delivery system provides both quality and protection for the residents of Michigan.