

**Governor Snyder's "No Soup for You" Kitchen
Speech – Ashley Forsberg, RN, Sparrow nurse
July 13, 2011**

Governor Snyder and members of the audience:

My name is Ashley Forsberg and I am a Registered nurse. I am here to express my concern for the citizens of my community, my patients, coworkers, neighbors, and friends. The soup kitchen you see here was an everyday occurrence back during the Great Depression that started in 1929 and lasted over 10 years. As a citizen of this state and country I fear that it may become a reality again.

As a nurse I feel that one of my greatest strengths is listening. I have heard stories from my patients, neighbors and friends that are truly sad. Patients who have no health care with known conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, now homeless because they lost their jobs, used up their savings, and their family is torn apart. Only to be told they now have to lose their leg due to a diabetic ulcer they didn't have funds to treat.

I have seen a growing number of patients with anxiety and depression. Overwhelmed because they're financially strapped trying to help family members. You see that they have a son or a daughter now living with them because they graduated from college but they can't find a job. The grand baby is sick - born with a heart condition needing surgery. As well as having their own Mom and Dad now in need of assistance. The list is never ending → and Governor this is OUR Main Street reality.

The Mother Jones magazine reported - As middle class citizens, our income has been stagnant for 30 years. According to reports the top 10% of this country have 2/3 of its wealth. Governor Snyder your own MI Dashboard reports that the "Real personal income per capita as of 6/20/11 decreased since your inauguration from \$28,250 to \$27,558. Our children in Michigan living in poverty increased from 19% to 23%, and yet the legislative bills you have passed have given businesses within our state an 81% tax break while increasing the tax burden on an already stretched and strained middle class income a whopping 30+%.

The Mother Jones article further reported that between 2007–2009 Wall Street's profits grew 720% and Unemployment grew 102%. All while our American home equity plummeted 35%. The data from the same Mother Jones article reports 2009 data from the Economic Policy Institute that CEO's pay is 185 times bigger than the average worker's pay. As an American this seems unthinkable. (<http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/02/income-inequality-in-america-chart-graph>)

Why sir, are the collective bargaining rights that maintained step increases to keep pay fair, kept working conditions fair and safe, and healthcare seemingly affordable, UNDER ATTACK by you and your constituents? Why? Especially now when the INEQUALITY seems soooooo obvious? Sir WHY are ALL the cuts against public sector employees – our university nurses, our firemen, our police officers? WHY are we not hearing our voted officials say "I'll take a pay cut"?

Instead - we hear your administration is earning more than your predecessors'. We hear that you won't be moving to Lansing when you take office (I'm sure I'll get the taxpayer bill for

security). We hear you want employees to pick up more of their health insurance premiums, and less to the employers. The employers in many cases are the insurers and the same businesses that have made record profits in the past year. We hear you want to tax our retirements that we have earned and made plans for based upon a **contract**. We hear of a 1% healthcare claim fee to fund \$400 million we need to get \$800 million in federal funds to fund our desperately needed Medicaid budget – but nothing to prevent the current health insurers from passing that cost on to the employees already strapped – yet again. WHY aren't we hearing, as citizens, "I'll investigate insurance companies that have had record increases to their premiums, and try to figure out why - when they report record profits"?

We hear instead – "I will create jobs which will increase our tax revenues and lower our foreclosures, and give our communities the resources they need to keep firemen and police officers".

However AGAIN our Main Street reality is our houses continue to be underwater, and on your MI Dashboard it shows that unemployment has grown an additional tenth of a percent to 10.3. And even though our Gross Domestic Product grew from a -5.2% to 2.9%, our state and local government operating costs increased 1.6% as a percent of our GDP. Our government debt burden per capita also increased from \$748 to \$762. NO new jobs for this state. Even The Detroit News reported "Michigan is the only state to lose "clean economy" jobs in the past seven years, according to a report released today by the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program". (<http://detnews.com/article/20110713/BIZ/107130332/Report--Michigan-only-state-to-lose-green-jobs#ixzz1S6AE1HSv>)

Governor Snyder - I respectfully ask as a nurse, and citizen WHY is the inequality continuing??? Why are the citizens of this great state still facing uncertainty as to their health, wealth, and happiness which is their inalienable right, when the businesses that have the funds and the ability to level the playing field are getting richer? Daily "Soup kitchens" returning could be OUR next reality. We have to ask ourselves - is this the legacy we want to leave our children, friends, neighbors and parents?

Thank you.