

## **Michigan Realtors Get Involved in Creating Jobs**

by

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Approximately two years ago, a group of Realtors from the Western Wayne Oakland County Association of Realtors and I were in Lansing on business as our legislators were getting ready to go into “lock-down” to figure out how and where to raise taxes to generate revenues in an effort to solve the State’s budget crisis. At the same time, the State’s housing prices were plummeting and the Big Three were downsizing significantly.

Discussions of the Michigan Business Tax (MBT) and taxes on services were rampant in Lansing but there didn’t seem to be any conversations about how we were going to replace those lost manufacturing jobs or what we were going to do to attract new businesses to Michigan. It seemed obvious that raising taxes on currently struggling business was not the answer. Surely that could cause more layoffs and not attract new companies to Michigan.

It was at this juncture that the Western Wayne Oakland County Association of Realtors (WWOCAR) made the decision that our role was much greater than simply helping folks buy and sell houses. We owed it to our clients to help them keep their homes and not only survive in Michigan but *thrive* in Michigan.

WWOCAR commissioned a year-long research project called “Jump Start Michigan” with the guidance of Dr. Chris Petras, a political and policy analyst, and his research team. The goal of the Jump Start Michigan Project was to generate solutions for Michigan legislators and officials as they considered solutions to address the State’s economic and housing market crisis.

### **The Three Phases to the Jump Start Michigan Project included:**

1. Assessment and analysis of Michigan’s economic and housing market conditions
2. Creation of a proactive theme to embrace “Entrepreneurship for Economic Rejuvenation” with a focus on getting individuals to utilize their entrepreneurial capabilities.
3. Creation of a new program idea “Entrepreneurial Rejuvenation for Unemployed Workers Program (ERUWP).

Some of Dr. Petras' research showed Michigan has never recovered from the recession of 2001 while the rest of the country had recovered. The research went on to show approximately 600,000 Michigan jobs have been lost since the year 2000, 68% of those job losses coming from the manufacturing sector. While small business accounts for approximately 70% of job creation, Michigan is well behind the national average for small business start-ups.

Focus must be placed on the creation of jobs and the attraction of new businesses to Michigan both of which will increase revenues to the state.

**The Main Theme and Basic Structure of Entrepreneurial Rejuvenation for Unemployed Workers Program (ERUWP) idea is:**

1. Assessment of unemployed workers for entrepreneurial attitude and possession of an entrepreneurial skill
2. Provide training for unemployed workers through small business workshops
3. Assist qualified unemployed workers in finding funding sources for small business start-ups

**WWOCAR's Research Shows:**

1. Of the approximately 584,000 individuals currently unemployed, ERUWP has the potential to create approximately 3,500 new small businesses a year, employing approximately 16,000 people per year given industry sector opportunities in MI.
2. The State of Michigan has lost the majority of jobs in manufacturing which creates a pool of unemployed workers more adaptable to manufacturing and thus able to start small businesses that feed into the other manufacturing areas.

WWOCAR has met with several State legislators and officials who have all embraced the program's ideas. WWOCAR plans to educate citizens of Michigan on the program through a series of town hall forums and press conferences.

**WWOCAR Call to Action:**

1. Contact your Legislators and ask them what they are doing to create jobs in Michigan and how they plan to attract new businesses to Michigan.
2. Tell them that you would like them to look at the ERUWP program for job creation.

To find out more about the Jump Start report or the ERUWP program go to [www.Jump-StartMichigan.com](http://www.Jump-StartMichigan.com) or call Gary Reggish, President of the Western Wayne Oakland Country Association of Realtors (WWOCAR) and owner of Remerica United Realty of Novi, MI at 248.374.6804, or Dale Smith, Association Executive of WWOCAR at 240.478.1700.