

## Gillibrand touts 'massive' incentives for Detroit's automakers

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Auburn Hills — Democratic presidential hopeful Kirsten Gillibrand on Monday outlined government programs she argues would benefit Michigan residents and accused President Donald Trump of “spewing hate and racism” that has cost the United States its moral standing in the world.

Trump “did not create hate and racism and anti-Semitism, but what he has done is pour fuel on a fire that is raging more than I’ve ever seen in my lifetime,” the New York U.S. senator said during an MSNBC town hall taping at the Rochester Mills Production Brewery and Taproom in Auburn Hills.

“We are at our best when we love one another.”

Gillibrand made her first campaign stop in Michigan the same day as fellow 2020 Democratic hopeful Beto O’Rourke of Texas, who stopped in Center Line, Ferndale and Detroit on Monday morning during his first swing through the state.

She was expected to join a Fems for Dems event in Clawson later Monday with Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who has encouraged all candidates to visit what MSNBC host Chris Hayes called a “battleground state” that Trump won by 10,704 votes in 2016. The MSNBC town hall is set to air on the cable new network at 8 p.m.

Gillibrand promoted a Democratic plan to fight climate change known as the Green New Deal, arguing tax incentives could ultimately help Michigan automakers that are already wary of rising fuel economy mandates and would be required to move toward a zero-emissions standard.

“Michigan has a history of building things, creating things, manufacturing things and innovating,” she told reporters. “If you say to every manufacturer, when you create energy efficiency, when you create an energy efficient engine, you are going to get a massive tax benefit, that’s how you compete with China.”

Gillibrand said she would pay for Green New Deal implementation by creating a “modest” new transaction tax on stock trades.

Republican elected officials have said the proposal would cost tens of trillions of dollars, but experts including a libertarian Cato Institute researcher have said the Green New Deal is too “broad brush and vague” to yield a precise cost estimate.

Michigan Republican Party chair Laura Cox cited the Green New Deal as she criticized the visits by Gillibrand and O’Rourke, calling them two of the “biggest clowns” in the “Democratic presidential circus.”

“This \$93 trillion disaster would deal a fatal blow to Michigan’s manufacturing and agricultural sectors, and destroy Michigan’s middle class,” Cox said in a statement.

Cox pointed to Democratic support for the Green New Deal, an expensive plan to fight climate change that O’Rourke did not discuss during his stop in Ferndale.

Asked about health care by a Michigan physician, Gillibrand used the televised forum to tout her plans for a Medicare for All system. She proposed a buy-in option for all residents who could still have the choice to purchase private insurance, a choice she thinks few would ultimately make.

“I want to get to a single-payer system,” she told reporters after the event. “I think the quickest way to do that is create competition.”

Calling clean water a “human right,” Gillibrand said during the town hall that her proposed Promoting Infrastructure and Protecting the Economy Act would help communities like Flint upgrade infrastructure and fight water contamination.

“Polluters” should pay the cost to clean up PFAS chemicals that threaten drinking water supplies, she said, suggesting the need for alternative funding sources at legacy pollution sites where the former owner is unknown or no longer exists.

The O’Rourke and Gillibrand stops in the vote-rich region show the continued importance of Oakland County, once a conservative stronghold that has turned blue over the past decade. Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton won the county in 2016, but by smaller margins than former President Barack Obama enjoyed in 2008 and 2012.

Trump won Michigan by 10,704 votes in 2016, but a strong performance in Oakland County helped Whitmer and other Democrats sweep the top of the state’s ticket in 2018 while flipping seats in Congress and the state Legislature.

U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin, D-Holly, defeated incumbent Republican Mike Bishop in the 8th Congressional District and U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens, D-Rochester Hills, picked up an open 11th District seat that had been held by a Republican.

Experts attributed the Oakland County gains to a strong surge by female voters who mobilized and marched in the wake of Trump’s 2016 election despite a 2005 recording in which he made lewd comments about women and sexual assault.

Oakland County is “emblematic” of a shift in voting preferences by suburban voters, said state Sen. Jeremy Moss, D-Southfield, who was among several local officials that joined O’Rourke in Ferndale.

“We’re going to be a hot spot for all candidates who have to figure out a way to win Michigan.”

Trump is accelerating Oakland County’s movement toward Democratic candidates, Moss said.

“The Mitt Romney Republican of Oakland County — where the Romneys lived — is not the Trump Republicans. It’s going to be a race to who can appeal to that identity here, and Oakland County is the place to be.”

“If you look at the shifts, the biggest changes from Republican to Democrat across the country is in suburban communities. So I think that’s where Democrats are performing very well across the country, and so Oakland County is emblematic of that, so we’re

Michigan Republican Party spokesman Tony Zammit said he expects Michigan to be a key battle ground state in 2020.

“I think that the road to the presidency, as always, is going to run through the Midwest,” he said. “And I think that Michigan is going to be a key, especially for the Democrats, so it’s going to be one of those states we’re going to fight tooth and nail to hold.”

Republicans are already laying the groundwork for that effort, Zammit said, suggesting that Trump’s sluggish approval ratings are starting to climb and will continue to do so as voters get to know the Democratic candidates.

“While Republicans can win the White House without Michigan, I don’t think a Democrat can. And so I think if we take Michigan from the Democrats, I think that pretty much shuts them out of the White House.”