Snyder says first priority is fixing Michigan's roads

Paul Egan and Kathleen Gray, Detroit Free Press Lansing Bureau *3:11 p.m. EST November 5, 2014*

Gov. Rick Snyder said today that getting a deal in the Legislature to raise more than $1 billion more a year to fix and maintain the state's roads and bridges is his No. 1 priority after "a very successful election."

In a meeting with the Detroit Free Press editorial board, Snyder said, too many "unusual" things can take place in lame duck sessions of the Legislature and he hopes to discourage most of those topics.

"I get concerned because you can have a wide variety of topics all over the place and I don't concur with that view," he said. "Social issues are something I'm not espousing."

He's not interested in repealing prevailing wage laws or having a discussion on changes to the electoral college.

But he will encourage the Legislature to take up an expansion of the Elliott Larsen Civil Rights Act to also include the LGBT community, prohibiting discrimination in hiring and housing decisions.

"I'm meeting with leadership later this week. I don't know what their appetite is for that, but that's something on my list of questions I'm going to ask," he said.



Detroit Free Press columnist Brian Dickerson, staff writer Jim Schaefer, staff writer Kathleen Gray and Editorial Page Editor Stephen Henderson offer their takeaway from Tuesday's elections and what it means for Michigan going forward.

Snyder, a Republican, defeated Democrat Mark Schauer after a hotly contested election in which Schauer challenged Snyder's record on taxes, school funding and right-to-work legislation, among other issues.



Gov. Rick Snyder spoke Wednesday about plans for his second term.

With 99% of precincts reporting, Snyder won 51% of the vote, compared to 47% for Schauer.

Snyder, the morning after his victory, told reporters at the Renaissance Center in Detroit that he doesn't even want to consider roads a second-term priority, because he wants to get it done during the lame duck session of the Legislature before the end of the year.

"I wouldn't say there's an agreement," but "the framework of what we had before was very close," Snyder said.

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Solid victory for Snyder, but legacy still in question

He said the components of a roads package could include shifting the state sales tax that's charged for gas to roads, switching to a percentage-based fuel tax, increasing fees and fines on overweight trucks and increasing registration fees for drivers.

"From a rational, logical point of view, this should happen," he said. "Why don't we pull out the package we had. Let's get it done."

Earlier, with primary and general elections looming, raising extra revenue through higher gas taxes or other measures was "too difficult" for many lawmakers to vote for, Snyder said. With the general election over, "that constraint is off."

Snyder, backed by business groups such as the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and many other opinion leaders, has been pushing to raise more than $1 billion a year extra to put toward Michigan's roads for three years. The Legislature considered proposals that included hiking the gas tax about 25 cents a gallon before the summer break, but adjourned without reaching a deal.

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Snyder in 2016? GOP's election wins fuel speculation

Snyder said he's "excited and ... honored" to be elected to a second term and he's gratified that Republicans have even strengthened their majorities in the Legislature.

The gains in the House and Senate were "a surprise to most people but shows support for what we are doing," he said.

Snyder said he also wants to keep moving forward with helping Detroit get on a sound path forward as it emerges from Chapter 9 bankruptcy and give greater emphasis to technical jobs as career options for Michigan students.

"There are tens of thousands of well-paying jobs out there," Snyder said. Giving technical training greater emphasis would "really send a message that Michigan is the place to do business all across the world."

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Gov. Rick Snyder wins re-election

Snyder defeated Schauer by a greater margin than the polls projected. Snyder said he wasn't surprised.

"I always felt it was going to be stronger than what a lot of the polling data was out there, because I was out talking to citizens," Snyder said.

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