

**107<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting & Fundraiser Dinner  
Citizens Research Council of Michigan**

**Eugene A. Gargaro, Jr. Public Service Award  
5 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Thursday, September 27, 2023**

**Ora Pescovitz  
Remarks**

- Thank you...
- I am honored by this recognition. And honestly, I am overwhelmed and I feel most undeserving.
- Any award with the name “Eugene Gargaro” attached is of the highest honor.
- Gene is among the finest examples of public service that we will find anywhere. His dedication, integrity and example of leading with passion, purpose, selflessness and kindness are qualities that I could only hope to emulate. ....

- o ...and I'm so honored to have Gene as a friend and role model...and now have this award attached to his name.
  
- o It is hardly an exaggeration to say that when the history of Detroit is written, Gene Gargaro's contributions will resound heroically for his decades of commitment to one of the world's greatest cultural assets, the Detroit Institute of Arts....and also for his overall role in the "grand bargain," which protected so much of Detroit in 2013 during the bankruptcy.
  
- There is another reason I am overwhelmed by this recognition, and it is because those who were previous recipients of the Gargaro Award. These are honorees who ascended to the

highest level of public service – Paul Hillegonds, John Dingell, Doug Roberts, Dennis Archer, and Kelly Rossman-McKinney, who received the award posthumously.

- Their collective spirit of public service and working for the common good has lifted all of our hopes... and sets the highest example of public service – and not just in Michigan, but throughout our nation.
- I am grateful to the staff, directors and trustees at the Citizens Research Council of Michigan for including me on such a dignified list.
- In a few minutes, I will join a discussion about the opportunities and challenges facing higher education...but for a moment, I'd like to touch

briefly about the value of higher education... and its intrinsic role in furthering progress and opportunity for all people.

- In today's highly partisan environment, we have lost the proper focus on the role of education. The public discussion has moved away from the pursuit of knowledge, progress and opportunity.... and into the cloistered silos of sloganeering, political self-aggrandizement and petty grievances.
- More than ever, education must be the force that shapes our democratic world. And, we must realize the power of education and research to provide economic opportunities not only to individuals, but also to communities and to our state.

- Time and again, the Citizens Research Council has shown this to be the case. And the CRC is to be commended for pushing for a rational and well-reasoned approach to public policy based on facts, not impulsive conjecture.
- Education is at the core of the CRC's mission... as evidenced in the "Michigan's Path to a Prosperous Future" series, which supports public policy through factual research and incisive analysis.
- While it's true that those of us in higher education sometimes focus on esoteric debates of academia.... there can be no question that higher education must respond to the challenge

posed by today's profound technological, cultural and economic transformation.

- To put today's emerging change in perspective....
  - Think about how the world looked differently before and after the internet....
  - Now imagine that....was merely the prologue to the changes ahead inspired by artificial intelligence and augmented reality.
- For higher education to keep up with this fast-changing world, we must be more responsive and relevant to the changing

“learning needs” of today’s students....and we must be dynamically engaged in our communities.

- Student success, accessibility, affordability, practical research and collaborating with communities to build a workforce, economy and improved wellbeing must all be at the core of our mission.
- And we must be unafraid to confront and challenge the skeptics who challenge the value of a college degree.
- A college degree is a vital and necessary means to improved economic competitiveness, upward mobility and personal fulfillment....

- o And it is also fundamental to the functioning of a thriving democracy.
- With education must come civility.... And with civility must come a discussion about the paramount importance of diversity, equity and inclusion as we continue along the path to perfecting a democratic society.
- And as we know.... The path to progress is lined by inspirational role models, like Gene Gargaro and others... who have answered the call to public service.
- Thank you for bestowing this incredible honor on me. I accept it on behalf of the faculty, staff, students, administrators and the board of



Oakland University... In other words, those who actually do the work.

- I am so proud we, at Oakland, are recipients of the Eugene A. Gargaro, Jr. Public Service Award.
- Thank you to Oakland's many supporters and friends.... And personally, I'd like to thank my partner, Dan, for sharing this important moment with me tonight.

And thank you to all of you who support the important work of the CRC.