OTHER VOICES: Ideas for the next governor

By Ed Clemente

Michigan is at one of its biggest crossroads in more than 100 years. We are competing in an ever-changing global economy, we are experiencing statewide leadership turnover at all levels with redistricting changes just around the corner, and we are struggling to provide vital services that our people need due to declining revenues in these tough economic times.

On top of these difficult realities, the next governor will also have to grapple with being able to create the good-paying 21st century jobs for our Michigan workers at a time when the skill sets for those jobs keep evolving.

While I am not a fortune-teller, I have had the opportunity to observe and assist in developing some important economic growth strategies for Michigan as the chair of the House New Economy and Quality of Life Committee. From that experience, I would like to offer a few top 10 lists in key areas that might help our next governor hit the ground running.

• **Top 10 economic sectors.** These are initiatives that are already under way in Michigan and are showing positive results: high-tech batteries for electric vehicles; solar energy; agriculture; travel and tourism; film; defense; wind energy; information technology; life sciences; and advanced manufacturing and manufacturing diversification.

• **Top 10 pipeline issues.** These are projects, partnerships, early-phase opportunities that are already in one stage or another that are improving our state's diversification: MSU facility for rare isotope beams; UM Pfizer Campus; EPA lab; Wayne State University, TechTown, NextEnergy; entrepreneurship/career training; access to all forms of capital; new materials/composites research; new manufacturing processes; life sciences, medical schools, medical R&D; University Research Corridor; tech transfer, intellectual property; clean tech/green tech centers of energy excellence.

• **Top 10 future assets.** These are opportunities based on various Michigan assets and the ability to leverage them: tribal business development; robotics; LED technology; photovoltaic standards development; government creativity and innovation; job-training programs; aerospace engineering; supply chain technology; regional economic collaboration; statewide New Economy Commission.

• **Top 10 quality-of-life projects.** These are areas that will improve the quality of life for Michigan residents and help attract job creators to our state: foundations, nonprofits; mass transit, high-speed rail; outdoors, agricultural tourism, entrepreneurship; brownfields, historic preservation, green building; cultural/creative development; talent retention and attraction, knowledge job creation; tourism/entertainment marketing; niche higher education programs; business and academic alumni; and international relations.

In these uncertain economic times, it is difficult to predict the future, but it is possible to position ourselves in a variety of fields to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. That's why I humbly offer these recommendations to the next administration, as well as my willingness to provide guidance on any of these issues. Thanks for listening, and good luck to the new administration.

*Ed Clemente, D-Lincoln Park, is the state representative from District 14.*