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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

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## **Wiener to Step Down; Governor Names D.C. Office Director Chief of Staff**

LANSING – Rick Wiener, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm’s chief operating officer and long-time advisor, announced today that he will be leaving his chief of staff post on November 1.

Wiener said: “I am leaving the Granholm staff, but not the Granholm team. While today I’m announcing that I’m giving up my title, I’m not giving up my conviction that this is one of the best leaders this state has known.”

Governor Granholm announced that John Burchett, current director of her Washington D.C. office, will serve as chief of staff upon Wiener’s departure. Wiener indicated that he had informed the Governor several months ago of his intention to leave before the end of this year.

“With budget targets complete and the strong hope that the Governor’s economic initiatives will be completed soon, this is the right time to make the change,” Wiener said. “I’m proud to have had the opportunity to have served in this Administration for almost three years, and I am proud to leave behind a strong team of exceptional and dedicated managers and public servants”

Wiener helped the Governor build an Administration that has eliminated nearly \$4 billion in state budget deficits while continuing to invest in education and the protection of Michigan’s most vulnerable citizens. During his tenure as COO, Michigan was named one of the best-managed states in the nation and one of the top-rated states for use of technology and business development. The Governor praised Wiener for his insight, his political skill, and his dedication to developing good public policy.

“Rick’s reputation as a wise counselor and a brilliant student of the political process far predates my tenure in Lansing,” said Granholm. “I was lucky enough to have snagged him for my team for these past two years, and he served as the captain of a team of which I am very proud. Catching Rick was like catching lightning in a bottle – it was powerful, and much too short-lived. I regret his decision and his departure but appreciate – as always – his candor in wanting to step back from the intensity of this office. I wish him only the very best...and wish him not to be too far away.”

Wiener noted that he is departing the Administration with sadness, but with optimism for the Governor’s team.

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“The Governor needs a chief of staff who can dedicate exceptional intensity 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week to her office,” said Wiener. “And that will be even more true in the next 15 months. She needs someone who can give it their all, and more, every day of the week. It’s a commitment I’ve made from day one in this administration, but I’ve decided that I simply cannot commit to that same level of sustained intensity going forward. This is among the most bittersweet professional decisions I’ve made, but I leave the office in able hands. John’s ready to continue the good work that I’ve helped to get underway, and he’s ready to dedicate himself to maintaining the level of commitment and intensity I’ve always been proud to bring to this job.”

John Burchett will step in as the Governor’s new chief of staff upon Wiener’s departure. He will begin to transition into the new office in October. As director of the Governor’s Washington D.C. office, he serves as the Governor’s representative to both the National Governors’ Association and the Democratic Governors’ Association. He has worked closely with the Michigan congressional delegation to win additional road dollars for the state, maintain our military bases through the BRAC process, and draw down critical federal dollars for both disaster and economic relief.

“John is an iron fist in a velvet glove,” said Granholm. “He’s every bit as determined and tenacious as he is uplifting and gracious. He’s a skilled manager of people, he’s well-respected by my staff and Cabinet, and he knows how to cut to the quick of solving a problem. He’s the kind of professional – and friend – I trust to offer smart counsel and honest input in every situation.”

Burchett has worked closely with governors and staff from nearly every state. He is highly-regarded among his Washington peers as an effective coalition builder who can work across party lines to deliver results for his state.

“John works quickly to build relationships that deliver results,” said Ray Scheppach, executive director for the National Governors Association. “He’s earned the respect of governors and congressional leaders who appreciate his ability to develop decisive, no-nonsense solutions that benefit the entire state of Michigan.”

Before being named director of the D.C. office, Burchett served as deputy director of Governor Granholm’s transition team. A Michigan native, Burchett has worked in Washington D.C. for the past 8 years, serving during that time as a White House Fellow, a special assistant to the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, an assistant management officer for the D.C. Control Board, and a government management consultant, specializing in state and local government, business planning, and business process reengineering.

Before moving to Washington in 1997, Burchett served for three years as an assistant Wayne County corporation counsel where he specialized in real estate and economic development projects. He was heavily involved in the negotiations and development of both the new Tiger

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Stadium and Ford Field in downtown Detroit. Burchett also served as counsel for Little Caesars Enterprises and was an attorney at Honigman Miller Schwarz and Cohn.

Burchett earned his undergraduate degree from Notre Dame in 1984 and his J.D. from Harvard Law School in 1987. He clerked for the Honorable Cornelia Kennedy on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

“Michigan is seen, in a variety of arenas, as a creative national leader by those outside the state,” said Burchett. “I look forward to working on the ground to keep building that reputation both outside and inside the state. I’m honored to be asked to serve in this new way. I’m certain that working in the halls of the state’s capitol will be as rewarding and challenging as those of our nation’s Capitol were.”

**MEDIA NOTE: Rick Wiener will conduct a media roundtable at 11:00 a.m. today (Tuesday, September 13) in the Communications Office of the Governor located on the first floor of the Romney Building in downtown Lansing.**