

# Lansing State Journal

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019 ■ LSJ.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Nessel blasts proposed budget cuts

Attorney general says plan is 'devastating'

David Eggert  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MACKINAC ISLAND – Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel said Republican-backed cuts to her budget would have a “devastating” impact, limiting the office’s ability to protect consumers, prosecute sexually abusive clergy and look into wrongful convictions.

The general fund reductions proposed by the Senate and House range between 10% and 15%, or \$4.2 million to \$5.3 million, not including sizable cuts to what are known as restricted funds. They are seen as payback for some of the Democrat’s moves since taking office in January, like reaching a legal settlement to prohibit faith-based adoption agencies that contract with the state from discriminating against LGBT couples.

“The proposed cuts would be devastating to the residents of our state,” Nessel told The Associated Press in an interview this past week at the Detroit Regional Chamber’s Mackinac Policy Conference. “It’s very short-sighted of the Legislature to think that cutting the budget of my office is in some way going to punish me personally for any of my views that I disagree with them on. The fact is it’s going to punish their constituents, and it’s going to be harmful to all our state residents.”

She listed a number of ways that the funding reductions would hurt, and she said lawmakers may not know that for every \$1 allocated to the department, it can generate \$10 or more.

The consumer protection division this year has received more than \$15 million in settlements that went to the state or to defrauded victims, Nessel said. Her office has intervened to scale back utility rate increases, saving customers.

She is planning to file major lawsuits against companies over the opioid epidemic and drinking water contamination related to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. She has formed a task force to charge caregivers who abuse elders and vulnerable adults, and units to crack down on payroll and auto insurance fraud. A new wrongful conviction

See NESSEL, Page 5A

## SAYING GOODBYE

Eastern High is leaving the building it’s occupied for 91 years



RJ Wolcott Lansing State Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

LANSING – As Jack Davis hobbled down the hall at Eastern High School with a football injury on a fall morning in 1954, Thurman Harris, the school’s debate coach, asked him what’d happened. “He said, ‘Davis, why are you playing football? You should be on the debate team.’” The future lawyer hung up his shoulder pads. The following year, he and his partner, Lynn Clapham, won the state’s debate championship. Davis went on to earn a law degree from Harvard University. Ligia Romero came to Eastern with dreams of spiking volleyballs down on the opposition. Standing just above five feet tall meant that wasn’t going to happen.

See EASTERN, Page 8A



### USA TODAY

Virginia Beach gunman was long-time employee with security pass for building where co-workers were slain. 19A

### Judy Putnam column

Snag that delayed his graduation proves lucky for Morehouse College grad from East Lansing. 11A

### Weather

High 65° ■ Low 40°  
Partly sunny, breezy.  
Forecast, 3A

Volume 165 | No. 29  
Home delivery pricing inside  
Subscribe 877-599-6685  
©2019



for health. for care. for life.





# Eastern

Continued from Page 1A

Setting aside her ambition of being a highlight-reel player was difficult. Noticing Romero's despondency, her coach, Jean Robinson pulled her out of a game

"Everybody has to play at 100 percent to get that win," Robinson told her. "On a team, everybody depends on everybody else."

That reality check helped the 1977 graduate embrace her role setting up big plays.

At Eastern, Noah Maldonado gained self-confidence through his involvement with the Lansing Economic Area Partnership's youth entrepreneurship program.

"I got my foot in the door by meeting with a lot of different business owners and getting advice on how I could accomplish the goals I wanted to."

Today, the 2015 graduate owns LNSNG, a clothing line he runs with fellow Quakers Tony Allen and RJ Everett.

This is a year of change for Eastern. It's the school's final year at the building it has occupied for 91 years.

Sparrow Health System purchased the Eastern property in 2016. And so Eastern is moving from the Lansing School District's oldest building to its newest, the former Pattengill Academy, which has undergone extensive renovations following the passage of the Pathway Promise millage in 2016.

For those who walked the historic building's green-tiled hallways, past its oak trophy cabinets, up and down worn staircases, the memories will stand, even if the school doesn't.

"It's not the building, it was the atmosphere," said 1956 graduate Jane White. "It was meeting and being with people and it being a very happy time in my life."

## Lansing gets a new high school

Eastern High School opened its doors in the fall of 1928.

More than 700 students filed into the 1,600-seat auditorium, welcomed by the school's first principal, Dwight Rich, according to an account of the school's first 50 years written by Jon Young.

The school cost \$1 million to build, according to Young's book. Eastern's surroundings at that time were modest: looming elm and maple trees and the fledgling Sparrow Hospital, which had welcomed its first patients in 1912.

Eastern's mascot came from its location on Pennsylvania Avenue. Quakers founded the colony that became the state of Pennsylvania in the 17th century. The name of the school's yearbook came from a senior named Merlin Cran, who used the first letters of Lansing and the last of Eastern to create "The Lantern."

Among its first graduates were Clements Sohn, nicknamed "Batwing Man" who dazzled audiences with his skydiving jumps before his death in 1937.

Ellie Doersam arrived at Eastern as a fresh-faced University of Michigan graduate in 1953. She'd earned a history degree, but there were no jobs in the history department.

"I had a minor in physical education, so they put me in the gym with five classes of 75 students each," she recalled.

Fourteen years later, she was promoted to dean of girls, responsible for the discipline of the female students and the school's health clinic. She started at Eastern working alongside many staff members who were there when it opened, although a new generation, including new principal Don Johnson, was replacing them.

"I always told the kids, change is constant, but family is continuous. I always looked at Eastern as a family."

She developed a reputation as omniscient. Whether it was knowing where a missing fur coat was or the names of student's parents, uncles, aunts or even pets, Doersam had the goods.

She became the district's first female high school principal in 1983, following Johnson's retirement. She told the State Journal at the time the outpouring of support she received from students made her feel like a "millionaire."

## Where sports and school spirit abound

The first few times Sam Vincent visited Eastern, he went to watch his older brother Jay play basketball.

The faceoffs between Jay Vincent's Quakers and Earvin "Magic" Johnson's Everett Vikings inspired Sam to play for Eastern when his time came in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

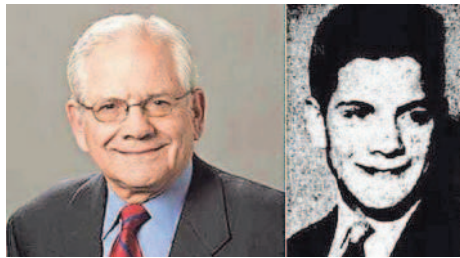
"Those Jay vs. Earvin games that were sold out. Those were times when you couldn't find a ticket and the line was out the door. Inside, there was an incredible atmosphere," Vincent said.



Marcelle Carruthers, the principal at Eastern High School, is an alumnus of Eastern, where he was ranked the best quarterback in the state during his senior year in 1983. MATTHEW DAE SMITH/LANSING STATE JOURNAL



Incoming freshmen stand at the doors of Eastern High School in the fall of 1989. LANSING STATE JOURNAL COLLECTION AT THE ARCHIVES OF MICHIGAN



Jack Davis, a 1956 Eastern graduate, is pictured on the right from a State Journal story in 1955. At left is a 2008 photo of Davis. LANSING STATE JOURNAL FILE

While their age gap meant they never squared off in high school, Sam Vincent had his eye on the one-game scoring record Johnson set while at Everett High School: 54 points. Against Waverly High School, he set the new bar at 61 points.

"I remember it being one of those games where you're kind of in that special place," Vincent said. "It was a game where the shots were falling and somewhere late in the game, someone said I had 50 whatever, and at that point, I thought, 'Man, if I score a little more, might get to where Magic was.'"

The Vincent brothers headed to MSU before playing professional basketball in the NBA and abroad. Jay won an NCAA National Championship alongside Johnson at MSU, while Sam was a two-time first-team All-Big Ten player who started in all but one of his games as a Spartan.

Basketball isn't the only sport where Quakers have excelled.

Kevin Jackson, a 1982 graduate, went on to win Olympic gold in 1992 for freestyle wrestling. The Thornhill brothers, Josh and Kaleb, went on to play football at MSU in the early 2000s, following in the footsteps of their dad, Charlie.

Marcelle Carruthers, an Eastern graduate who is now Eastern's principal, was the only football player in Michigan to rush and pass for more than 1,000 yards his senior year.

"I was in awe because it was the school that all my friends went to," Carruthers said of his first day at Eastern.

That included athletic standouts like the Vincents and Jackson, the later with

## On the cover

TOP PHOTO: Students leave Eastern High School on Wednesday. LEFT STRIP, TOP: Scott Van Deusen asks a question during a sit-in protest in 1990; MIDDLE: Academic Decathlon Team member Emanuel Kemp and his mother, Rhada, share some refreshments at a reception in 1995; BOTTOM: la Lor, a freshman in 1993, works on a piece of Hmong needlecraft. RIGHT STRIP, TOP: Nicole Gray is sworn in as a witness by clerk Aaron Wieber during a mock trial in 1991; MIDDLE: 1993 valedictorians pose for a photo; BOTTOM: Brandon Ruiz gets computer help from teacher Leroy Howell in 1995. BOTTOM PHOTO: A 1958 photo of the school.

PHOTOS BY NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL; LANSING STATE JOURNAL COLLECTION AT THE ARCHIVES OF MICHIGAN

## Eastern graduation

The Eastern High School Class of 2019's commencement ceremony will take place June 2 at the Lansing Center, 333 E. Michigan Ave. The ticketed event begins at 6 p.m. For more information, visit the school's website, [lansing.schools.net/schools/high-schools/eastern/](http://lansing.schools.net/schools/high-schools/eastern/).

whom he played football.

"(Walking inside) I'm like, I'm one of the guys now."

It was where students he'd gotten to know from Walter French school, as well as others from the city's south and east sides, came together under one roof boasting nearly 2,000 students during Carruthers' time as a student.

"That's the one thing I've always loved about Eastern High School, the diversity was always here."

## Finding a home

Romero was heartbroken when the time came to leave Eastern in 1977. It'd become a second home for her. Her family had settled in Lansing after seeking political asylum in the United States from her birth country of Guatemala.

"What really set Eastern apart was how diverse it was," Romero said. It was a place where she saw faces that looked like hers among a varied cast.

At times, Eastern's has enrolled students who've spoken more than 50 languages.

Her mother graduated from the district's adult education program two years before she earned her diploma at Eastern. More than a dozen family members followed in Romero's footsteps by attending Eastern in the years that followed.

"It was quite an accomplishment for the entire family really," she said of her graduation. "We came without language, and there I was graduating. We moved into a new culture, and we navigated that."

Jennifer Hamilton, a 2001 Eastern graduate, had a love for the school and

its traditions embedded in her family.

Both her parents and grandparents met while attending the school. As a cheerleader, she saw her family wasn't alone in its multi-generational connection to the school.

"In the fight song, there's a part where fans shout out their class year. It was always interesting to me — my parents went there, and it was the same for many of my peers — how many alumni would come back for the sports."

Now a media specialist at a middle school in Maryland, she can still remember how it felt walking the same steps as her family members had all those years ago.

"We were in a building that had some history as opposed to all the schools being built at that time," she said. "The marble had huge dips so you can tell which are well traveled because the dips are deeper."

Leslie Grimm grew up just down the road from Eastern High School. She went to private schools until attending Eastern and graduating from its International Baccalaureate program as a valedictorian in 2012.

The rigorous IB program, coupled with the diversity of the school, drew her. Statistics like dropout rates and test scores didn't reflect the essence of what was happening inside at the time, she said.

"Whether we were one of the lowest schools in Lansing area test score-wise, we had a great atmosphere to counterbalance that," Grimm said.

## What does the future hold for Eastern?

After years of questions about whether Eastern would be shuttered and what would happen to students if it did, an answer came with the district's Pathway Promise plan.

The Pathway Promise reoriented the district's schools and carved out a biotechnology focus at Eastern. Voter approval of the \$120 million bond in 2016 allowed for the upgrades to turn Pattengill into the new Eastern.

The bond's success came four months after the district sold the 18-acre site where the historic school building stands. Sparrow purchased the property in 2016 for \$2.475 million.

"Sparrow has launched a strategic master facility planning process that includes beginning to assess the Eastern High School campus and consider options," John Foren, its spokesperson, wrote in a statement. "We share a commitment with the Lansing School District to the Lansing community and have many common interests, including the continued health, education, and economic growth of the area."

Diamond Parsons, a senior, is this year's student council president. Fliers in the hallway and promotion on social media helped her win the election. A pizza giveaway, she said, might have clinched it.

She's hoping this year's class left its mark on the school. As a junior, she participated in a school walk out in protest of gun violence and kept up efforts as a senior to get students involved in supporting one another's sports and clubs.

Eastern doesn't have a New Tech program like Everett High School, but that doesn't matter to the 17-year-old. It's hallways are a loud, bustling hub of chatter, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I love how it's old," she said. "Yes it gets hot, but I love our building."

Contact RJ Wolcott at (517) 377-1026 or [rwolcott@lsj.com](mailto:rwolcott@lsj.com).