

MARK A. BEHNKE - BATTLE CREEK CITY MAYOR

Key findings include:

- **Long-Tenured City Official:** Behnke has served on the City Commission since 1991 (with multiple stints as mayor).
- **Republican:** Behnke ran as a Republican for state house in 1998 and 2012, losing both elections. He has also contributed to Republicans, including election denier Bill Huizenga and local politician, Dave Morgan, who insinuated outside agitators were responsible for the violence seen at January 6.
- **Reposts from Republicans:** Behnke reposted to his social media a post from a far-right account relating to the border after the 2024 election. He also is tagged many times from a local politician who insinuated January 6 violence was from outside agitators.

Battle Creek (“Cereal City”) is a mid-sized city in Calhoun County anchored by manufacturing and food processing (WK Kellogg Co/Kellanova) with a population around 52,000. Battle Creek is a working class city, with median household income of \$51.7k, and roughly 18% of residents below poverty, with a racially diverse population (approx. 63% White, 16% Black, 8–9% Hispanic) [[Data USA](#), 10/27/2025].

Politically, Battle Creek leans Democrat in conservative Calhoun County; Harris won Battle Creek in 2024 54-46. There is not significant documented election denier activity in Battle Creek. Although the Battle Creek City Council is official non-partisan, Republican-aligned incumbents hold a majority.

BACKGROUND

Behnke is a longtime small-business figure in trucking/logistics. He is listed as president of Behnke Transportation, a Battle Creek–based freight/logistics firm.

Behnke was first elected to the Battle Creek City Commission in 1991; has served multiple terms and multiple tenures as mayor (pre-2020 when commissioners selected the mayor and post-2020 when voters began electing the mayor). He was selected mayor by a 5–4 commission vote in Nov. 2017. He then won in 2020 52-48 and in 2022 54-46, both against Lynn Ward Gray. 2020 was the first time the mayor position was elected by the people of Battle Creek, not an appointed sitting city councilor. Behnke ran unopposed in 2024 for his reelection as mayor [[Battle Creek](#), 10/28/2025].

Although city posts are nonpartisan, Behnke ran as a Republican for MI House District 62 in 1998 (lost to Mark Schauer 63.8%–36.2%) and again in 2012 (lost to Kate Segal 57.7%–42.3%) [[Ballotpedia](#), [Wikipedia](#), 10/28/2025]. Behnke has also contributed to Republican candidates as recently as 2022 when he contributed to David Morgan’s run for State House and Bill Huizenga’s reelection campaign for U.S. House. Huizenga is an election denier and the Rep for Battle Creek [[Election Deniers](#), 10/28/2025].

ON THE ISSUES

2025 PRIDE FLAG VOTE

Behnke voted in favor of flying the Pride flag for the month of July [[Battle Creek](#), 10/28/2025].

VULNERABILITIES & ADVERSE FINDINGS OF NOTE

REPOST FROM FAR-RIGHT ACCOUNT

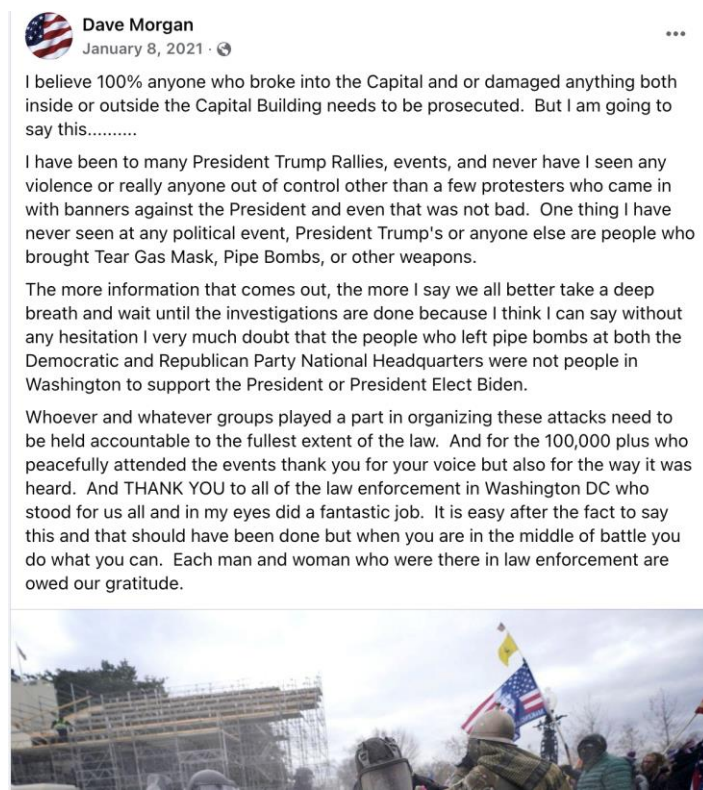
Behnke’s last shared post on X was a video arguing Tom Homan “destroys AOC” [[X](#), 10/28/2025]. The original post was from an [account](#) whose bio read “God-Fearing Patriot | Family Man | America First us Amplifying High-Quality America First Content.”

REPOST FROM KAYLEIGH MCEENANY

Behnke reposted a tweet from Kayleigh McEnany in the lead up to the 2020 election where she thanked Trump for welcoming her on stage.

TAGGED POSTS FROM REPUBLICAN ACCOUNT

Behnke has been tagged many times in posts from a [Dave Morgan](#), a local political figure, who insinuated after January 6 that violent people may have been outside agitators. Morgan's viewpoints seem to be all over the place and his Facebook is chaotic.



CIVIL LIBERTIES LAWSUIT

Autumn Smith filed a lawsuit against the Battle Creek City Council alleging they violated her First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments. Smith's request to fly a Tea Party flag and an "Appeal to Heaven" flag (revolutionary war flag used with extremists today) [Smith v. City of Battle Creek, 2024 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 238704]. The case appears to be open but does not seem to have gained much traction. Further, Smith tagged Battle Creek City Councilors in a post lambasting city hall for denying a FOIA request. Smith's [Facebook](#) is full of extremist content, including her being a self-proclaimed patriot.

ARPA FUNDING CONTROVERSY

One of Battle Creek's prominent African American religious leaders in early 2022 called out Morris's age and what he called her "lack of experience" during a March 6 Facebook event. He, along with the host of the Facebook event, also questioned the fairness and transparency of the process used by city commissioners to allocate about \$8 million in ARPA to fund projects submitted by organizations in the community. Commissioners—including Morris—publicly defended the process; Morris is quoted

calling it “very fair and unbiased” [[Second Wave Media](#), 10/28/2025]. It does not appear the criticism from community leaders gained much traction as Morris has been elected twice resignedly since then.

SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

[Facebook](#)

[Campaign Facebook](#) (does not appear to be in-use)

[Campaign X](#)

[LinkedIn](#)