Recent forecasts show improvements in tax collections, and many states had built up healthy reserves, but large deficits still remain a challenge in parts of Midwest

by Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org)

Only a year ago, the fiscal condition of U.S. states was almost universally strong. Revenues were coming in higher than expected, and budget reserves were at record levels. The talk in state capitols was centered on how to use this strong fiscal position to make new investments in areas such as infrastructure and teacher pay. But then came massive business closures, job losses and an increased demand for health-related expenditures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“What you saw last spring was tax revenue going off a cliff,” says Josh Goodman, senior officer with the Pew Charitable Trust’s State Fiscal Health Project. Over the summer, revised state revenue forecasts were showing huge, sometimes record-high, budget shortfalls for fiscal years 2021 and 2022. Fast-forward to today, and the budget picture is mixed: better than many expected in the middle of last year, but still much worse than the outlook at the beginning of 2020. According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, U.S. states reduced general fund spending in fiscal year 2021 by 1.1 percent compared to levels in FY 2020, and by 5.5 percent compared to governors’ pre-pandemic budget proposals. This decline came on the heels of nine consecutive years of spending growth.

In December, Moody’s Analytics estimated that state revenue for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 will fall $175 billion below pre-pandemic projections. “Budget problems are still here,” Goodman says, “but states are generally feeling a bit more optimistic than they were six or eight months ago.” One of those states is Wisconsin.

In January, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau reported that over the remainder of this budget cycle and the next biennium, the state was expected to collect an additional $1 billion compared to revenue estimates from November 2020.

“That’s all good news right now for Wisconsin and Wisconsin taxpayers,” Sen. Howard Marklein says. Marklein, who serves as co-chair of the Legislature’s budget-writing Joint Finance Committee, says he recently went back and reviewed 20 years of Wisconsin’s financial statements. His conclusion: “Our balance sheet is as strong now as it’s been going back to the early 1990s.”

Minnesota Sen. Carla Nelson says her state is seeing improvements on the fiscal front as well. In the spring, Minnesota’s budget leaders were projecting a shortfall of $4.7 billion for the coming biennium. In December, that figure fell to $1.2 billion, and there was a projected surplus for the current year. “Many of us are optimistic the budget picture will improve even more,” she said.

HOW BUDGETS STABILIZED

Brian Sigritz, director of state fiscal studies at the National Association of State Budget Officers, says several factors have allowed tax collections to rebound. For one, states have been able to collect revenue from online sales during the pandemic. Just a few years ago, this would not have been possible, but a Supreme Court decision (South Dakota v. Wayfair) lead the way.

Around the Region

• Governors’ State of the State addresses reflect lessons of 2020 — expand broadband and telehealth, retrain workers

Capital Closeup

• Proposals in 2021 would give legislatures more powers and oversight during public health emergencies

Rainy Day Fund Balances as % of General Fund Expenditures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>FY 2020</th>
<th>FY 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kansas</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rainy day fund balances are not available for states identified with an asterisk.

> COVER STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS | MIDWESTERN OFFICE

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More than 1 million acres enrolled in Ohio program that incentivizes farmers to help protect water quality

Agricultural practice | # of acres enrolled
--- | ---
Implement voluntary nutrient management plan | 1,092,852
Reduce use of fertilizer through variable-rate application | 4,050
Apply fertilizer below the surface to reduce nutrient loss | 22,800
Mix manure into the soil to keep it in place and minimize nutrient loss | 2,010
Introduce a small grain into the crop rotation to reduce erosion and enrich the soil | 1,990
Plant a cover crop for the winter months | 8,500

Source: State of Ohio

More than 1 million acres enrolled in Ohio program that incentivizes farmers to help protect water quality

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Concerns about prescription drug costs have some states looking north for policy solutions

by Jon Davis (jdavis@csg.org)

A s they wrestle with rising costs for prescription drugs, some Midwestern lawmakers are looking to their northern neighbors for help. Among the ideas: Allow for the importation of drugs from Canada, or implement a form of “international reference pricing.”

Under a bill introduced in North Dakota earlier this year, the state would establish a program that bases drug prices on costs in Canada’s four most populous provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario and Québec.

SB 2170 would annually determine maximum retail prices for the 250 most costly prescription drugs identified by the state’s public employees’ retirement system.

These drugs would then be subject to the “referenced rate” — a maximum price that would be set at either the lowest cost paid by those provinces or the maximum cost as reported by Canada’s Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. Cost savings would have to be passed on to consumers.

“We thought the public in North Dakota needed to have a conversation about long-term prescription drug prices,” says Sen. Howard Anderson, sponsor of SB 2170. “People can easily compare prices, and they wonder why we can’t get access to similar prices here.”

The bill is based on model legislation from the National Academy of State Health Policy.

“International reference pricing lets [states] get around importation,” says Trish Riley, the academy’s executive director. “By going to a pricing index, you can get lower prices, including for biologics [like insulin].”

Federal law dating back to 2003 authorizes state importation programs and sets out requirements for them. However, the U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services must certify that implementation does not pose a risk to public health and safety. That approval didn’t happen until last year when the Trump administration published a new rule for importation programs.

The rule (which excludes biologic drugs) took effect on Nov. 30, but immediately faced lawsuits from domestic drug makers.

As of early February, six states — Colorado, Florida, Maine, New Hampshire, New Mexico and Vermont — already were seeking federal approval to establish drug-importation programs, but as of early February, the Biden administration hadn’t yet announced whether it would let the Trump administration’s decision stand.

North Dakota would join those six U.S. states if either of two bills from this year become law: SB 2209 and SB 2212.

Minnesota, too, is mulling importation legislation this year (HF 73 and SB 312), and Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers included an importation program in his proposed budget. Evers in 2019 also created a Task Force on Reducing Prescription Drug Prices; its final report from last year noted importation as a possible policy.

In Michigan, the Prescription Drug Task Force created by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in February 2020 noted such a program could have been established by four different bills in the Legislature’s 2019 session: HB 4978, HB 4979, HB 5107 and SB 525 (none of these measures made it past the committee stage).

This task force’s final report to the Legislature included importation as a “future consideration,” but did not recommend it as an immediate step.

Jon Davis serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.
Illinois revamps college-level developmental education with goal of improving completion rates

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csog.org)

This past summer, following the killing of George Floyd, legislators across the country began asking questions about racial justice and disparities in their own states. Among them was Illinois Rep. Carol Ammons, and one of her questions, along with other leaders in her state’s Legislative Black Caucus, was this: “Is this just a police issue?”

“Our answer was ‘no,’” she says. Their legislative response was to develop a sweeping policy agenda built on four foundations: criminal justice reform, economic equity and opportunity, health care and education.

Much of the work on that last pillar fell to Ammons, last year’s chair of the House Higher Education Committee. Her efforts culminated in January with the passage of HB 2170. The measure seeks changes at all levels of the education system, with an overarching goal of advancing racial equity.

On the higher-education side, one piece of that bill illustrates the kind of systematic reforms being sought. It has to do with how the state’s community colleges deliver developmental education to students, and how these institutions choose who takes part in this coursework.

Developmental education is remedial instruction in subjects such as English and math, often traditionally taken before students can move on to college-level, credit-bearing courses. State-level reforms in this policy area became “a centerpiece,” Ammons says, in part because of what legislators learned in committee testimony over the summer. In Illinois, almost half of high school graduates enrolled full-time in a community college are placed in developmental education. Among minority students, this rate is even higher—nearly 71% out of every 100 Black students, for example, and among this group, only six of 100 go on to graduate.

“The traditional developmental-education courses cost students time, money and financial aid, but they don’t count toward college credit,” Ammons says. “It becomes a barrier.”

HB 2170 uproots the traditional developmental-education approach, calling for it to be replaced with an evidence-based model that maximizes a student’s likelihood of completing an introductory college-level course within his or her first two semesters.

One likely result: community colleges’ adoption of a “co-requisite model,” under which students are placed directly into college-level coursework with concurrent instructional supports. “What we’ve seen with the traditional model is that 18 percent of Black students in math and 29 percent in English completed a gateway course with a C or better in three years,” says Emily Goldman, senior policy manager for the Partnership for College Completion. “With the co-requisite model, it’s 69 percent and 64 percent.”

Illinois isn’t alone in seeking these kinds of policy changes. More states around the country are recognizing the traditional model as an obstacle to postsecondary completion, says Nikki Edgecombe, a senior research scholar at the Community College Research Center.

The loss of time and money (including the possible exhaustion of financial aid) while taking remedial courses are factors, she notes, but so is the impact on a student’s academic outlook.

“Can it be demotivating for a student, ‘I applied to college, they let me in, and now they won’t let me take college classes,’” Edgecombe says. “Getting students into and through their gateway courses is important to generating academic momentum.”

Tim Anderson serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee.
Eight Midwest governors gave State of State addresses in January

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@cg.org)

1 INVEST MORE IN PROGRAMS THAT NARROW, OR ELIMINATE, GAPS IN BROADBAND ACCESS

If the governors get their wishes, Midwestern states will be investing tens of millions of dollars — sometimes hundreds of millions of dollars — in programs that expand broadband access.

“The pandemic underscored how possible work from home or remote education can be for those on the wrong side of the digital divide,” Nebraska Gov. Tom Ricketts said in his State of the State address.

Similar sentiments were echoed by governors across the region. Many of their proposals this year build on existing state broadband programs (often costing sponsors millions of dollars to increase access for providers to expand services), but seek to accelerate a closing of the broadband divide with greater public investments.

- In his proposed biennial budget, Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers allocates nearly $200 million. That is five times the combined amount spent on broadband in the state’s biennial budgets of 2013, 2015 and 2017.
- Gov. Kim Reynolds said it’s time for her state to “plant a stake in the ground and declare that every part of Iowa will have affordable, high-speed broadband by 2022.” The estimated cost: $450 million.
- South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem is seeking an appropriation of $100 million, an amount that she says, combined with dollars from the federal government and private sector, will get high-speed internet to all unopened or underserved households.
- Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb asked legislators to invest an additional $100 million in the state’s Next Level Broadband Program.

- For the first time, Kansas recently began distributing “connectivity emergency response grants,” a total of nearly $50 million to help close the digital divide. “It’s a tool to recruit new businesses and keep existing ones from leaving,” Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly said in her State of the State address.

“It’s also a tool to provide care through telehealth services to rural and underserved Kansans. And it’s a tool for our children and their education.”

2 BUILD ON RISE OF TELEHEALTH WITH LAWS THAT REMOVE BARRIERS TO SERVICES

Nationwide, the use of telehealth climbed exponentially last year — for example, the number of claims in October 2020 was up 3,060 percent from the previous year, according to the independent, nonprofit group FAIR Health.

This shift in health delivery was caused in large part by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also enabled in some states through governors’ executive orders. For example, Noem waived rules in South Dakota that prevented medications from being prescribed remotely and that required a patient-provider relationship prior to a telehealth visit.

She urged legislators to pass bills making these changes permanent.

Reynolds, too, touted the promise of telehealth, and singled out a law passed last year in Iowa that is allowing students to access behavioral health services remotely, in their schools.

“That’s a law that many of us learned over the last 10 months: telehealth is a powerful tool that we should continue to encourage and expand,” she said.

“And it’s not just for mental health. Thousands of low-income patients experienced it firsthand this year, receiving treatment and checkups from their own home.”

3 MODERNIZE UNEMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS THROUGH UPGRADES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Between March 2020 and January of this year, Wisconsin received 8.8 million unemployment claims. That is 1.6 million more than the state handled over the previous four years combined.

This huge influx exposed just how inadequate and antiquated the system is for handling these claims, Gov. Evers said in his State of the State address. The result was major delays in processing claims, adjusting to new federal programs, and getting benefits to people in need of the aid.

Evers has introduced a 10-year, $90 million plan to modernize the unemployment system. He also is pursuing legislation that would allow, and sometimes require, a greater use of electronic communication, transactions and signatures.

“At least two other governors in the Midwest also emphasized the need for modernizing unemployment systems.”

In Kansas, Gov. Kelly said, “the volume of benefit applications [due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic] absolutely overwhelmed our unemployment system.” She plans to leverage $37.5 million in federal funds to begin making upgrades.

In his budget address to legislators, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum said a decades-old mainframe used for North Dakota’s unemployment insurance system had to be "invisibly patched together, at considerable cost, to get us through the pandemic surge." He has proposed spending $105 million to upgrade systems across seven different state agencies that rely on antiquated mainframe technologies.

4 POSITION FUTURE, DISPLACED AND ESSENTIAL WORKERS FOR LONG-TERM CAREER SUCCESS

In recent years, states across the Midwest have launched new initiatives that seek to prepare young people or train incumbent workers for success in high-demand career fields.

Several of these programs were highlighted in the governors’ speeches this year, as were new initiatives and investments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Indiana, Holcomb says, the state devoted about $75 million of federal dollars from the CARES Act to workforce development.

Gov. Burgum’s budget includes a $45 million appropriation to expand and develop career and technical education across North Dakota, and in South Dakota, the state’s technical colleges started an “upskill” program in the fall for workers dislocated by the economic effects of COVID-19.

Through the program, these workers are able to seek certificates in high-demand fields, such as health care and information technology, online and at little or no cost to them.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer touted a bipartisan legislative effort that has led to the launch of Michigan Reconnect, which provides tuition-free pathways for adult residents wanting to earn a postsecondary certificate or associate’s degree.

Michigan also has a separate program — Futures for Frontliners — that Whitmer describes as a “G.I. bill for essential workers.”

Through the program, these workers are able to seek certificates in high-demand fields, such as health care and information technology, online and at little or no cost to them.

- Yes, governor limited to two, four-year terms (no eligible to be governor again after four years)
- Yes, governor cannot serve more than 8 years in any 12-year period
- No

Source: The Council of State Governments “Book of the States”

State | Minimum age | Years of state residency
--- | --- | ---
Illinois | 25 | State resident for 3 years
Indiana | 30 | State resident for 5 years
Iowa | 30 | State resident for 2 years
Kansas | 25 | 3 years not specified; must be qualified state elector
Michigan | 30 | Registered state vote for 4 years
Minnesota | 25 | State resident for 1 year
Nebraska | 30 | State resident for 5 years
North Dakota | 30 | State resident for 1 year
Ohio | 18 | 3 years not specified; must be qualified state elector
South Dakota | 21 | State resident for two years
Wisconsin | 18 | State resident for 5 years

Every Midwest state has a U.S. citizenship requirement. In states such as Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin, governors must be qualified electors; Michigan requires the governor to be a registered voter.

Source: The Council of State Governments “Book of the States”

AROUND THE REGION

During the pandemic, states have expanded telehealth and checkups from their own home. “It’s also a tool to provide care through telehealth services to rural and underserved Kansans. And it’s a tool for our children and their education.”

“G. I bill for essential workers.”

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer touted a bipartisan legislative effort that has led to the launch of Michigan Reconnect, which provides tuition-free pathways for adult residents wanting to earn a postsecondary certificate or associate’s degree. Michigan also has a separate program — Futures for Frontliners — that Whitmer describes as a “G.I. bill for essential workers.”

More than 82,000 frontline heroes have been accepted into the program,” she said. “That’s over 80,000 lives that could be changed as a result; 82,000 people who will enhance their skill set and earn higher wages.”

“G.O. bill for essential workers.”

Eight Midwest governors gave State of State addresses in January

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@cg.org)
BILLs SEEK STRONGER LEGISLATIVE CHECKS ON GOVERNORS’ EMERGENCY POWERS

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

In North Dakota, the COVID-19 pandemic hit during a year in which the state’s part-time legislature didn’t meet at all in regular session. A few days of special session were possible (the legislature is limited to 80 session days during a biennium), but even then, lawmakers didn’t see much of a chance to check the powers of the executive branch.

“We could have passed a resolution to end the [public health] emergency after we drove home,” Gov. Doug Burgum said. “But we had just enough time to deal with the governor’s emergency.”

The result was her introduction of SB 2124, a bill that as of early February had received veto-proof approval in the Senate and had been sent to the House.

“This isn’t COVID legislation, and really has nothing to do with the current administration or its handling of COVID,” Myrdal says. “It has do with looking at our code and finding gaps that we needed to fill.”

MORE POWER TO CONVENE SESSIONS, GREATER OVERSIGHT

As of early February, bills and/or constitutional amendments on the powers of the executive and legislative branches — particularly as they relate to the handling of public health emergencies — had been introduced this year in at least seven Midwestern states: Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

North Dakota’s SB 2124, for example, grants additional powers to the legislative branch while placing new limits on the executive.

Under the bill, a governor’s declared state of disaster or emergency would last 30 days. It could be extended beyond this time under one condition — the governor calls a special session of the Legislative Assembly to allow lawmakers to vote on the declaration.

The legislature would then have the authority to extend or terminate the state of disaster or emergency, via passage of a concurrent resolution not requiring the governor’s approval. And language in the bill would prevent the governor fromturning over any legislative decision to terminate. (Another section of SB 2124 gives the North Dakota Legislative Assembly specific statutory authority to hold virtual sessions in order to carry out its duties during a state of disaster or emergency.)

“Under the wrong leadership, it’s a dangerous thing not to have an adequate separation of powers,” Myrdal says. Ohio Sen. Rob McColley made similar institutional, and constitutional, arguments during testimony introducing SB 22. That bill would create a joint, 10-member legislative committee to oversee actions taken by the governor and Ohio Department of Health during a statewide public health emergency. This committee would have the power to rescind orders made by the executive branch.

States of emergency issued by the governor due to a public health crisis would last 30 days, an extension beyond that time would require the Ohio General Assembly to pass a concurrent resolution.

“The governor and Department of Health can react quickly in a time of true emergency, but after a course of time, the checks and balances and separation of powers need to be restored,” McCollery said in his committee testimony.

He cited examples of existing legislative oversight in Ohio — for example, joint committees on administrative rules and Medicaid. According to McCollery, such oversight should extend to how the executive branch handles emergencies.

This year in Indiana, under a bill passed by the House in early February, the state’s part-time Legislature would have the authority to meet in “emergency session” to address a governor’s declared state of emergency. HB 1123 also would prohibit any orders that stop individuals from attending in-person worship services. A third provision would require certain emergency orders from local health departments to get approval from locally elected officials.

In Wisconsin, under existing statute, “a state of emergency shall not exceed 60 days,” unless it is extended by a joint legislative resolution of the legislature. But Gov. Tony Evers has issued new states of emergency citing changing conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic — for example, Wisconsin’s hospitals nearing full capacity last late year.

A legal dispute over Evers’ authority to issue these new orders, without legislative approval, was before the Wisconsin Supreme Court as of early February. Michigan lawmakers are trying to leverage the legislative branch’s power of the purse to limit the powers of the executive branch.

The House passed a bill in early 2021 with funding for schools (HB 4048). It was tied-barred to a second piece of legislation (HB 4048) that would stop the Department of Health and Human Services from closing schools to in-person instruction or canceling school sporting events.

Capitol Closeup is an ongoing series of articles focusing on institutional issues in state governments and legislatures. Previous articles are available at csgmidwest.org.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Do states have laws requiring paid family leave, and if so, what funding mechanisms are used?

Under paid family leave, payments go to people who take time off for care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child who becomes part of the family through birth, adoption or foster care placement.

In recent years, legislation on paid family leave has been introduced in most Midwestern states. None of these bills had become law as of January 2021, but outside the region, at least nine U.S. states, along with the District of Columbia, have these policies in place. California, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Washington had fully implemented their laws as of 2020. (In Canada, a national program of employment insurance, funded by employers and workers, covers maternity and parental benefits.)

The maximum length of paid leave in the nine states varies, with 12 weeks being most common, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families. The wage replacement for workers ranges between 60 percent and 100 percent of their salary, with states also including some kind of cap on the weekly benefit, the Bipartisan Policy Center noted in a 2019 analysis of state laws. Most employers must participate in these programs, though smaller-sized firms are sometimes exempt.

In the five states that have implemented paid family leave, the employer fully funds it through payroll deductions. In New York, for instance, the state sets the employer contribution at a rate that covers the cost of coverage (it’s currently 0.511 percent of an employee’s gross wages). Cost sharing is another option. In Oregon, premium costs will be split between the employer (60 percent) and employer (40 percent). Colorado’s new law, the result of a voter-approved initiative from November 2020, calls for a 50-50 split — via a payroll deduction of 6 percent on wages. Both states’ laws take effect in 2023.

Last year, the Minnesota House passed HF 5. Building off the state’s existing unemployment insurance program, this measure would have required employers to pay a yearly premium on employee wages to cover the costs associated with paid family and medical leave. Businesses could have then charged their employees up to 50 percent of these costs. HF 5, which stalled in the Senate, also would have made state benefits available to small businesses to cover the expense of hiring replacement workers.

California was the first U.S. state to offer paid family leave. When the state’s program was enacted in 2004, a number of businesses already offered paid family leave. So long as these companies’ programs met or exceeded California’s statutory standards, they could remain in place. Other states have generally followed this model.

In the Midwest, some cities and counties have laws on paid family leave in place — Chicago and Cook County in Illinois and the cities of Duluth, Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Another option: provide paid family leave to state-employed workers. In a 2016 study, the National Partnership for Women and Families listed Illinois and Ohio as two of three U.S. states providing this benefit. In 2020, at least two other Midwestern states, Michigan and South Dakota, began offering paid family leave to employees.

Question of the Month response by Ilene Grossman (igrossman@csg.org), assistant director for CSG Midwest, which provides individualized research assistance to legislators, legislative staff and other government officials. This section highlights a research question received by CSG Midwest. Inquiries can be sent to csgmidwest.org.

U.S. PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS’ ACCESS TO BENEFITS, 2020

- 20% had access to paid family leave
- 75% had access to paid sick leave and 79% to paid vacation
- 64% had access to defined contribution retirement plans and 19% to defined benefit retirement plans
- 48% percent participated in health care plans

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
**IOWA STUDENTS NOW HAVE OPTION TO CHOOSER FULL-TIME, IN-PERSON LEARNING**

Iowa is the first state in the Midwest to require local school districts to offer full-time, in-person learning as an option to families. With the passage of SF 160, which took effect in mid-February, Iowa joined a handful of other U.S. states (Arkansas, Florida and Texas) with such a mandate in place, according to Education Week.

This school year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most states have left the question of remote vs. in-person learning to the discretion of local school districts. In Iowa, however, Gov. Kim Reynolds urged legislators to act quickly this session. “We can’t wait any longer,” she said. “Our kids can’t wait any longer.” With the signing of SF 160, only a COVID-19 public health emergency issued by the governor would waive schools from the in-person requirement.

According to Columbia University's U.S. School Closure & Distance Learning Database, 86.7 percent of the nation’s K-12 schools were “closed or mostly closed” as of April 2020, often the result of governors’ emergency orders. That number had fallen to 37.1 percent by October 2020, with Indiana and North Dakota among the states with the fewest closures.

"[U.S. school] closures are more common in schools with lower third-grade math scores and higher shares of students who experience homelessness, are of limited English proficiency, are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, live in single-parent families, or are racial/ethnic minorities,” Columbia University researchers noted in an analysis of their findings from the database.

**ILLINOIS ELIMINATES CASH BAIL AS PART OF OVERHAUL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICIES**

Starting next year, Illinois will abolish the use of cash bail, with statutory language that could set a new path for criminal justice policy across the nation, according to the Vera Institute of Justice.

The Pretrial Fairness Act — part of HB 3653, the General Assembly’s recent overhaul of criminal justice policy — provides a presumption of pretrial release for all criminal defendants. Judges can deny the release of an individual who poses a “specific, real and present threat” or has a “high likelihood of willful flight.” A written explanation must be provided as to why the criminal defendant was kept in jail rather than in “less restrictive conditions.”

In other states that have moved away from cash bail, judges are able to detain defendants deemed to be dangerous or a risk to public safety. Illinois’ standard (“specific, real and present threat”) is more narrow and will help limit implicit or explicit biases in the system, the Vera Institute says. According to the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice, more than a quarter of a million people are incarcerated in the state’s county jails every year, and a majority of them are there because they can’t afford to pay a money bond.

Along with ending cash bail, HB 3653 requires police to wear body cameras, establishes mandatory training requirements for law enforcement and bans the use of chokeholds. The bill also changes how the residency of incarcerated individuals is determined for the purposes of population counts and redistricting — the state will use their residence prior to incarceration instead of the location of the prison where they are being detained.

**MIDWEST STATES JOIN NATIONAL $573 MILLION OPIOID SETTLEMENT; FUNDS TO AID TREATMENT PROGRAMS**

Every Midwestern state joined a national settlement with the consulting firm McKinsey & Co. over its role in advising pharmaceutical companies to promote the use of high-dose opioids. Under terms of the deal agreed to in early February, McKinsey will pay $573 million to 47 states, the District of Columbia and five territories. (Washington and West Virginia reached separate settlements with McKinsey, while Nevada declined to settle.)

According to The New York Times, McKinsey admits no wrongdoing, but “will agree to court-ordered restrictions on its work with some types of addictive narcotics.” The company will also make tens of thousands of pages of documents available in a public database, shedding light on its role in advising opioid companies.

Announcements from state attorneys general in the Midwest indicated that each state’s settlement money will be used to boost funding for ongoing opioid treatment programs. Minnesota and Nebraska are among the states that have laws in place directing how any opioid settlement funds are to be spent.

Ohio’s $24.7 million will be split via a memorandum of understanding with local governments on how to distribute settlement funds: 36 percent going directly to local governments; 15 percent to the state attorney general’s office (in order to leverage statewide buying power for prevention, treatment and recovery support services); and the remaining 55 percent to the OneOhio Recovery Foundation. The latter is a state-local partnership established in 2020; it oversees funding programs addressing prevention, treatment and long-term recovery, criminal justice, and public awareness.

**SASKATCHEWAN SET EXPORT RECORDS IN 2020 DESPITE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Saskatchewan’s merchandise exports rose 12.6 percent in November 2020 compared to November 2019 — the highest percentage increase among Canada’s provinces — and were up 3.3 percent during the first 11 months of 2020, compared to a 13.0 percent decline nationally, according to provincial officials.

Saskatchewan also produced a record $16.9 billion ($13.3 billion in U.S. dollars) in agricultural exports last year, a 31 percent increase from 2019 and a new high for the province, officials said. The province’s leading agricultural exports include canola seed, canola oil, wheat (both durum and non-durum) and lentils. Its top markets are the United States, China, Japan, India and Mexico. Major increases in 2020 exports were also seen in farm and intermediate food products; forestry products and building and packaging materials; and industrial machinery, equipment, and parts, officials said.

As part of a broader plan for economic growth, Saskatchewan is striving to increase the value of its exports by 50 percent between 2020 and 2030. It is planning to open three new trade offices in Singapore, Japan and India in 2021.

“The fact that Saskatchewan’s exports have not only held steady during the COVID-19 pandemic, but have grown, is truly remarkable,” Trade and Export Development Minister Jeremy Harrison said in January. “It is a testament to the resilience of our exporting industries and the fact that the world continues to need what Saskatchewan has.”

Saskatchewan was one of two Canadian provinces in The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference to experience increased exports in November 2020 compared to November 2019, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity, an economic data visualization and distribution website. In the same period, Manitoba’s exports increased 2.03 percent while Ontario’s dropped 1.33 percent and Alberta’s dropped 9.72 percent, OEC reported.
Wayfair) and the enactment of state laws have allowed these collections to occur.

Additionally, state revenue from personal income taxes stabilized. "We haven't seen as much of the impact on the higher-wage workers and high income, so the states with more progressive tax structures haven't seen much of a personal income tax decline," Sigitz says. "Some haven't seen a decline at all."

**BIG ASSIST FROM D.C.**

Federal intervention has helped as well, whether it was assistance for businesses and workers (payroll protection loans, enhanced unemployment and stimulus checks, for example) or direct payments to state and local governments from the CARES Act.

"There's a lot of evidence that [the federal aid] has made a big difference," Goodman says. That includes money for schools and a higher federal matching rate for Medicaid that has offset states' higher health care costs.

"Whether it's for COVID expenses or money for education, it's been greatly needed and greatly helpful," Illinois Sen. Steve Stadelman, vice chair of the Senate Revenue Committee, says of the influx of federal aid.

Goodman, however, warns states to prepare now for a return to the normal federal-state fiscal relationship.

"One thing we saw coming out of the Great Recession is once the federal government pulled back, that sort of created a cliff for states where their budgets had been built around receiving the federal aid," he says. "When it went away, it led to budget challenges. So that's one of a few reasons why states should be cautious and should consider their long-term budget picture because they are feeling a bit more optimistic."

**TOUGH DECISIONS FOR ILLINOIS**

Budget conditions often vary considerably from one state to the next. In the Midwest and elsewhere, year-over-year tax collections from 2019 to 2020 dropped sharply in some states and mildly in others, and even increased in a few jurisdictions (see map on page 1). Likewise, some states are now showing budget surpluses, others large shorts.

Illinois appears to have one of the biggest budget challenges of all — a projected $3.8 billion deficit for the current fiscal year, according to the Legislative Fiscal Study Commission. As such, it's a bit more optimistic.

"In the Great Recession, the reserves weren't big enough to deal with the problem, so a lot of states redoubled their efforts to build the reserves," Goodman says. "If there's ever an appropriate time, it's right now. But that money still must be wisely spent and, not used to help us afford extravagant wish-list items."

Across the country, states had record-high levels of budget reserves when the pandemic hit, a fact that will help many of them now avoid budget cuts or tax increases.

"In the Great Recession, the reserves weren't big enough to deal with the problem, so a lot of states really redoubled their efforts to build the reserves," Goodman says, noting that at least 15 states tapped into their rainy day funds in FY 2020.

**STRESS-TESTING BUDGETS**

According to Goodman, states also can prepare for future downturns through a process known as "budget stress testing." He says these stress tests help policymakers identify volatility in a state's tax structure (based on different economic scenarios), and then can be used to set savings targets and implement other budget practices.

Minnesota was among the first states to incorporate stress tests into its budget management process. According to Pew's State Fiscal Health Project, Minnesota's law also requires that a third of the money from a budget surplus be deposited into the rainy day fund until a designated target is reached. "These accounts are a big reason that Minnesota is in such a great position to weather financial difficulties," Nelson says.

In 2019, Nebraska lawmakers took a series of steps to help the state be in position to withstand future downturns: changing the calculation for how much gets deposited into the state reserve fund (LB 638), and requiring legislative staff to perform stress tests (LB 713). Wisconsin, too, has spent the past decade rebuilding its budget reserve. "When I was elected back in 2010, we were in the hole by $3 billion and we had zero in our rainy day fund," says Marklein, who is a certified public accountant. "We studied our state financial situation at that time, and it was our goal to gradually keep improving our state's financial position." Wisconsin has a statutory cap on how much can be deposited into its rainy day fund: 50 percent of surplus revenues at the close of the fiscal year. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the next deposit is expected to be $232 million, which will bring the fund up to nearly $1 billion.

"I don't want to touch it if we don't have to," Marklein says. "It's still there for unforeseen circumstances, and right now, with the revenue projections that we've got, it certainly looks like we're not going to need to tap into the fund in the near future."

**CHALLENGE, UNCERTAINTY AHEAD**

"Some haven't seen a decline at all," Sigitz says. "They're still contending with increased spending related to the pandemic, and also revenue than what they were expecting to receive before the pandemic hit," he says.

"There also remains uncertainty about the future of federal aid, as well as the rollout of the vaccine and whether it will allow for a return to normalcy," Sigitz says. "Most likely, consumers have to feel safe increasing their interactions, resuming their normal shopping habits, or just spending money at brick-and-mortar retailers," Stadelman says. "Their ability to have confidence that they are going to be safe … will go a long ways to having an economy that is closer to where it was before the pandemic began."
A little ‘nudge’ brought the North Dakota native to the House: 10 years later, he is helping the state through a legislative session like none other in its history

by Laura Tomaka (tomakal@sbg.org)

Decade ago, Scott Louser got the nudge he needed to run for office. It came from his best friend’s father, a longtime leader in his home community.

“He said he heard a rumor that I was interested in running for office,” Louser recalls. “I don’t know where he heard that, and I suspect now he made it up. “But he got my interest.”

And it led Louser to work that, 10 years later, he still relishes: “Even on the toughest days, I enjoy being a legislator.”

Some of those toughest days came early in his career. In the spring of 2011, his hometown of Minot was hit by one of the worst natural disasters in state history; the Souris River rose over its banks and levees, resulting in record-level floods, mass evacuations and extensive property damage.

Louser’s role as a legislator, as well as a local real estate agent, has put him in the middle of Minot’s efforts to recover ever since, from securing funds for various infrastructure upgrades to ensuring the completion of flood control projects that protect homes and businesses.

“We are not even close to being done in trying to recover from that flood,” he says.

While protecting Minot from a repeat of the 2011 flood remains a priority for Louser, his legislative focus has taken on a larger, and more personal, mission since he became House assistant majority leader in 2018.

“I like being able to have an impact for the whole state, not just my district,” he says.

“I’m inspired by my kids, and I want to make this state as welcoming as I can … I want it to be the best state in the country for my children and I want them to have more opportunities than I did, so I make decisions on a daily basis with that in mind — just trying to be a good dad.”

In a recent interview with CISG Midwest, Rep. Louser discussed his views on leadership, the challenges facing North Dakota, and how he and his colleagues are conducting session in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are excerpts.

Q: As you mention, this has been a landmark session for North Dakota on the technology front. What were some of the big changes made in 2021, and how has it been going early on?

A: Not only can the public watch [committee meetings] live or archived, but they can testify and weigh in remotely. We as legislators are able to participate in [committee hearings and floor session] remotely. I’m really proud of how we have been able to incorporate all these technological changes to accommodate anybody, COVID-related or not. I can’t say enough about our IT division. Whether or not everybody is using the tools is one thing, but the fact that they exist is really impressive.

Q: What kind of impact could these changes have on public participation?

A: They are going to create a lot more engagement. You get some kind of controversial or passionate bill, and it used to be that maybe 20 people wanted to testify. It could now be 1,000 people saying I want my voice heard. While practically that can’t happen, it’s going to lead to a lot more engagement, as well as awareness of what the work we do … People think it’s just a lot of fun coming to Bismarck for four months. I enjoy every day, but getting up at 5:30 and being in the Capitol from the time it’s dark in the morning until it’s dark at night? That’s not everybody’s idea of fun. The work we all put in will now be on display.

Q: How has the pandemic, and the government’s response to it, impacted the relationship between your state’s legislative and executive branches?

A: Because of the pandemic, we have recognized that we ceded to our governor and our executive branch a lot of authority over the years that the legislature probably should have maintained. And so we’re trying to strike that balance between the executive branch and the legislative branch. That’s really a top issue right now.

Q: Most states are dealing with budget challenges this year. How is North Dakota faring on the fiscal front?

A: I’m feeling better when I see oil at $50 a barrel than at $40, because we are very dependent on that revenue … We’re always prepared for the worst, and we’re going to be in pretty good shape coming out of the session. But there’s so much uncertainty with the new [Biden] administration and all the discussions about tax policy and banning fracking … If that [ban] comes to fruition, it’s going to really hurt our state.

Q: If you could accomplish just one thing this legislative session, what would it be?

A: We have a Legacy Fund that was set up by the voters. It is constitutionally protected and takes in 30 percent of the oil tax revenue. That fund is now generating returns that allow us to fund some of our general fund obligations, and there’s discussions about bonding against the future revenue. That is a large, large lift this session and an overriding issue. I want to ensure our ability to protect that fund and use it according to what the voters want. It’s going to be the biggest fight this session.

Q: Taking a broader look at the North Dakota legislature and its accomplishments, what are some areas you would put at the top of that list?

A: Many of them are ongoing. For example, security of the elections in North Dakota. We are consistently rated the top state for election security and transparency. I’m very proud of that. I’m also proud that we have protected private property rights in our state and that we’ve been able to keep taxes low while being able to fund critical infrastructure.
First Person: Many Months of Planning, New Partnerships Help Ohio Shine on Election Day

Challenges of past year led to innovations on voting security, poll worker recruitment

Over a year ago, I wrote on my chief of staff’s white board that “on Nov. 4, the world will know and believe the results of Ohio’s presidential election.” That mission was accomplished.

Finally, keeping Ohioans safe also meant easing the burden on polling locations on Election Day, and that required an intentional and unprecedented effort to maximize early and absentee voting.

In response to our efforts, Ohioans cast 3.4 million early or absentee ballots, essentially doubling our state record. It marked the first time that more than half of the votes in Ohio had already been cast before polls opened on Election Day.

As a result, our state shattered its all-time record for voter turnout, with nearly 6 million Ohioans making their voice heard. Fifty-nine percent of all ballots were cast either early in person or by mail, with a 94 percent return rate for absentee ballots.

TIME NOW TO BUILD ON OUR SUCCESS

No matter the metric, Ohio ran its most successful election ever.

We should be proud of our 88 county boards of elections for running a safe, secure, accessible, and accurate election. Our team at the Secretary of State’s Office — along with Ohio’s bipartisan boards of elections, voting rights advocates and dedicated poll workers — did our “sweating” in the spring and summer.

As a result, Ohio was ready to shine when the world was watching on Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Frank LaRose was elected Ohio secretary of state in 2018 and previously served two terms in the state Senate. He is a 2013 graduate of CSG Midwest’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD).

STATELINE MIDWEST | FEBRUARY 2021

estimated turnout rate of voting-eligible population in November 2020 election

Lower than estimated U.S. turnout rate: 66.7%

Higher than estimated U.S. turnout rate: 66.7%

Source: U.S. Elections Project

Challenges of past year led to innovations on voting security, poll worker recruitment

by Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose

In the days following Nov. 3, the eyes of the world focused on several states around this great nation as they worked to count every legally cast ballot. Breathless political analysts tapped at massive screens — zooming in on counties like Maricopa, Clayton and Allegheny, watching and waiting for a result to be determined.

Not in Ohio.

Over a year ago, I wrote on my chief of staff’s white board that “on Nov. 4, the world will know and believe the results of Ohio’s presidential election.” That mission was accomplished, and it has far more to do with the months of work preceding Election Day than the speed of counting on election night.

After the spring primary, my office outlined four challenges we needed to overcome in order to run a successful election for Ohio voters.

DETAILS ON HOW WE MET FOUR ELECTION CHALLENGES

The global pandemic made the 2020 election the most unique — the most challenging — of our lifetime.

With that in mind, we had to focus first on something that’s never needed to be a consideration in the administration of an election — the health and safety of voters and poll workers.

In response, we partnered with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formulate a 61-point Voter Prevention and the Ohio Department of Health to formul

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ESTIMATED TURNOUT RATE OF VOTING-ELIGIBLE POPULATION IN NOVEMBER 2020 ELECTION

Lower than estimated U.S. turnout rate: 66.7%

Higher than estimated U.S. turnout rate: 66.7%

Source: U.S. Elections Project

 SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

This page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Responses to any First Person article are welcome, as are pieces written on other topics. For more information, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or tanderson@csg.org
CSG JUSTICE CENTER DETAILS BARRIERS TO WORKFORCE RE-ENTRY, AND HOW STATES CAN REMOVE THEM

More than 40,000 state and federal laws make finding jobs and careers harder for people leaving prison and returning to the workforce, according to a new report from The Council of State Governments’ Justice Center.

“Aft the Sentence, More Consequences: A National Report of Barriers to Work” provides a state-by-state snapshot of these barriers, as well as a policy playbook for removing them.

The new report is available at csgjusticecenter.org.

CSG POINTS WAY TO MORE-INCLUSIVE STATE TELEWORK POLICIES FOR DISABLED

States are increasingly developing and implementing telework programs for state government employees.

What policies are needed to increase access and inclusion for people with disabilities? A new CSG study, “Disability-Inclusive Telework for States,” provides some answers by highlighting state approaches. It can be found at csg.org/36ZbQh8.

The Council of State Governments partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy to produce the study, which includes an overview of workplace protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the components of state telework programs, and an analysis of how these programs can be modified to better accommodate all employees.

BIRKHOHLZ INSTITUTE TO FOCUS ON CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN GREAT LAKES COMMUNITIES

The 2021 Patricia Birkholz Institute for Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Policy will kick off later this year with a focus on helping the region’s coastal communities to become more climate resilient.

These institutes are a biennial event of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus: the leading binational organization of state and provincial legislators promoting the restoration, protection, and sustainable use of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

CSG Midwest provides staff support to the caucus. Legislators interested in participating in this year’s institute can contact CSG Midwest director Mike McCabe at mmccabe@csg.org.

Previous institutes focused on reducing lead in drinking water and nutrient pollution; model policies were released in July 2019 and September 2020, respectively.

Membership in the caucus is open to legislators in the eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes region. More information is available at greatlakeslegislators.org.

LATEST BOOK OF THE STATES’ AVAILABLE

Since 1933, The Council of State Governments has served as a resource for state leaders and a catalyst for innovation and excellence. “The Book of the States” has been an annual reference tool of choice since 1935, providing relevant, accurate and timely information on topics and comparisons for all 56 U.S. states, commonwealths and territories. The latest edition, and other CSG publications, are available at https://issuu.com/csg.publications.

CSG’S ONLINE ‘UNIVERSITY’ AIMS TO HELP NEWER LEGISLATORS FIND EARLY SUCCESS

To help new state policymakers jump-start their time in legislative service and find success in their roles, The Council of State Governments has launched “CSG University”—a four-part Zoom series that introduces legislators to their veteran peers from around the country. Each session aims to equip new legislators with best practices and resources on topics from communicating with constituents to leading a committee hearing as they begin their service in the legislature.

MARCH 8 SESSION ON DRAFTING, AND CHAMPIONING, LEGISLATION

Many new lawmakers run on issues that they plan to champion in the legislature, but hundreds, and in some states thousands, of bills are introduced each year. This session will be led by longtime senior legislative staff and policymakers. They will explain best practices for drafting and championing successful legislation, and share their experiences on getting legislation from the idea stage to the governor’s desk for signing.

MARCH 22 SESSION ON HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE LEADER, MEMBER

This session will help new lawmakers who have been tapped to serve in committee leadership or who want to make the most of their work as committee members. Hear from seasoned committee leaders and senior staff on the elements of planning a productive committee meeting.

PREVIOUS SESSIONS

The first CSG University session, held in early February, featured state senate presidents and house speakers sharing their perspectives on successful lawmaking. During a second session, veteran lawmakers shared practices and protocols that have worked (or not) in helping and communicating with their constituents.

More information, and recordings of past sessions, are available at web.csg.org/csgu/introduction/.

MORE TO COME

CSG Midwest is once again planning a series of virtual sessions tailored for the region’s legislators. Details can be found at csghmidwest.org.

CSG MIDWEST HOLDING VIRTUAL VISITS WITH LEGISLATORS

CSG Midwest is holding one-on-one virtual meetings with legislators from across the Midwest.

The purpose of these visits is to introduce or update members on the various products, services and opportunities available to them through The Council of State Governments—for example, individualized research assistance, involvement in CSG’s many interstate working groups and committees, and participation in the nonprofit organization’s meetings and leadership training programs.

CSG’s Midwestern Legislative Conference includes legislators from 11 Midwestern states and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Three provinces are affiliate members of the MLC.

CSG MIDWEST NEWS & EVENTS

CSMIDWEST | FEBRUARY 2021

The Council of State Governments was founded in 1933 as a national, nonpartisan organization to assist and advance state government. The headquarters office, in Lexington, Ky., is responsible for a variety of national programs and services, including research, reference publications, innovations transfer, suggested state legislation and interstate consulting services. The Midwestern Office supports several groups of state officials, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, an association of all legislators representing 11 states (Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin) and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. The provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are MLC affiliate members.
**FOR NEWER STATE LEGISLATORS, BILLD PROGRAM OFFERS ONE-OF-A-KIND CHANCE TO DEVELOP SKILLS NEEDED FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, POLICYMAKING**

April 9 is deadline to apply for fellowship; 5-day program begins July 30

The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference is seeking applicants for the 26th annual Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development. Conducted in partnership with the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs, BILLD’s intensive five-day program includes a mix of sessions on leadership training, professional development and policy.

Thirty-nine fellowships will be awarded this year to state and provincial lawmakers. The program’s competitive application process is overseen by the MLC’s BILLD Steering Committee, a bipartisan group of legislators from each of the MLC member states.

Applications are due by April 9 and available at csgmidwest.org. Please contact Laura Tomaka, CSG Midwest’s program manager for BILLD, for more information: ltomaka@csg.org or 630.925.1922.

**4 REASONS TO APPLY: REFLECTIONS FROM BILLD GRADUATES**

1. **ADVANCE CRITICAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS WITH GUIDANCE FROM TOP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERS**

   "BILLD really taught me the importance of finding a partner across the aisle to work with. It was an important lesson to learn early on in my legislative career, and I’ve used those lessons to pass meaningful legislation when I was both in the majority and minority." — Indiana House Minority Leader Phil GiaQuinta, class of 2009

2. **GAIN EXPERTISE ON KEY POLICIES FROM LEADING UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS AND LEARN POLICYMAKING STRATEGIES FROM SKILLED PRACTITIONERS**

   "I learned the importance of research, listening, planning and meeting before acting and advancing ideas. Additionally, the value of having regular conversations on understanding what people truly hear from what you are saying." — Michigan Sen. Aric Nesbitt, class of 2012

3. **EXPLORE THE CRITICAL ROLE THAT STATE LEGISLATURES PLAY IN THE U.S., AND HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT THESE INSTITUTIONS AS A LAWMAKER**

   "My BILLD experience carried over into my daily work as a legislator in the sense that I worked hard to build consensus and move past ideology to focus on policy decisions that best served the public. This is what a successful legislature needs to have." — former Nebraska Speaker Jim Scheer, class of 2013

   "Legislative skill development and learning how to better leverage state government networks and resources were the most impactful experiences I had with the BILLD program. It brought home the need to take advantage of the work we’ve all done — looking to each other for ideas for better policy and investment and to champion state issues at the national level." — former Michigan House Minority Leader Christine Greig, class of 2015

4. **MEET, LEARN FROM AND NETWORK WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES — SOME OF THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST EMERGING LEGISLATIVE LEADERS IN THE MIDWEST**

   "There are many legislative colleagues I have met through BILLD and CSG on whom I can rely for support, insight and education. I know there is always someone through my BILLD/CSG network I can contact to help work through an issue." — Illinois Rep. Tim Butler, class of 2016

   "BILLD was one of the first real experiences I had to work constructively with other legislators without seeing each other in a ‘red’ or ‘blue’ jersey. BILLD invited me to focus on the person I’m working with, and not get distracted by the title or reputation. BILLD humanized politics in a way I wish every legislator, and every constituent, could experience." — North Dakota Rep. Corey Mock, class of 2011

**NUMBERS ON BILLD AND ITS LEGISLATIVE GRADUATES**

- **# OF LEGISLATORS WHO HAVE GRADUATED FROM BILLD SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1995**
  - 876

- **# OF CURRENT LEGISLATORS IN 11-STATE MIDWEST WHO ARE BILLD GRADUATES**
  - 232

- **# OF CURRENT LEGISLATORS IN CANADIAN PROVINCES WHO ARE BILLD GRADUATES**
  - 31

- **# OF BILLD GRADUATES CURRENTLY SERVING AS TOP CAUCUS LEADERS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE STATES**
  - 7

- **# OF BILLD GRADUATES WHO HAVE SERVED OR ARE CURRENTLY SERVING IN U.S. CONGRESS**
  - 11

- **# OF BILLD GRADUATES WHO HAVE SERVED OR ARE CURRENTLY SERVING AS STATEWIDE ELECTED OFFICIALS**
  - 16

- **# OF BILLD GRADUATES SERVING AS LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRS, VICE CHAIRS AND RANKING MEMBERS IN 2021**
  - More than 140

- **# OF BILLD GRADUATES WHO HAVE SERVED AS CHAIR OF CSG’S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE**
  - 15

- **# OF BILLD GRADUATES WHO SERVED AS MEMBERS OF CSG’S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN 2019-2020**
  - 26