

Saskatchewan students get unique, inside look at provincial government

by Jon Davis (jdavis@csg.org)

You want to teach schoolchildren something about your state or provincial government, but how to do that with a population of one million living across a quarter-million square miles?

Two programs in Saskatchewan provide different, yet related answers.

The “A Day in the Legislative Assembly” program gives eighth-grade students (generally 13- and 14-year-olds) from southern Saskatchewan the opportunity to tour the Legislative Building in Regina and learn about the province’s system of government. Students are introduced during the Legislative Assembly’s daily session and invited to watch the proceedings.

The first “A Day in the Legislative Assembly” in 2010 got a great response from teachers, so the Provincial Capital Commission sought and got permission to make it a permanent program, says Donna Cuddington, the commission’s senior executive coordinator.

After a year off to redesign the program for a permanent footing, the commission relaunched it in 2012. A Day in the Legislative Assembly is now offered twice a year, during the body’s fall and spring sessions, she says.

The Charles Knight Youth Mentorship Program is for northern Saskatchewan students in grades nine through 12 (generally between 14 and 18 years of age).

Through the program, students learn about the democratic process, explore postsecondary education opportunities and careers in government, and learn about Saskatchewan’s history.

Charles Knight Mentorship participants come to Regina for several days of activities, including meeting the lieutenant governor, cabinet ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly and participating in a mock parliamentary system inside the province’s legislative chamber.

The program also includes tours of the Legislative Building and Government House (the lieutenant governor’s official residence); the University of Regina, the First Nations University of Canada, and Saskatchewan Polytechnic — Regina Campus; and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s Depot Division.

All expenses to participate in the program are covered through the Provincial Capital Commission. Students and chaperones stay in residence at the University of Regina.

Transportation from either La Ronge or Prince

Albert (respectively a First Nations community, and the province’s third-largest city, both located in north-central Saskatchewan), depending on applications, is also included.

Charles Knight was a developer who provided initial funding for the program named in his honor. He died on June 28.

The programs focus on provincial government, but not the province’s role vis-à-vis the federal government in Ottawa, Cuddington says.

“Just doing this alone is very educational and gives them more of a grasp on what goes on [in the Legislative Assembly]. That’s enough for them to take in at the time,” she says.

According to its website, the Provincial Capital Commission, which has no precise analog amongst state governments, is mandated “to enhance quality of life for our citizens through the celebration and creation of opportunities, stewardship of the land, and engagement of our youth about our democracy and provincial history.”

The Commission also “promotes, preserves and strengthens our diverse heritage and culture to ensure that [Regina] is a source of provincial pride and significance.”



This year’s Midwestern Legislative Conference Chair’s Initiative of Illinois Sen. Elgie Sims Jr. is “State Strategies to Build Civic Engagement.” Articles on this topic will appear throughout the year in *Stateline Midwest*.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION: What are Midwestern states doing about wage theft?

Minnesota passed a new wage theft law during the spring legislative session. HF 2 (an omnibus jobs, economic development, energy and commerce finance bill) includes appropriations of nearly \$2 million a year for wage theft prevention, doubles the number of investigators, and makes certain wage-theft violations a felony.

Wage-theft violations can cover minimum wage, overtime, forcing employees to work off-the-clock, meal breaks, pay stub and illegal deductions, tipped minimum wage, and misclassification of employees. According to a 2017 study by the Economic Policy Institute, 2.4 million workers in the 10 most populous U.S. states lose \$8 billion a year in minimum-wage violations alone.

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry estimates that 39,000 workers in the state lose nearly \$12 million per year.

Minnesota is not the only state in the region to address this issue.

In **Illinois**, SB 161 takes effect in January. It creates a Worker Protection Unit within the attorney general’s office. It will work with the Illinois Department of Labor to detect unlawful conduct and sue violators of several laws, including the Prevailing Wage Act and the Employee Classification Act.

Indiana’s SB 465 (from 2009) requires employers to post minimum-wage requirements and provides for the sharing of information about classification of construction workers between the state’s Department of Labor, Department of Revenue, Workforce Development agency and Worker’s Compensation Board.

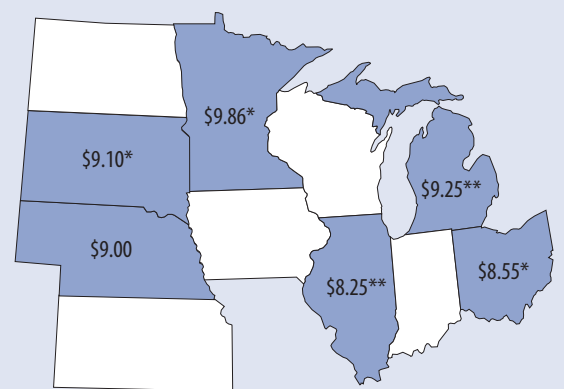
SF 2416 (from 2008) requires the labor commissioner in **Iowa’s** Department of Workforce Development to investigate alleged violations and to file an annual report on the administration of the state’s wage-theft laws. That law also established civil penalties and specified which employer actions are considered simple, serious or aggravated misdemeanors.

Nebraska’s LB 560 (from 2014) requires employers to give each employee an itemized statement listing their wages and deductions each payday. It also provides whistleblower protections to employees and criminal penalties for employers who violate the law.

The **Ohio** Fair Minimum Wage Amendment, approved by voters in 2006, forces employers found in violation of wage laws to pay the employee’s back wages and damages, as well as the employee’s costs and reasonable attorney’s fees.

Wisconsin Act 292 of 2009 allows the state Department of Workforce Development to issue stop-work orders and impose penalties due to

Hourly minimum wage in Midwest, 2019



- Federal minimum wage, \$7.25 per hour
- Above federal minimum wage

* Minimum wage is adjusted annually for inflation.

** Illinois’ minimum wage will increase incrementally to \$15 per hour by 2025. Michigan’s minimum wage will increase incrementally to \$12.05 per hour by 2030.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor

the misclassification of employees in the construction industry.

Question of the Month response by Mitch Arvidson, CSG Midwest policy analyst. He can be reached at marvidson@csg.org. Question of the Month highlights an inquiry sent to CSG Midwest Information Help Line: csgm@csg.org or 630.925.1922.