VOTERS’ TURN: BALLOT MEASURES ON KEY STATE POLICIES IN PLAY THIS FALL

Future of tax policy, marijuana legalization and payday lending laws to be decided

ILLINOIS: GRADUATED OR FLAT INCOME TAX?
A single issue is dominating political ads and elections in Illinois this year: the high-profile, big-money fight over whether to switch from a flat tax to a graduated income tax.

This big shift in tax policy requires voter approval because of language in Illinois’ 50-year-old Constitution that constrains the taxation options of the legislature. It says that any income tax “shall be at a non-graduated rate,” and that any tax on corporations “shall not exceed the rate imposed on individuals by more than a ratio of 8 to 5.”

This November, the General Assembly is asking voters, via a legislatively referred constitutional amendment, for more flexibility. It also has already passed a bill to implement a graduated income tax starting in January if voters approve the constitutional change.

“Being a member of the General Assembly or the governor is not going to be fun in 2021,” says Ken Redfield, emeritus professor of political science at the University of Illinois-Springfield, noting the state’s immense fiscal challenges. “It could be an unbelievable horror show if there is no federal stimulus and the graduated income tax goes down to defeat. Then everything goes back on the table.”

For opponents of the ballot measure, he adds, one of the recurring talking points up to Election Day will be this: “Can you trust these guys?” Proponents argue that the graduated income tax will create a fairer system, and that the plan ready for implementation would actually

How should the state tax its citizens? Should the recreational use of marijuana be legal? Does the state need to do more to protect consumers from payday lenders? These are among the policy questions that will be decided this fall not by legislatures, but by the voters themselves.

In all, ballot measures of some kind are part of a year’s elections in six Midwestern states (see map in right-hand column). CSG Midwest recently interviewed legislators and others about these measures, and what’s at stake. Here is an overview of some of the measures to be decided on in Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota.

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• Great Lakes: Even as support grows for a project to control movement of Asian carp, many barriers must be overcome before construction begins
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WHAT’S ON THE BALLOT? MEASURES TO BE DECIDED ON BY VOTERS IN NOVEMBER

Graduated income tax
Flat income tax
No income tax

Amend Constitution to allow for graduated income tax

Decide whether to hold a state constitutional convention (recurring measure that appears on ballot every 10 years)

Two constitutional amendments: 1) Require warrants from law enforcement before accessing persons’ electronic data and communications; and 2) Modify rules on use of money from Natural Resources Trust Fund

Three constitutional amendments: 1) Ban slavery as a form of punishment; 2) Extend length of time to repay tax increment financing debt for “extremely blighted” property; and 3) Legalize medical marijuana

One statutory initiative: Cap interest rate charged by payday lenders

Two constitutional amendments: 1) Change process for amending state Constitution; and 2) Modify membership of state Board of Higher Education

Two constitutional amendments: 1) Legalize sports betting in Deadwood, S.D.; and 2) Legalize recreational use of marijuana

One statutory initiative: Legalize medical marijuana

None

Source: Ballotpedia and CSG Midwest research

INSIDE THIS ISSUE
Lesson in resiliency: How states, farmers and processors managed impact of COVID-19 on food production

by Carolyn Orr (carolyn@strawridgefarm.us)

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Just a few months ago, all signs pointed to an economic crisis in the nation’s animal agriculture industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meat processing plants were being closed, or operations greatly curtailed, due to health concerns and illnesses among employees. By late April, nearly 40 percent of U.S. processing capacity was idle. Livestock slaughter plummeted (see graphic).

In the meantime, prices were falling for producers, who were also forced to hold livestock longer or euthanize slaughter-ready animals. While most cattle could be slowed down and held a little longer, the situation was much worse for hog and poultry producers. For the eight weeks from April 11 through May 30, there were 22,000 cattle and 125,000 hogs per day ready for processing with nowhere to go.

We faced a real disaster, and challenges went far beyond the impressive way state officials, farmers and processor organizations have worked together to address the COVID-19 crisis is making a big difference,” says Cody McKenley of the National Pork Producers Council.

He and others credit the spirit of partnership, creative thinking and communication for helping the agricultural sector weather the storm. In April, some analysts were predicting that up to 2 million hogs would need to be euthanized; the number turned out to be much less.

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig provides a little history lesson for “going to extraordinary lengths to find other markets and to donate to food banks,” but the states played a role as well.

For example, Naig oversaw a Resource Coordination Center in Iowa to help farmers make informed decisions, and he teamed up with other state agriculture leaders, along with processors and industry organizations, to share information and develop creative alternatives.

One solution was to turn to land-grant universities for the processing of hogs for sale or donation. In South Dakota, Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden says, the state partnered with South Dakota State University to move animals to the school’s meat lab for processing (despite most student labor having gone home). Labs at universities in states such as Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska also were used to process animals for food banks.

Meanwhile, new collaborative initiatives between states and pork producer councils helped connect processors with additional food opportunities — for example, “Pass the Park” in Iowa, “Pork Carriers” in Nebraska, and “Passion for Pork” in Wisconsin.

With help from industry and agriculture departments, processors were able to make contact with smaller processors all over the country. For example, hogs and cattle sometimes moved from the Midwest to smaller processors on both coasts. State departments of transportation assisted by increasing weight limits to get animals moved quickly and efficiently. Across the Midwest, too, privately owned processing plants added hours and stepped up operations.

Minnesota was one of the first states to help smaller processors increase capacity, via a grant program run through the Department of Agriculture. [It] awarded more than $200,000 to 46 state-inspected and custom-exempt meat processing plants to help them increase capacity,” Minnesota Rep. Paul Anderson explains.

In addition, states such as North Dakota, Kansas and Iowa have used money from the federal CARES Act to develop new grant or cost-share programs for small meat processing facilities, food processors, food banks and/or others.

Another policy strategy has been to provide direct support for farmers impacted by the pandemic.

• In Iowa, up to $2,000 per farmer is available to help with the transition to direct-to-consumer sales.
• The Wisconsin Farm Support Program distributed $50 million in direct payments to farmers affected by the pandemic, with more than 12,000 farmers receiving payments.
• The Iowa Economic Development Authority allocated $50 million to livestock producers impacted by the pandemic (the maximum amount for a single producer is $100,000).
• Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta each teamed up with the Canadian federal government to offer about $12 million per province to cover a farm’s cost of keeping animals long-term. The provinces also helped farmers with the premium costs for Canada’s livestock risk-management insurance.

Even with all of these efforts, some animals had to be euthanized. Indiana and Minnesota established cooperative disposal sites, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service provided approximately $100 per animal unit. Iowa paid farmers ($40 per hog and 25 cents per laying hen) forced to euthanize animals due to lack of market access. “The disposal assistance program is just one way the state is trying to help producers through this very difficult time,” Naig adds.

One takeaway from the experience of the last few months: The ability of state officials, producers and industry organizations across the region to communicate and work together is invaluable, a lesson to remember when future animal disease outbreaks or disasters occur.

VOCAL PERIOD FOR ANIMAL AGRICULTURE: WEEKLY TRENDS IN # OF HOGS, CATTLE SLAUGHTERED, FEB. 29-JULY 25

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service

GREAT LAKES

Despite legislative progress, many barriers stand in way of new project to control Asian carp

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

The funding of a project to stop the introduction and spread of Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species continues to enjoy bipartisan support in Congress, and Midwest advocates also see many obstacles in the way of construction and completion. For the Great Lakes ecosystem and the region’s economy, “the stakes are really high,” says Anna-Lisa Castle, water policy manager for the Alliance for the Great Lakes.

“You think about all of the boating, angling, and tourism and recreation in the Great Lakes, the $7 billion fishing economy,” she says. “And the other thing about [Asian] carp is that they won’t stop there. You could see carp make their way to the waterways that connect to the Great Lakes.”

The next big step in control efforts is the placement of new barriers at Brandon Road Lock and Dam, which is part of the Chicago Area Waterway System, a mix of natural and engineered waterways that connect the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan. This system is the most likely pathway for Asian carp to reach the lake.

In July, the U.S. House passed the Water Resources Development Act (HR 7575), which authorizes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Brandon Road Lock and Dam project at a cost of $863 million. The U.S. Senate also has passed a measure with authorization language in it.

According to Castle, the U.S. Congress approved an authorization bill for Brandon Road in 2019 as well, only to have questions arise about its wording. This year’s measures would fix that problem, and also would have the federal government pay a higher share than normal for an Army Corps project. Typically, the cost distribution is 65 percent (federal) vs. 35 percent (non-federal sponsor); the U.S. House-passed bill puts the split at 80:20.

Still, even with this cost-share adjustment, costs will remain a challenge.

Illinois is the host state and non-federal sponsor. Last year, while signaling his support for the project, Gov. J.B. Pritzker said his state was “not in a financial position to commit to the full plan in its current form.”

One idea is for the Great Lakes jurisdictions to contribute. In 2019, Michigan announced its intention to provide $8 million for the project’s preconstruction, engineering and design phase, but earlier this year, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer vetoed that line item. In the state budget in order to redirect funding for the state’s COVID-19 response. A bill to restore this funding commitment was advancing in Michigan as of early September.

Meanwhile, Pritzker has not yet signed a formal agreement with the Army Corps, a step needed for the federal agency to move to the project’s next phase. The delay is due in part to concerns about language in the agreement seen as conflicting with Illinois water law, Castle says. In 2019, University of Illinois researchers linked the introduction of silver carp (one of four species of Asian carp) to a decline in native sport fish in the Upper Mississippi River System. In the Illinois River, bighead and silver carp now comprise 63 percent of the total weight of all the river’s fish. It is not certain whether species of Asian carp would survive and grow in the Great Lakes. However, a recent University of Michigan study concluded that the risk of Asian carp becoming established in Lake Michigan was “high.”
**Health & Human Services**

Nebraska bans ‘surprise billing’ for emergency medical care; other states may do so, too

by Ilene Grossman (igrossman@csorg.org)

**Midwest-Canada Relations**

D

ebraska in July became the latest Midwestern state to regulate “surprise billing” when the “Out-of-Network Emergency Medical Care Act” (LB 997) was signed into law.

Once it takes effect on Jan. 1, the law requires out-of-network providers to bill a patient for no more than his or her health insurance plan’s in-network co-payments, co-insurance, and deductible for emergency care. It defines an emergency as the sudden onset of a medical condition that would place a person in serious jeopardy if not treated immediately, and limits a patient’s expenses to what would have been charged if the patient had been treated at an in-network facility.

Nebraska joins Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin in regulating surprise billing, which can happen when someone gets emergency care at an out-of-network facility or is seen by an out-of-network provider, or when a person gets cared at an in-network facility but is treated by an out-of-network provider.

Since the insurer doesn’t have a contract with the out-of-network facility or provider, it may decide not to pay the entire bill. In that case, the out-of-network facility or provider might then bill the patient for the balance, according to The Commonwealth Fund, a nonpartisan group promoting a better health care system that tracks this issue nationwide.

“We’re seeing more states working to adopt protections,” says Maanasa Kona, a professor at the Center on Health Insurance Reforms in Georgetown University’s Health Policy Institute.

“There’s a lot of bipartisan interest in this; the real dividing line is between providers and insurers,” she says.

LB 997’s author, Sen. Adam Morfeld, says constituents raised the issue with him last year. One, a student, had an emergency yet was able to find an in-network hospital. Even so, he says she got surprise billing charges. After helping get that billing straightened out, “I did more research and realized it’s a fairly common phenomenon,” he adds.

He introduced LB 569 in the 2019 session, which would have banned surprise billing in emergency and non-emergency situations. The bill did not advance, but that summer, he and Sen. Matt Williams (chair of the unicameral legislature’s Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee) convened a group of insurers and providers to find common ground, and decided to focus LB 997 on surprise billing only in emergency contexts.

In other Midwestern states, a package of bills (SB 570-573) to regulate surprise billing and provide penalties for violations is pending in Michigan. Kansas legislators this year mulled but didn’t pass surprise billing protections (SB 357). A Wisconsin law (AB 1034) bans surprise billing for COVID-19 treatments. An Ohio bill (HB 579) would do likewise, including for future immunizations.

The federal CARES Act offers some surprise billing protection via the $175 billion Provider Relief Fund for medical providers responding to COVID-19. Those taking money from the fund can’t seek to collect out-of-pocket payments that are greater than what the patient would have otherwise been required to pay if the care had been provided by an in-network provider.

“A significant number of providers have accepted money from this fund,” Kona says.


**Examples of Importance of Aluminum to Midwest’s Economy**

- **Transportation**
  - Transportation is the largest end user of aluminum
  - Transportation is the largest manufacturing industry in Kansas (aerospace) and Michigan (motor vehicles/parts); it is the second largest manufacturing industry in Indiana and Ohio (both for motor vehicles/parts)

- **Machinery**
  - Machinery/equipment is the third largest end user of aluminum
  - Machinery/equipment is the largest manufacturing industry in North Dakota. It is the second largest in Iowa and Wisconsin; third largest in Illinois and South Dakota; and fourth largest in Minnesota and Nebraska

**Midwest-Canada Relations**

**Stakes are high for region’s economy with new tariffs on aluminum, subsequent retaliatory trade actions**

by Ilene Grossman (igrossman@csorg.org)

**Midwest**

**Canada**

**Relations**

During an August visit to a factory in Ohio, President Donald Trump announced tariffs of 10 percent on Canadian aluminum, saying a surge of exports from north of the border was threatening “to harm domestic aluminum production and capacity utilization.”

That decision marked the latest turn in an on-going, off-again conflict over aluminum, which is used in key industry sectors across the Midwest. Trump’s announcement came just over a month after the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement took effect.

The new tariff will be imposed on a particular type of aluminum, non-alloyed unwrought aluminum, which is used in many products, from automobiles to washing machines to food and beverage packaging.

The transportation sector is the largest end user of aluminum, and under the USMCA, 70 percent of the steel and aluminum used to build cars and trucks must originate from North America. The result of the new tariff will be the use of less aluminum from Canada, higher prices on vehicles, or both.

Two years ago, the United States imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum from Canada as well as other trading partners. Presidential authority to do so comes from a decades-old federal law that allows such restrictions if import levels for certain goods are deemed a threat to national security. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Commerce concluded that aluminum is essential to national security because of its use in military equipment and in sectors such as power transmission, transportation systems, construction and manufacturing.

As the USMCA was being negotiated, the United States removed its steel and aluminum tariffs for imports from Canada. But Canadian and U.S. officials agreed at the time that the tariffs could be reimposed “if imports of aluminum or steel products surge meaningfully beyond historic volumes of trade.”

In his August announcement, Trump cited an 87 percent increase in Canadian imports of non-alloyed unwrought aluminum between June 2019 and May 2020 compared to the prior 12-month period.

Jon Johnson of the C.D. Howe Institute said recently that Canadian aluminum exports to the U.S. “have been all over the map,” and that Trump’s decision was imposed during a temporary high-volume time.

Canadian officials do not see their production of aluminum as a security threat to the United States; rather, they view their country as a partner in North American defense.

In June, a group of aluminum companies wrote to the U.S. trade representative urging no new tariffs. They said levels of Canadian exports to the United States are “consistent with levels prior to the [2018 tariffs] … and below peak-volumes experienced in 2017.” They added that there was no evidence of transhipment (Canada shipping China-made steel to the United States, for example) or evasion of duties.

The manufacturing sector in every Midwestern state could be affected by these tariffs — for example, vehicles made in Michigan, aircraft in Kansas, and machinery in Iowa and North Dakota. In addition, Canada began imposing retaliatory tariffs within a few days of Trump’s announcement.

According to a recent report by The Trade Partnership, U.S. exports that are subject to retaliatory tariffs may take a long time to recover — even after these tariffs are lifted. The report’s findings were based on an analysis of the products subject to Canada’s retaliatory tariffs from 2018.

Ohio House Speaker Bob Cupp and Minnesota’s Rep. Beth Slowik sat down for a discussion on Monday, Feb. 8, about the new tariffs and the impact on their respective states and the broader Midwestern manufacturing sector.

The Ohio and Wisconsin Trade Partnership, a group promoting a better health care system that tracks this issue nationwide, also offered a glimpse into how the tariffs could affect each state.

Ohio’s industries rely heavily on the auto and aerospace sectors, both of which are major users of aluminum. The trade partnership estimated that the tariffs would cost Ohio’s businesses $28 million in lost revenue over the next 12 months, mostly because of decreased production.

In Wisconsin, the manufacturing sector relies heavily on aluminum, particularly for construction and automotive manufacturing. The partnership estimated that the tariffs would cost Wisconsin’s businesses $17 million in lost revenue over the next 12 months, again because of decreased production.

Source: The Commonwealth Fund: CSG Midwest research

**Balanced, or Surprise, Medical Billing Laws in Midwest (August 2020)**

- Comprehensive consumer protections in place*
- Partial consumer protections in place
- No protections

* Comprehensive is defined as laws that:
  1. require insurers to hold consumers harmless from extra provider charges and bar providers from sending surprise bills to consumers in certain circumstances;
  2. include one or two mechanisms to resolve the insurer-to-provider payment; a rule determining how much the insurer pays the provider, or an arbitration process to resolve disputes between providers and insurers; and
  3. have state-level protections to cover emergency department and in-network hospital settings (the law must apply to all state-regulated types of insurance, including HMOs and PPOs).

By Ilene Grossman, CSG Midwest staff liaison to the committee.
Many facility managers indicated concern that if someone tested positive, they might not be able to get enough people to come in to work, and "that was leading some of [the facilities] to avoid doing testing they might otherwise need or want to do," she added.

That was also driving when testing was done. Rydrych said placing the industry's pre-existing challenges to finding employees willing to come in to work, so a "lab tech database" of people willing to work in nursing home or long-term-care settings was established. Facilities short on staff could then use this database to find people, she added.

Facilities are required to have a staffing plan to anticipate shortages, and state employees act as a last line of sorts, able to step into emergency situations if no local employees can be found, Rydrych said.

Rydrych added that when a COVID-19 case is confirmed, a response team moves in to help with infection prevention, case investigations and contact tracing. In addition, each facility with an outbreak is assigned a Minnesota Department of Health case manager.

Rydrych said the state measures success in several ways: how well facilities maintain low numbers of positive cases after an outbreak begins in a long-term-care facility, reductions in the proportion of positive tests in affected facilities, and the support provided to them for on-site infection prevention.

Health officials in Minnesota are looking at broader measures of success as well. For example, do all skilled nursing facilities have updated COVID-19 preparedness plans? Are they able to get additional staff support without having to transfer residents to other sites for care? Has there been a decrease in regulatory infection-control citations? Are testing rates for COVID-19 at acceptable levels?

OTHER STATES RAMP UP TESTING, PREPARATION FOR 'SECOND WAVE'

In June, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued an executive order establishing the Michigan Nursing Homes COVID-19 Preparedness Task Force. It includes directors of the departments of Health and Human Services and of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, legislators (two from each chamber, including one from each party) and other stakeholders.

This ad hoc panel was charged with helping prepare the state for "a potential second wave" of COVID-19 by meeting with state agencies and industry stakeholders, analyzing "relevant data on the threat of COVID-19 in nursing homes" making that information publicly available, and making recommendations for improving the quality of that data.

Its final report, issued at the end of August, includes 28 recommendations on the availability of resources, quality of life for facility residents, staffing, and placement of residents including:

- Improving the coordination, distribution, allocation and/or procurement of personal protective equipment and testing supplies;
- Dedicated labs and securing funding for continuing testing of nursing home residents; and
- Improving support for the physical and mental health of facility staff.

Thirteen recommendations address residents' quality of life, including allowing outdoor visits, limited communal dining and certain small-group activities; and "opt-ins" for residents to participate in indoor visits, and to establish "pods" with fellow residents.

In August, Ohio launched a mandatory statewide testing initiative for more than 765 assisted-living facilities that offers baseline saliva testing to all staff and residents at no cost to the facilities. Indiana created "strike teams" in April to assist with testing if there is a cluster of cases at facilities where there are many essential workers.

Article written by Jon Davis, CSG Midwest policy analyst. He can be reached at jdv@csig.org.
like the U.S. Constitution, most state constitutions give the governor the authority to appoint agency directors with the advice and consent of the legislative branch’s upper chamber. Unlike presidential appointments, however, gubernatorial ones rarely create controversies or ignite political storms, with legislators deferring to the governors on who will help run the executive branch, says Christopher Mooney, a professor of state politics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. “Gubernatorial appointees are less visible so there’s less fire and brimstone,” Mooney says. “In general, it’s pretty straightforward.”

Recent disputes in politically divided Minnesota and Wisconsin have proven to be exceptions to that rule. In August, the Minnesota Senate rejected the nomination of Nancy Leppink as commissioner of the state’s Department of Labor and Industry, a position to which she had been appointed by Gov. Tim Walz in February 2019. According to the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, eight gubernatorial appointees for state agencies or boards have been rejected since 2000.

In November 2019, the Wisconsin Senate voted unanimously to approve two of Gov. Tony Evers’ appointees but then voted along party lines to deny confirmation to five others. The governor called Pfaff, his designee to lead the state’s Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, “a legislative chamber to cast roll-call votes, they had to select top administrative officials in state government.

Examples of methods used to select top administrative officials in state government

- Appointed by governor, confirmed by senate or by both houses
- Appointed by governor, legislative confirmation not needed
- Elected directly by voters of state
- Chosen by full legislature or specific legislative committee
- Chosen by independent state board or commission

CONFIRMING STATE AGENCY HEADS IS (USUALLY) A STRAIGHTFORWARD PROCESS

by Jon Davis (jdavis@csg.org)

In an interview earlier this year with CSG Midwest, University of Missouri political scientists Steven Peever and Squire, a leading expert on state legislatures, said “most of the state’s constitutional provisions can be interpreted to allow for legislatures to meet in a way that is different than traditional fashions.” He adds that the judiciary has typically deferred to legislatures and allowed them to make decisions about internal operations.

In Wisconsin, a law passed in 2009 allows the legislature to meet virtually in the event of a publicly declared disaster. Earlier this year, the Wisconsin Senate met virtually to protect the health of members and staff during the pandemic. Senators cast roll-call votes from across the state (in their homes or offices, for example). South Dakota also held a virtual session day this year.

On a June 2020 webinar hosted by CSG’s Midwest Legislative Conference, Minnesota Rep. Rick Hansen talked to fellow lawmakers about how his state’s “seat of government” constitutional requirement was interpreted and applied as the legislature met in special session to act on COVID-19-related measures. Though legislative rules were temporarily changed to allow for remote voting, and very few members were actually in the legislative chamber to cast roll call votes, they had to be physically present somewhere in the city of St. Paul, Minnesota's seat of government.

“We had people calling in from parking lots for the roll call because we need a majority vote, or a supermajority vote if we were suspending the rules, to be in St. Paul,” said Hansen, who took part in the legislative session from his office.

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UNDER NEW NEBRASKA LAW, PROPERTY TAX RELIEF WILL COME VIA CREDIT ON INCOME TAXES

As they met at an unusual time of year for legislative session — namely the middle of summer, due to the postponement of session days caused by the COVID-19 pandemic — Nebraska lawmakers faced a familiar challenge: How can we reduce the property tax burden for homeowners, farmers and businesses? Their answer was passage of LB 1107, a bill being hailed by proponents as a major breakthrough after previous years of trying to address this perennially high-priority issue.

The bill passed with overwhelming legislative support and was signed by the governor in August. It relies on the state’s income tax system to provide the relief. Homeowners, businesses and others will be eligible for a refundable income tax credit based on the amount they paid in property taxes to their school district. The amount of credits will be $125 million in 2020, and is expected to then increase in subsequent years. However LB 1107 includes language that ties future increases to growth in Nebraska tax collections and the size of the state’s cash reserves (they cannot dip below $500 million). But by 2024, the amount of tax credits must reach $375 million, and starting in 2025, the size of these credits will increase based on changes on the assessed value of real property in Nebraska.

According to the Federation of Tax Administrators, property taxes accounted for 38.2 percent of total revenues for state and local governments in Nebraska in 2017; in the 11-state Midwest, only Illinois is more reliant on the property tax as a revenue source (see map). Property taxes tend to be a very minimal source of revenue for state governments themselves. However, two states in the Midwest do collect a significant amount in statewide property taxes. Collections in Minnesota go to the state general fund. Michigan’s property tax is earmarked for K-12 education. In Saskatchewan, the provincial government establishes a uniform rate for property taxes.

SASKATCHEWAN IDENTIFIES AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGY AS KEY DRIVER OF FUTURE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Saskatchewan wants to be a global leader in agricultural technology in the years and decades ahead, and it is planting seeds for growth in this sector through two innovation-based funds. Under a new $1 million AgTech Growth Fund, the province will invest in research-and-development projects related to the agriculture industry — for example, in areas such as traceability, food processing, robber-proof farm equipment, indoor agriculture and animal health.

The goal of this first-of-its-kind fund for the province is to drive private investment in transformative farming. Meanwhile, the province is setting aside $15 million in a larger Innovation Saskatchewan fund to help develop new technologies in agriculture. Dollars will go to agriculture technology companies that require venture capital to move past the startup phase and scale up business operations.

Agriculture is a traditional economic strength in Saskatchewan, and it also is seen as a future driver of jobs and prosperity. By 2050, global demand for food is anticipated to rise by 70 percent. In 2019, agriculture accounted for 8.8 percent of gross domestic product in Saskatchewan.

READY FOR VOTE BY MAIL? NATIONAL STUDY ANALYZES, COMPARES POLICIES AMONG 50 STATES

In a national scorecard analyzing how state policies will either enable or inhibit the ability of individuals to vote by mail, the Brookings Institution gives most states in the Midwest a passing grade, in large part because of their rules on witness signatures, the timeline for accepting ballots, and the delivery of vote-by-mail applications.

The highest grades went to U.S. states (nearly all in the West) that are automatically sending ballots to registered voters. No state in the Midwest is taking this approach. However, as of late August, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin were among the states planning to send vote-by-mail applications to registered voters, Brookings researchers found. In another four Midwestern states — Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota — voters do not need an excuse to request an application.

With the exception of Wisconsin, no Midwestern state requires voters to include a witness signature with their mail-in ballots, and only Wisconsin and South Dakota require that a copy of a photo ID be included with a voter’s application and/or ballot.

The Brookings Institution also examined the options for individuals who chose to vote by mail. For example, Michigan, Nebraska and Ohio are among the states that will provide drop-off boxes for voters, as an alternative to using the mail to return completed ballots. (In some states, decisions on the use of drop-off boxes are left to local administrators.)

The scorecard gives Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota and Ohio high marks for their policies on when mailed-in ballots will be accepted — namely, if they are postmarked by Election Day, and even if they are received beyond five days of Election Day.

NORTH DAKOTA USES ‘GROW YOUR OWN’ STRATEGY TO ADDRESS SHORTAGE IN SPECIAL-EDUCATION TEACHERS

The state of North Dakota is partnering with one of its public universities to help school districts address a persistent, widespread workforce challenge — the shortage of licensed special-education teachers. Using a $750,000 grant from the state, Minot State University will create a new scholarship program that allows 20 education paraprofessionals to earn a degree in special education. The program has already been working with special-education students in the state. North Dakota is using a portion of its money from the federal CARES Act to fund the scholarship program, which will cover seven semesters of instruction for each recipient.

In addition, starting next fall, Minot State will implement a ‘grow your own’ strategy for paraprofessionals. For example, the state funds a $1.5 million grant program that school districts can use in one of two ways: 1) provide tuition scholarships or stipends to paraprofessionals who are employed by the district and seeking a teaching license, or 2) encourage high school students to pursue teaching. (With both options, the grants are limited to school districts with more than 30 percent minority student enrollment.)

In Kansas, under a two-year pilot program of the Kansas Department of Education, school districts identified paraprofessionals and others “with great potential,” and then helped these individuals become teachers via an accelerated licensure pathway created by the state. This initiative was for elementary-school and special-education teachers. The efficacy of the program is now being evaluated.

MICHIGAN AGREES TO $500 MILLION SETTLEMENT IN FLINT WATER CRISIS, WITH MOST MONEY GOING TO CHILDREN

After 18 months of negotiations, the state of Michigan agreed in August to pay $600 million to individuals and businesses affected by the water crisis in the town of Flint, with close to two-thirds of the money going to children age 6 and under at the time of their first exposure. The crisis in Michigan’s seventh-largest city began in 2014, when the town’s supply of water was switched to the Flint River, leading to toxic levels of lead in drinking water. The consequences included an uptick in deaths from Legionnaires’ disease and lead poisoning among children.

Most of the settlement money will be earmarked for young people: 64.5 percent for ages 6 and under; 10 percent for ages 7 to 11; and 5 percent for ages 12 to 17. Money also will go to local special-education services, as well as to pay the claims of adults and to compensate individuals for property damage and business losses. Even prior to the August settlement, Michigan had spent more than $400 million on its response to the Flint water emergency. For example, it is helping the city replace all of its lead service lines and putting money toward nutrition programs, child health care services, early-childhood programs, and lead prevention and abatement. The state also has adopted the nation’s strictest standards for lead and copper in drinking water.

Source: Federation of Tax Administrators

Source: Brookings Institution

Source: Bellwether Education Partners, “Anxiety in the Noise: The Complex Reality of Teacher Shortages”
provide tax relief for 97 percent of Illinois taxpayers. Gov. Pritzker has put $50 million of his own money into supporting the "fair tax" proposal.

MICHIGAN: EXPAND PRIVACY PROTECTIONS IN CONSTITUTION?

A ballot measure in Michigan aims to add a few words to the state's Constitution to address the potential privacy implications of law enforcement's use of increasingly sophisticated technologies.

"Rather than try to adjudicate every new technology, and rely on it being taken to the U.S. Supreme Court — which can take years or decades — we thought it would be much better to require a warrant in all cases," says Michigan Sen. Jim Runestad, who led efforts to get the bill on the ballot as a legislatively referred initiative.

The language would add words "electronic data" and "electronic communications" to a section of the state Constitution securing a person's "houses, papers and possessions" from unreasonable searches and seizures.

Runestad has been working on the proposed constitutional amendment for multiple sessions. In years past, he says, securing legislative passage was an "uphill battle" because of the concerns of Michigan law enforcement.

But Runestad relied on the experience of another state to alleviate those concerns. In 2014, voters in Missouri amended their state Constitution to add privacy protections related to electronic technologies. Runestad reached out to sheriff's associations, chiefs of police, attorneys general and prosecutors in Missouri to measure the impact of the constitutional amendment on their work.

"All of them said there was no problem, there was no issue," he says. This year, the measure easily passed both of Michigan's legislative chambers.

NORTH DAKOTA: CHANGE HOW CONSTITUTION CAN BE AMENDED?

North Dakota is one of five states in the Midwest that gives voters broad, direct powers to change their state's Constitution. That process, North Dakota Senate President Pro Tempore David Hogue says, has caught the attention of individuals and interest groups from outside the state.

"They know what it takes to get our Constitution changed, what it costs to get the signatures and get the media buys to launch a campaign," Hogue says. "It's really quite reasonable for them. For $500,000 or a million bucks, you can do it."

According to Hogue, the result has been multiple proposals to amend North Dakota's Constitution, with all or most of the money for these campaigns coming from outside the state.

For example, this year, a measure that almost appeared on November ballots (it was taken off as the result of a state Supreme Court ruling this summer) sought to establish ranked-choice voting in North Dakota, among other provisions.

"It's not a one-off problem," Hogue says of the influence of outside money. "It's systemic."

In response, the North Dakota Legislative Assembly is asking voters to change the process. If a constitutional amendment is approved by voters, it would next have to go before the legislature. Lawmakers would then either approve or reject the proposal. Minus legislative approval, the proposal would then have to be approved a second time by voters before taking effect.

"It's a collaboration between the people and the legislature," says Hogue, who sponsored the legislatively referred constitutional amendment.

"The legislature makes sure the proposal gets aired out, with public hearings and public testimony. You're going to have both sides have the chance to weigh in, even if they don't have the resources."

He jokingly refers to the proposal as the "Barbra Streisand-Robert Redford 'The Way We Were Amendment'" because North Dakota's Constitution once required this kind of legislative input.

SOUTH DAKOTA: LEGALIZE USE OF MARIJUANA?

The future of South Dakota's marijuana laws will be decided by the state's voters this November.

Currently, South Dakota is one of six Midwestern states where both recreational and medical use of marijuana is illegal (see map). Four years ago, in neighboring North Dakota, voters chose to legalize medical marijuana.

In Michigan, the use of medical and recreational marijuana has received voter approval over the past 12 years (medical in 2008, recreational in 2018). But proposals to legalize recreational marijuana also have sometimes been rejected by voters in recent years, in North Dakota and Ohio.

Two different proposals will appear on South Dakota ballots in November — one an initiated measure to legalize marijuana for medical purposes, the second a proposed constitutional amendment to legalize recreational and medical marijuana.

MISSING FROM THE FINAL NEGOTIATED LEGISLATION

Vargas says, "But sometimes we can't do enough because of a lot of political forces. "Now voters are going to see the Cadillac version of that legislation on the ballot.”

Additional protections are needed, Vargas says, to keep parts of Nebraska’s population from falling into debt traps.

"This is affecting people of color and low-income people, and particularly single mothers," he says.

"That is a population that needs as much support as possible, and they tend to rely more on different public programs. At the same time, we have a consumer product that is profiting off of those who we are trying so hard to help."
Representative Tom Demmer

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70s, and there should also be people in diversity is a strength too. There were and ethnic diversity, I think having age of residents in the state. Just like we approach it from the perspective that a served you as a legislator 2012, you were in your mid-20s. Demmer spoke about his leadership style, to spot those opportunities and make the most of them. “I try to be informed by those (past legislative) experiences, try to learn lessons, and gain some of the context that you get by having been through different scenes,” he says. “At the same time, you want to make sure you don’t develop cynicism or the perspective that,” I’ve seen this before and it won’t work.”

That impulse may be especially hard to fight for a longtime Republican legislator in Illinois. Since Demmer took office in 2013, for example, Democrats have had control of both houses. Yet Demmer has found ways to make his mark on policy, particularly in areas such as health care and the budget.

“Being in the superminority does not mean you can’t have a real impact on policy,” he says. “You just have to be able to spot those opportunities and make the most of them.”

In a recent interview with CSG Midwest, Demmer spoke about his leadership style, his policy priorities and accomplishments, and his perspective on legislative service. Here are excerpts.

Q When you were first elected to the Illinois House, in 2012, you were in your mid-20s. But now you’ve been a legislator for almost eight years. How has this mix of youth and experience served you as a legislator?

A When I first ran, age was definitely a factor. I tried to approach it from the perspective that a legislature should have a wide variety of people to reflect the wide variety of residents in the state. Just like we talk about geographic diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, I think having age diversity is a strength too. There were people in the House in their 60s and 70s, and there should also be people in the House in their 20s and 30s. I tried to position that issue as a positive to bring to the table rather than a liability. In the time that I’ve served, there’s been a unique chance to use my generational perspective, or the things that younger folks would be more accustomed to working on. I’ve been able to work on a number of tech issues, been able to work on some things that affect young families, and been able to bring some of my own personal experience, or generational experience, into the mix.

Q You now serve as deputy House minority leader. How do you approach this leadership role, especially with your caucus being in the superminority?

A I really enjoy having the chance to serve in that leadership position. It pushes me to try to get the perspective of not just my own district or my own personal opinion about things, but really try to understand where everyone in our caucus is coming from — the priorities they have, the things they’re trying to accomplish, the feedback they’re getting from their districts across our broad and very diverse state of Illinois. We have people who come from very different walks of life, and that’s a strength of a legislative body.

Being in the superminority changes the approach that our caucus takes. We understand that if there’s a proposal that we’re opposed to, the Democratic majority doesn’t have to consult us. … But there are still meaningful ways and opportunities for bipartisanship. I’ve worked on the state budget the past few years, and we’ve done it in a bipartisan way. I’ve also worked on a lot of health care policy. We have a longstanding tradition of bipartisanship in approaching Medicaid and health care issues.

Q You are director of innovation and strategy at KSB Hospital. How have your roles in government and health care informed one another, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A I’ve tried to bring some of those lessons learned in the hospital world to better frame some of the discussions we’ve had in the policy world. During COVID, for example, what were the pressures that were facing hospitals or health care providers? They were thinking about capacity, about PPE (personal protective equipment) supply, about staffing challenges. If a doctor or a nurse or a technician has to stay home on a quarantine, how can you replace that person? In some areas of the state, you don’t have a backup. Understanding that point where policy meets operations is an important part of government. It’s a really complex line to walk because of the different experiences people have.

In Illinois, we have everything from large, world-class academic medical institutions all the way down to very small, critical-access hospitals that are miles away from their next neighbor. The operations side of that looks very different, so it’s been helpful to look more at that intersection of policy and practice.

Q Looking forward, what are your legislative priorities for the fall and beyond?

A One issue that I’m spending a lot of time preparing for, hopefully it will happen in this [fall] veto session, is around hospital transformation. We passed a Medicaid provider assessment program this year, and a component of that was to dedicate funds to try to help improve health care delivery in at-risk neighborhoods — in places where the hospitals have been struggling with declining volume, some operational challenges of recruitment and coordination of care, those kinds of things.

So we set aside a specific amount of money for that [program], and we’re working with a bipartisan, bicameral working group to come up with some rules and guidelines for how that funding can be awarded. It’s a very interesting and very rewarding process to be involved with, thinking about how you can have the biggest impact in improving health outcomes in some of the most disadvantaged parts of Illinois. The other key item that’s on the agenda just got accelerated in importance because of the announcement of the planned closure of two nuclear power plants in Illinois, one of which is in my district (Byron). It’s a huge challenge for that small community. … There’s been an ongoing discussion about energy policy, and the announced closure of these plants has added urgency to that discussion. That’s something I didn’t expect to be involved in this fall, but definitely will now be because of the impact on my district.

Young, and experienced, legislator helps lead minority caucus while also working across aisle on policies such as improving health care policies in underserved communities

by Mitch Arvidson (mavidson@csg.org)

Tom Demmer came to the Illinois General Assembly as one of the legislative body’s youngest members — a 26-year-old who already had served on his local county board and worked as a White House intern. It didn’t take long for Demmer’s older colleagues to take note of his leadership qualities and potential. By age 30, he had joined the House Republican leadership team as deputy minority leader in 2018 (the No. 2 position in his caucus).

Demmer is now nearing his eighth year of service, and stands at an unusual juncture in his legislative career — still a young lawmaker, but one with considerable experience.

He aims to make the most of both. “I try to be informed by those (past legislative) experiences, try to learn lessons, and gain some of the context that you get by having been through different scenes,” he says. “At the same time, you want to make sure you don’t develop cynicism or the perspective that, ‘I’ve seen this before and it won’t work.’”

That impulse may be especially hard to fight for a longtime Republican legislator in Illinois. Since Demmer took office in 2013, for example, Democrats have had control of both houses. Yet Demmer has found ways to make his mark on policy, particularly in areas such as health care and the budget.

“Being in the superminority does not mean you can’t have a real impact on policy,” he says. “You just have to be able to spot those opportunities and make the most of them.”

In a recent interview with CSG Midwest, Demmer spoke about his leadership style, his policy priorities and accomplishments, and his perspective on legislative service. Here are excerpts.

When you were first elected to the Illinois House, in 2012, you were in your mid-20s. But now you’ve been a legislator for almost eight years. How has this mix of youth and experience served you as a legislator?

When I first ran, age was definitely a factor. I tried to approach it from the perspective that a legislature should have a wide variety of people to reflect the wide variety of residents in the state. Just like we talk about geographic diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, I think having age diversity is a strength too. There were people in the House in their 60s and 70s, and there should also be people in the House in their 20s and 30s. I tried to position that issue as a positive to bring to the table rather than a liability. In the time that I’ve served, there’s been a unique chance to use my generational perspective, or the things that younger folks would be more accustomed to working on. I’ve been able to work on a number of tech issues, been able to work on some things that affect young families, and been able to bring some of my own personal experience, or generational experience, into the mix.

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Young, and experienced, legislator helps lead minority caucus while also working across aisle on policies such as improving health care policies in underserved communities
by Iowa Speaker of the House Pat Grassley

Iowa has a citizen legislature. When we aren’t in session, our members are back home in their communities, living and working with their constituents. Our membership is comprised of farmers, teachers, small-business owners and retired folks, all of whom bring unique life experiences and expertise to our process. In Iowa, we think this is important because it keeps legislators grounded and connected to the people they serve. Legislative sessions are supposed to last just 100 to 110 days; that leaves about two-thirds of the year without legislators occupying the Capitol building. However, legislative business and oversight continue even when we are not convened.

IOWA’S LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BALANCES POWER OF GOVERNOR

In addition to the various standing committees in the Iowa Legislature, we have a Legislative Council. Typically co-chaired by the speaker of the House and Senate majority leader, this council is made up of 24 legislators and includes members of both parties. This smaller group of members, often assistant leaders and committee chairs, helps guide the Legislature and make decisions when we are not in session.

The council meets at least once per year, often more than that. Its responsibilities include establishing and implementing personnel policies, overseeing the Legislature’s nonpartisan staff, approving the legislative budget, and creating interim committees that study relevant issues and make policy recommendations.

As states grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and how best to respond, governors have been thrust into the spotlight. During these unprecedented times, many Americans are quickly seeing how much power the chief executives of their states truly hold, and my home state of Iowa is no different.

While somewhat limited, Iowa’s Legislative Council does hold unique powers to oversee the other branches of the government, especially during times like we are currently experiencing.

Our governor has the ability to issue emergency proclamations on a variety of subjects, including natural disasters, public health emergencies, energy shortages and public disorders.

While not utilized in recent memory, Iowa’s Legislative Council can rescind emergency declarations, but must do so in their entirety. This can provide the Legislature with significant negotiation power during a state of emergency.

When COVID-19 reached Iowa, the Legislature suspended its session and took action to ensure that Gov. Kim Reynolds had the tools and resources she needed to respond to the pandemic.

We also made sure that Iowa’s legislative branch had proper oversight of the governor’s ability to tap our economic emergency funds by requiring her to receive approval from the council if she wanted to spend above a certain amount.

As all we know, the legislative branch controls the power of the purse, while the executive branch administers the law. This shouldn’t change simply because we are in the midst of an emergency.

RECENT CHANGE ENSURES ROLE OF LEGISLATURE IN ELECTION RULES

But the governor isn’t Iowa’s only statewide officer who holds emergency powers. Our secretary of state is the commissioner of our elections, and has significant authority to provide directives during an emergency.

This past spring, when the COVID-19 pandemic was still fresh and Iowa’s primary elections were nearing, the secretary of state utilized these powers to mail absentee-ballot requests to all registered voters and to extend the early-voting window from 29 to 40 days.

While the secretary of state’s intention was well-meaning, the majority of legislators disagreed that such significant changes should be made to election law by one individual at a moment’s notice, especially in the middle of election season.

Both parties understood that, under a different secretary, such broad powers could be used to do the opposite of what was done earlier this year — for example, instead of extending the early-voting window, reducing it.

Republicans worked with Democrats on a compromise that now requires the secretary of state to bring proposed election changes during an emergency proclamations to the Legislative Council for consideration. The council then has the ability to accept or reject the proposal in full or make changes to it.

The Legislative Council provides a check on the judicial branch as well. The Iowa Supreme Court is required to notify the Legislative Council when it adopts new rules and forms, and the Council has the ability to reject them. While rarely used, this power was exercised in 2019 when the Supreme Court did not follow the intent of the Legislature in policy that had been passed during the previous session. After rejecting the rules, the court worked with legislators to find agreement and move ahead.

COMMITTEE CAN REVIEW, DELAY RULES OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH

In addition to the Legislative Council, we have an Administrative Rules Review Committee that meets year-round. This bipartisan committee oversees the executive branch’s rulemaking process.

As various agencies and departments develop rules and regulations, they must come before this panel of legislators to explain the details, the authority, and the impact of the rule. The public is invited to provide feedback as well.

If the legislative committee disapproves of a rule, it is limited in what it can do to stop implementation. However, the committee does have a few options at its disposal, including delaying the rule from going into effect until the full Legislature has the opportunity to review the issue during the next session.

Separation of powers is something uniquely important in the American system of government. Each branch has a critical role to play, and each generally carries out its duties properly and within its authority.

However, when one of those branches oversteps its bounds or exceeds what’s allowed, our system of checks and balances provides an avenue to rectify the situation. This helps ensure that no branch becomes all-powerful over the others.

While right now it may seem that governors hold all the power, particularly in the age of COVID-19, Iowa’s and many other states’ legislatures have the ability to rein in this power.

Rep. Pat Grassley is speaker of the Iowa House. He also is chair of the Iowa Legislative Council.
The Council of State Governments Justice Center continues to work with North Dakota on justice system reform, this year assisting legislators with a potential overhaul of the state’s Uniform Juvenile Court Act.

The goal is to bring the 50-year-old law into alignment with the latest research on how to effectively promote positive behavior change among youth and young adults while improving public safety.

Josh Weber, the Justice Center’s deputy division director for corrections and re-entry, presented the findings of a preliminary assessment to the North Dakota legislature’s Interim Judiciary Committee in late July. (The legislature meets every other year; in odd years, interim committees study issues in-depth and work on potential legislation for the next session.)

The assessment included a review of existing statutes, policies and procedures, along with focus groups with representatives from juvenile courts, probation, behavioral health, the legislature, prosecution and defense, and community organizations, among others. It identified three key challenges affecting the juvenile justice system:

- **Lack of Statewide Coordination**: The absence of a statewide approach means that the administration of justice, adherence to research, services, and, ultimately, system performance and outcomes differ across the state.

- **Overreliance on Punitive Responses**: School personnel and resource officers, law enforcement and other adults whose behavior does not present a public safety risk to the juvenile justice system simply to connect them to services.

- **Limited Capacity for Evidence-Based Practices**: There is little program, provider, workforce and technological capacity to implement policies and practices rooted in research, but it is unclear where that gap stems from.

The Justice Center’s recommendations included:

- decriminalizing so-called “unruly” behaviors and developing pathways to serve young people outside of the justice system.

- establishing more stringent criteria and research-based processes for system decisions, especially for detention and out-of-home placement;

- investing limited resources into building a more robust continuum of community-based services across the state and for specific populations and communities.

The Justice Center also recommends strengthening the statewide commitment to and capacity for evidence-based services, quality assurance and data collection, as well as aligning state statutes with these reforms and other evidence-based best practices.

The interim committee is drafting a bill based on these recommendations for possible action in 2021.

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**STATELINE MIDWEST  |  SEPTEMBER 2020**

**GREAT LAKES CAUCUS CONTINUES WITH SESSIONS FOR LEGISLATORS ON SAFE DRINKING WATER, SHORELINE EROSION**

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus’s 2020 Annual Meeting continues in October with virtual policy sessions on state policies to address PFAS in drinking water to help the region’s coastal communities address emerging challenges.

The binational, nonpartisan caucus began its meeting on Sept. 11 with a session on safe drinking water. It featured Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha and Elin Bletzao, who uncovered the water crisis in Flint, Mich. They spoke about what has happened since then and what should happen next. A Sept. 21 session focused on state policies to control nutrient pollution as well as ongoing binational, cooperative efforts.

The Oct. 2 session on state policies to address PFAS in drinking water features Liel Eichler Clark, director of Michigan’s Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy. The Oct. 8 session on coastal communities will include the perspectives of the leaders of several Great Lakes organizations: the Great Lakes Commission, the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, and the Great Lakes & St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers.

Sessions begin at 9 a.m. Central Time. Registration is free and can be completed at greatlakeslegislators.org.

CSG Midwest provides staff support to the caucus — the leading binational organization of state and provincial legislators promoting the restoration, protection, and economic and sustainable use of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

**CSG EXPLORING LEGACY, IMPACT OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

The Council of State Governments and the State Exchange on Employment and Disability are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act with a six-part webinar series that began in July and continues through the end of September.

The series is examining the evolution of the ADA over the past 30 years and its continuing impacts on state policies, businesses and communities.

Registration information for the Oct. 15 session on accessible transportation and workplace technology and the Nov. 19 session on ensuring a disability perspective in state policy — as well as recordings of previous webinars — are available at seed.csg.org/ada30. The ADA also was the focus of a recent issue of CSG’s Capitol Ideas magazine.

**NEW GRANTS AIM TO IMPROVE WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN PROGRAM**

The Council of State Governments is partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help states enhance the delivery of health and nutritional programs for low-income families. More information on the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Special Project Innovation Grant is available at https://web.csg.org/wic. Grant funding will be used to encourage and evaluate innovative programs that improve the WIC certification and eligibility process.

**MLC COMMITTEES HOLDING VIRTUAL POLICY SESSIONS**

In lieu of their usual in-person sessions during the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting, the six binational, interstate policy committees of the MLC have been hosting a series of virtual sessions.

Recordings, presentations and slides of most of these already-held sessions are available at csgmidwest.org.

Here is an overview of the recent sessions of the MLC committees, all of which are led by state and provincial legislators from the region who serve as committee officers. CSG Midwest provides staff support to these committees.

- **Three MLC committees** — Agriculture & Natural Resources, Economic Development and Education — co-hosted a webinar in late July focusing on state policies related to PFAS.

- **Two MLC committees** — Justice and Rural Energy — convened roundtables in September.

- **One MLC committee** — Environment — continued to examine, improve its juvenile justice system.

- **In August, the MLC Health & Human Services Committee** detailed strategies to prevent or contain COVID-19 outbreaks in nursing homes and long-term-care facilities. Legislators also learned about the normative process for developing vaccines and how it differs in the race to find a viable COVID-19 vaccine.

- **The MLC Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee** meeting in September featured a discussion with Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Bridget McCormack, who served as co-chair of a Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration in her state. In addition, the committee examined Illinois’ experience with the legalization of cannabis, as well as other changes in the Midwest in state drug laws.

- **The MLC Midwest-Canada Relations Committee** is planning to hold a session this fall. In addition, its Energy Subcommittee has sponsored recent meetings on how the Midwest’s farmers can tap into the economic potential of renewable energy.
Since 2017, Illinois Sen. Dale Fowler (BILLD class of 2018) has been working with community leaders to create an inland port terminal in southern Illinois, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers.

Last month, the state announced $40 million for the development of the Alexander Cairo Port, with $4 million immediately awarded to fund final engineering, permitting and site preparation. In addition to the state funding, the project is expected to attract at least an equal amount in private investment.

“This project will have such an impact on our region, creating jobs, boosting our economy and creating opportunities in an area that has been overlooked and underestimated for far too long,” says Fowler, who serves as the Republican spokesperson on the Illinois Senate Commerce and Economic Development Committee.

“(It) will generate jobs, create opportunities and attract businesses,” adds Fowler. When completed, the port is expected to bring 500 jobs and more than $100 million in economic activity to the region and will position the area as a national hub for shipping and logistics.

“Understanding there are differences not just in philosophy among legislators, but differences in constituencies. The citizens of the district I represent have no greater or lesser voice than any other constituency, yet those groups of citizens may largely hold different views. We need to respect that and carry out our duties understanding that other legislators are representing their constituents the same as me.”

“Empathy and grace are hugely important in building relationships with the other side. If you don’t have the ability to empathize with your colleagues on the other side, and see them as human beings that you happen to have strong disagreements with instead of outright political combatants, you’re not going to be able to form relationships with them. It’s also about having the grace and patience to set aside the partisan barbs that happen frequently at the legislature and not let those things impact your person-to-person relationships.”

“You have to come to terms with the fact that compromise is a good thing and not a weakness. I also believe you have to make sure you’re always negotiating in good faith. If you develop a reputation of someone that’s difficult to work with, legislators across the aisle simply won’t want to engage you in productive dialogue.”

“A willingness to listen and treat issues individually. Both political parties philosophically disagree, but if individual members can put aside the tension on issues where they fundamentally disagree and be open to working on issues where agreement can be found, there are significant opportunities for bipartisan successes.”

A number of other BILLD graduates have leadership roles on economic development and commerce-related committees in their respective states.

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
- Michigan Sen. Ken Horn, class of 2007
- Minnesota Rep. Laurie Halverson, class of 2015
- Nebraska Sen. Matt Williams, class of 2015
- North Dakota Rep. Scott Louser, class of 2013
- Ohio Rep. Gayle Manning, class of 2011
- Ohio Sen. Rob McColley, class of 2011
- Wisconsin Rep. Adam Neylon, class of 2014

COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRS
- Indiana Rep. Doug Miller, class of 2018
- North Dakota Rep. Mike LeFto, class of 2015
- Wisconsin Sen. Patrick Testin, class of 2018

RANKING MINORITY MEMBERS
- Iowa Sen. Todd Taylor, class of 1998
- Michigan Rep. Sara Cambensy, class of 2018

Please submit Alumni Notes to Laura Tomaka, CSG Midwest program manager for BILLD. She can be reached at ltomaka@csg.org.
CSG Events

CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference
Webinars for Region’s Legislators
Visit csgmidwest.org to find dates of upcoming webinars and view recordings of past webinars on public policy, professional development and leadership training.

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus
Annual Meeting (Virtual Sessions)
October 2 and 9, 2020
Contact Lisa Janairo – ljanairo@csg.org
630.925.1922 | greatlakeslegislators.org

MIPRC Annual Meeting (Virtual Meeting)
November 10-11, 2020
Contact: Laura Kliewer – lkliewer@miprc.org
630.925.1922 | miprc.org

Midwestern Legislative Conference
Annual Meeting
July 11-14, 2021 | Rapid City, South Dakota
Contact: Cindy Andrews – candrews@csorg
630.925.1922 | csgmidwest.org

Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development
July 30-August 3, 2021 | Minneapolis, Minnesota
Contact: Laura Tomaka – ltomaka@csg.org
630.925.1922 | csgmidwest.org

CSG Henry Toll Fellowship Program
August 20-24, 2021 | Lexington, KY
Contact: Kelley Arnold – karnold@csg.org
800.800.1910 | csg.org

StateLine Midwest
StateLine Midwest is published 11 times a year by the
Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments.
Annual subscription rate: $60
To order, call 630.925.1922.

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