Fostering success on the path to adulthood

States aim to better support foster children “aging out” of the system by extending care beyond age 18

by Kate Tormey (ktormey@csg.org)

I n 2010, more than 650,000 children were in foster care, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For about half of these children, the goal was reunification with their birth families; for the others, the hope was to be placed in a loving, permanent home.

But for some of those children, that goal will not be met — and when they are poised to become adults, they will still be in the foster care system. In 2010, 21 percent of children in foster care were age 16 or older. That same year, 28,000 young people left the foster care system without a permanent family.

Researchers suggest that these young people have specific needs as they “age out” of state care and prepare to live on their own.

For the last 25 years, the federal government has provided states with dedicated funding to help people transition from foster care to independent living. Various programs over the years, including the John Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, have been authorized under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. Through these programs, the federal government has provided funding to offer health care, postsecondary education, employment, and connections to a mentor or other support system.

The law provides financial incentives to states that agree to care for foster children until their 21st birthday instead of just until age 18 — when they are legally adults. Since October 2010, states have been able to get matching funds to provide these services; to qualify, these young adults must be working, in school, or unable to do either because of a medical condition.

Gary Stangler, executive director of the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, says this is a critical issue for states because the outcomes for people left the foster care system without a permanent family are poor. Former foster children are at a high risk of being homeless after leaving care and all too often end up in the justice system. Research done by the University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall found that nearly 40 percent of former foster children had been homeless at one time or “couch surfed” (bounced between the homes of friends and relatives) in the last year.

Outcomes for young people: Former foster children versus general population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Former foster youth</th>
<th>General youth population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average income from employment</td>
<td>$12,064</td>
<td>$20,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health insurance</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>78.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs who have been arrested</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females who have been pregnant</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These data were collected from 21- and 24-year-olds who had been in foster care and compared with similar data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Source: University of Chicago/Chapin Hall

Research shows that foster youth are more likely to experience negative outcomes such as homelessness, unemployment, and teen pregnancy. State policymakers are adopting policies that allow these young people to stay in care longer — and get on a better path to independent living.
Health & Human Services

Health insurance costs rising as share of family budgets

The cost of health insurance premiums continues to consume a rising share of household budgets, reaching more than 20 percent of median family incomes in 2010 in some Midwestern states.

Those findings by the Commonwealth Fund are part of a recent study that also examines how various provisions of the Affordable Care Act could curb the increases in health costs being experienced by businesses and workers.

In 2010, the average private employer premium for family coverage in the United States was $13,871, an increase of 50 percent from 2003.

Cathy Schoen, a co-author of the Commonwealth study, says this steep rise has cut into or negated the wage increases of many families. The long-term trend is also straining the budgets of employers.

Increases are occurring across the country, but there is considerable state-to-state variation in the cost of employer-based health insurance. In the Midwest, for example, the average cost of family health premiums in 2010 ranged from a low of $12,542 in South Dakota to a high of $14,703 in Illinois.

The Commonwealth study does not address these disparities, but Schoen points to several possible reasons: cost-of-living differences and variations in health care costs, the demographics of the working population, characteristics of the state industry base (small vs. large businesses, manufacturing vs. services), and the type of health plans being provided by employers (high or low deductibles and the level of benefits, for example).

Differences in health care systems and practices are another potential factor. For example, Schoen says, strong primary health care systems can help drive down costs.

Using data from the Medicare program, researchers for the Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care have documented other regional variations that impact health care usage and costs. In areas with more hospital beds per capita, more people are admitted for hospital stays. In areas with high numbers of specialist physicians, there tend to be higher rates of doctor visits and visits. Revisits range, too, in too many prescriptions are being filled or diagnostic tests are being ordered.

One goal of the Affordable Care Act is to moderate cost growth by encouraging new payment and delivery systems — strengthening primary care, improving care coordination, and paying providers based on measurements of quality and health outcomes.

The Commonwealth Fund study points to other provisions that specifically target health premiums. Beginning in August, insurers not spending a certain percentage of their premiums on medical care will have to offer rebates to enrollees. The process of federal and state rate review is also being strengthened.

In addition, Schoen says, the opening of health insurance exchanges in 2014 will give states the opportunity to work with insurers on new provider payment systems while also requiring carriers on the exchange to meet certain cost and quality standards.

Opponents of the Affordable Care Act, though, are predicting that it will result in higher costs for employer-based coverage. Douglas Holtz-Eakin, president of the American Action Forum, concludes in a recent study that the new fee on health insurers as well as mandated changes in the insurance market will cause premiums to rise.

Great Lakes

Michigan forms council to lead battle against invasive species

In the last decade, the eight states and two provinces of the Great Lakes basin came together to protect water quality — through work on a compact and companion agreement designed to halt diversions and better manage the region’s water resources.

Those efforts culminated in 2008 with federal ratification of the compact.

Now, Michigan Sen. Howard Walker says, the time has come for basin-wide action to protect Great Lakes water quality, namely the threats posed to it by aquatic invasive species. He is hoping Michigan emerges a leader in these efforts as the result of three bills (SB 508-510) signed into law in late 2011.

Walker served as a lead sponsor of the legislative package, which establishes a 19-member Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Council within the state. Appointed by the governor and legislative leaders, the group is a mix of state agency heads, business leaders and conservation groups.

It has been given three central tasks, the first of which is to help revise Michigan’s own laws, regulations and programs and to update the state’s Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan. (Michigan is one of the few Great Lakes states that already has developed such a management plan.) That work will be done over the next few months.

The group’s second task is to guide the state as it weighs in on actions at the federal level, particularly the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Vessel General Permit (VGP) that regulates ballast water discharges in the Great Lakes and other U.S. waterways. The EPA already has a VGP, and in late 2011, the agency issued a draft VGP that would take effect in late 2013.

Eric Dean, chief of staff for Sen. Walker, says the council’s third task is perhaps its most important: reaching out to other Great Lakes jurisdictions to create a more uniform and effective basin-wide response to the threat of invasive species.

Dean says no single state or province can address the problem alone because invasives can move from waterway to waterway, jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

One idea is development of a compact establishing a uniform ballast water treatment standard among the Great Lakes states. Reaching such an agreement, though, would be a challenge.

Some Great Lakes states such as Michigan and New York tend to want tougher standards and permitting programs, while those with more ocean-going ship traffic and activity tend to share industry concerns about the impact of state or federal rules on waterborne commerce.

Cost of family health insurance premiums in the Midwest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average cost of premium</th>
<th>2010 % increase from 2003</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>$14,703</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>$14,703</td>
<td>$9,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$13,884</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>$9,500</td>
<td>$6,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>$13,240</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>$8,240</td>
<td>$5,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$13,460</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>$8,940</td>
<td>$5,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>$13,148</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>$9,024</td>
<td>$6,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>$13,903</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>$9,600</td>
<td>$6,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>$13,221</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>$6,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>$12,544</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>$9,600</td>
<td>$6,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$13,083</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>$9,040</td>
<td>$6,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>$12,542</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>$9,040</td>
<td>$6,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$14,542</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>$11,024</td>
<td>$7,420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Commonwealth Fund, “Realizing Health Reform’s Potential”
Economic Development

Midwestern states undertake efforts to boost small businesses

More than half of the nation’s private sector jobs come from small businesses — firms with fewer than 500 workers. Therefore, it’s no surprise that as states strategize to jump-start their economies, small-business growth has been the focus of much attention and new legislation. In the Midwest, the result has been new tax incentives and grant programs; states, too, are tapping federal funds aimed at supporting small-business development. In late 2011, Wisconsin lawmakers considered a number of job-related bills during a special session dubbed by legislative leaders as “Back to Work Wisconsin.”

Fourteen business-related bills were approved, including a measure (SS SB 2) that modifies the state’s Small Business Loan program in order to increase the number of businesses eligible for funding. The new law removes the requirement that a small-business owner be actively engaged in the business and expands eligibility to include businesses with 250 or fewer employees (the previous limit was 50). It also increases the maximum loan guaranteed to 80 percent of the principal or $750,000, whichever is less (the previous cap was $200,000).

New laws and programs for small businesses also took effect in Nebraska and Illinois in 2011. Nebraska has established a new angel tax credit (LB 389) that will provide a credit of up to $3 million for investments in small businesses primarily engaged in the high-tech economic sector. Individuals investing at least $25,000 and funds investing at least $50,000 will qualify for a tax credit of 35 percent of the investment. Businesses in areas designated as “distressed” qualify for an additional 5 percent credit.

Nebraska lawmakers also passed the Business Innovation Act (LB 387), which will provide $7 million in grants annually to small businesses. The funds can be used to assist microenterprises, for companies receiving Small Business Innovation Research grants, and for funding prototype development and commercialization activities. Forty percent of the funds will be dedicated to distressed areas of the state: counties with a population of less than 100,000 that have high unemployment, low per capita income or significant population loss.

In October, Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn announced plans to offer new funding assistance for the state’s entrepreneurs and small businesses. Under the Advantage Illinois initiative, the state will use $78 million in federal funds to encourage private lending to small- and medium-sized businesses.

Advantage Illinois includes a capital access program, a participation loan program, a cash collateral support program and a venture fund program. The state is enrolling lending institutions that will provide financing to businesses under the first three programs. The venture fund program is designed to improve capital investment in young, innovative companies in the state.

For every $1 of federal funding, the initiative is expected to generate at least $10 in new private lending, resulting in approximately $800 million in private sector investments and loans over the next few years.

Brief written by Laura Tomaka, CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Economic Development Committee. She can be reached at tomatkla@csgrg.org. The committee’s co-chairs are Rep. Ted Celeste of Ohio and Sen. Mike Vehle of South Dakota.

CSG ASSOCIATES

Make Great Things Happen

CSG appreciates the following companies and organizations for their membership in the CSG Associates Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% of firms and establishments</th>
<th>% of total employment</th>
<th>% of total annual payroll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>91.7</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. average</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Every year since 1992, U.S. rates of violent crime have been going down — so much so that the rate in 2010 was nearing half of what it was 20 years ago. That trend continued during the first half of 2011, according to FBI data released in December, and no region had a sharper decline — 9.7 percent than the Midwest. The rate is based on population size and the number of reported murders, forcible rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults.

Most states in this region have violent crime rates below the national average, with the two exceptions being Illinois and Michigan. But recent gains in those two states reflect the national progress that has been made in combating violent crime. Between 2006 and 2010, for example, rates of violent crime decreased 19.6 percent in Illinois and 13.2 percent in Michigan.

Criminologists cite a host of potential reasons for the decline, with one common explanation being a rise in the number of people in prison.

State imprisonment rates rose dramatically in the 1990s, by 62 percent, and remained relatively stable in the last decade, though many states have reported drops in the number of inmates in recent years.

Other oft-cited reasons include changes in police practices (more proactive and reliant on data to target areas prone to crime), a rise in the number of police, an aging population with relatively fewer young people, and a reduction in the use of crack cocaine.

North Dakota and Minnesota have the lowest violent crime rates in the Midwest and are among the 10 states with the lowest rates in the country. North Dakota, though, is the only state in the region where rates have risen considerably over the past two decades. The FBI data also show a rise in violent crimes in South Dakota between 2009 and 2010.

### Changes in violent crime rates: First 6 months of 2011 vs. first 6 months of 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>-9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>-6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>-6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Midwest includes Midwest United States. Source: FBI data

### Change in violent crime rates between 2009 and 2010; state's 2010 violent crime rate in parentheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2009 violent crime rate</th>
<th>Change in rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>480.0</td>
<td>+2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>328.2</td>
<td>+2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>369.1</td>
<td>+2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>285.8</td>
<td>+2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>370.2</td>
<td>+2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>295.8</td>
<td>+2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>319.7</td>
<td>+3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>342.8</td>
<td>+3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>237.3</td>
<td>+3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>339.1</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>263.4</td>
<td>+3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The violent crime rate is the number of reported offenses per 100,000 residents. The U.S. violent crime rate in 2010 was 433.6, a decrease of 8.7 percent from 2009. Source: FBI data

### Midwest is full of promising second-generation biofuels

The benefits of using biomass residuals — the byproducts from activities such as agriculture and forestry — as an energy source are clear for the Midwest. Both plentiful and a potentially low-cost source of fuel, biomass residuals are also less controversial than traditional corn ethanol because they are not a source of food or feed. Turning stover (the stalks, leaves and cobs that remain in corn fields after the grain is produced) into ethanol or using anaerobic digesters on livestock farms to generate bioenergy from animal manure are seemingly win-win propositions — more income for agricultural producers, new home-grown energy sources, and environmental protections for states and their communities.

But as Steve Brick, a senior fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, notes, there are technologically, logistical and cost hurdles to overcome in order to expand the use of these energy sources. And he says states are in a position to help.

In a recent report, Brick makes a series of recommendations that he says are modest in scope and that could be acted on now. “Harnessing the Power of Biomass Residuals: Opportunities and Challenges for Midwestern Renewable Energy” (available at www.chicagocouncil.org/biomass) focuses on the six Great Lakes states, but its recommendations and conclusions are applicable to the entire Midwest.

Brick identifies three policy strategies in particular that he believes would help the region tap into the full potential of biomass resources, which he estimates could make up 14 percent of the Great Lakes region’s electricity generation or 17 percent of its vehicle fuel.

### State policies to spur development

The first of those policy areas is improving manure management on dairy and livestock operations.

“If we take steps to use manure [from these operations] as a feedstock for various energy streams, we can create energy and minimize the threat to the waters of the region,” Brick says.

In the Great Lakes region, less than 10 percent of the large animal operations currently have some kind of energy management system for manure.

“We clearly have a tremendous potential to increase that number,” Brick says.

New state regulations or economic incentives could expand the use of anaerobic digesters at these facilities, and could be promoted as a way not only to boost energy production, but to reduce odors and nonpoint source water pollution. One policy strategy highlighted in the report is the development of nutrient-trading markets: allowing farmers to earn water quality credits for certain management practices and selling these credits to polluting dischargers.

Secondly, Brick encourages the region’s policymakers “to think about how the region’s corn farmers can get positioned to participate in a second-generation biofuels industry, one that would rely on the corn stover.” Research into making ethanol from corn stover is already well funded, but Brick says there is a logistical problem largely being ignored: “how best to coordinate the grain harvest and the movement of stover.”

Research into this problem could be handled by a group of states.

Another challenge is limiting the reliance on corn stover as a source for conserving soil quality and preventing erosion. New incentives may be needed for farmers to change their tillage practices, thus freeing up more stover to be used as a fuel source.

“The research done so far suggests that we can remove about a third of the corn stover off the fields and not compromise soil quality,” Brick says. “But that’s an average, and averages can be misleading.”

Lastly, Brick cites efforts such as Wisconsin’s Working Lands Initiative as an example of a third effort that can be undertaken by states: employing a “landscape vision” for how to conserve agricultural land and use its resources.

Too often, Brick says, we think of bioenergy resources as if they were coal or oil and, as a result, “tend to ignore the land-air-water-life/wildlife-human interactions that take place on the landscape.”

“When we ignore these interactions, we make unrealistic decisions about what can be done about bioenergy,” he says.

### Areas with high biomass concentrations

Brick cautions that there are limitations to biomass, with one of the most significant constraints being the fact that it is not a highly concentrated energy resource.

“You have to transport it some distance to use it,” Brick says. “It’s very easy for those transportation distances to get too long to make a project cost-effective.”

Knowing where there are natural concentrations of biomass, then, becomes essential when deciding where to locate new bioenergy facilities.

Northern Wisconsin, Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and the northeastern part of Minnesota are all home to high concentrations of forestry residue. The report also cites seven places in the six-state Great Lakes region where, within a 40-mile radius, there are about a million tons of stover a year that could be harvested — the amount of feedstock that Brick says is needed to support a bioenergy.

Article written by Ilene Grossman, assistant director of the CSG Midwest office who serves as staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Energy Committee. She can be reached at igrossman@csg.org.
The goal of the proposed National Popular Vote (NPV) compact is to guarantee that the U.S. presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes wins the presidency.

Under the current system, the president is chosen via state-by-state elections: The candidate who wins a state’s popular vote receives all of that state’s Electoral College votes. (The two exceptions are Maine and Nebraska, where electoral votes are awarded by congressional district.)

This system makes it possible for the loser of the national popular vote to win the presidency due to a maldistribution of votes because:

- The Electoral College is not evenly apportioned among the states (it favors less-populated states), and
- There are millions of “wasted votes” — any vote cast for a candidate above and beyond what he or she needs to win in a particular state has no bearing on who wins the race for president.

The NPV plan would retain the Electoral College but reforms the process. The signatory states agree to award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate designated by their respective chief election officers as having the largest number of popular votes nationally.

To date, the compact has been passed in eight states, including Illinois in the Midwest, and the District of Columbia. States with a total of 132 electoral votes have agreed to join the compact, which would take effect if states with a majority of the Electoral College votes (270 of 538) adopt it.

The compact began making its way to state legislatures in the aftermath of two extremely close presidential elections. In 2000, George W. Bush won the presidency even though Al Gore received more popular votes. In 2004, if John Kerry had received 60,000 more votes in Ohio, he would have won in the Electoral College, despite Bush having received more than 3 million more popular votes nationwide.

Prior to 2000, there were at least two other presidential races in which the candidate with the most popular votes lost the election: 1876 and 1888. In addition, there were five other presidential races in which a change in a small number of votes in one or two states would have led to victory by a candidate who did not win the popular vote.

One likely result of the NPV would be less focus on “battleground states,” the states with closely divided electorates whose races often decide the presidential winner.

There is much opposition to the compact, so it would be certain to face constitutional challenges. The Cato Institute believes that the NPV weakens federalism by eliminating the states’ role in presidential elections. The Heritage Foundation states that the NPV effectively eliminates the Electoral College without going through the process of formally amending the U.S. Constitution to do so. A document prepared for the League of Women Voters, which supports the NPV, points out that the compact needs as few as 11 states to take effect.

This could shift political power to the states that have entered into the compact and dramatically impact the way presidential candidates campaign.

### Table: Midwestern states’ electoral votes (% of U.S. total)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Lower chamber</th>
<th>Upper chamber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate president pro tempore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate majority leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate Committee on Organization, Calendar and Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate majority leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Organizational committee of majority caucus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Secret ballot vote of 49-member unicameral legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>House majority leader</td>
<td>Senate majority leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate-president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Speaker of House</td>
<td>Senate president pro tempore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Speaker of Assembly</td>
<td>Chair of Committee on Senate Organization (Senate president)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selection process for committee chairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Lower chamber</th>
<th>Upper chamber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Senate president</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Senate-president</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>Senate president pro tempore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Selection process for committee chairs**

- The committee selection process is part of that because it celebrates individual members and their abilities.
- Flood is the first speaker in the state’s history not to have first served as a committee chair. And unlike legislative leaders in other states, he does not have direct control over who the leaders of the standing committees will be.

A CSG Midwest survey of the selection process found that in most of the region’s 11 states, the top leader of the majority party caucus chooses committee chairs. In addition to Nebraska, there were three other exceptions to this rule. The upper legislative chambers in Kansas, Minnesota and Wisconsin have special organizational committees — made up of the top leaders of the party caucuses — that choose the chairs.

- Wisconsin’s five-member Committee on Senate Organization is composed of the top legislative leaders in both parties. The chair of that committee, the Senate president, selects the chairpersons of the standing committees.
- The Kansas Senate’s nine-member Standing Committee on Organization, Calendar and Rules is led by the Senate president (chair of the committee and majority leader (vice chair of the committee)) in Nebraska, the jockeying to become chair of one of the state’s 14 standing committees can last from the day one session ends to the day the next session is ready to begin.

“People can spend the entire interim trying to line up votes,” notes Sen. Mike Flood, speaker of the unicameral Legislature.

As in many other states, Nebraska’s committees are a critical part of the decision-making process and are considered the “workhorses” of the legislature. Every introduced bill, for example, goes through one of the unicameral’s committees and receives a public hearing.

But Nebraska stands alone in the region for how the leaders of those committees are selected.

The lining up of votes doesn’t mean simply securing the support of a few legislative leaders or a party caucus. Instead, two years on the floor of the legislature, all 49 members choose the committee chairs through a secret ballot vote.

Flood says this distinctive selection process goes hand-in-hand with the uniqueness of Nebraska’s political system — the only state with a nonpartisan, unicameral legislature.

“It goes back to what George Norris (a former Nebraska U.S. senator) envisioned with the unicameral,” Flood says, “and that is a decentralized legislature not dominated by party politics.”

### Selecting committee chairs: Process is largely controlled by leadership, but Nebraska is one notable exception

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@sgreg.org)
two and a half years after exiting care.

What’s more, Chapin Hall’s research shows, foster children are less likely to go to college and are more likely to experience teen pregnancy. As a result, experts say, these young people are in need of more services to achieve better outcomes as adults.

Stangler says that until recently, attention was mostly focused on early-childhood development and the impact of childhood experiences later in life. But he and his colleagues have recently released a study that suggests policymakers should also be catering to their foster care systems to the unique needs of teenagers. The study’s report, “The Adolescent Brain: New Research and its Implications for Young People Transitioning from Foster Care,” looks at how new discoveries in neuroscience can impact policy for these young people.

“This is new and exciting because for many years we have assumed and continued to believe that brain development is done by age 6 … that the cake was pretty much baked,” he says. “But it turns out that’s not true.”

The research shows that adolescent brains actually go through a period of development much like early childhood, with new neurons and synapses developing. Stangler says that the brain is essentially becoming more efficient at processing information and shedding connections built in childhood that are no longer needed.

The report recommends that policymakers look at providing more support from age 14 all the way to age 24, when recent research suggests that the brain is fully developed. Stangler says states should be working to make sure people in this age range stay in school and have a positive connection to a caring family or adult. Ideally, these individuals should also have access to real-life learning opportunities, such as internships or part-time jobs, which help teens learn how to save and manage money.

“We have a foster care system designed for 2-year-olds and it’s not easily adaptable to older youths,” Stangler says.

Policy options for states

ne option available to states is to build a comprehensive program to support foster children until age 21. While many states offer some services to foster children older than 18, very few offer a complete extension of foster care, including legal guardianship and a place to live, Stangler says. Illinois is the only state in the Midwest that currently offers complete, federally funded foster care beyond age 18; Michigan will begin doing so later this year. The federal government has approved waivers in Minnesota (which plans to extend care to 21) and Nebraska (which will extend care to 19), according to the National Resource Center for Youth Development, a service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children’s Bureau.

Proponents of these measures say that by giving foster children a few extra years of support, states can better ensure that they will be successful adults.

“We need to be thinking of developmental stages with these kids,” Stangler says. “We can’t turn them out at age 18. They are not ready, and we have proof of what happens when we do.”

Researchers at Chapin Hall have been studying a group of foster children in three Midwestern states — Illinois (where children can stay in care until 21) as well as Iowa and Wisconsin (where children generally leave care on their 18th birthday or soon after). The study found that foster children from Illinois were twice as likely to have attended college and more than twice as likely to have completed at least one year of college when compared to their peers from the two other states.

The study also found that youths in Iowa and Minnesota were 2.7 times more likely to be homeless soon after exiting foster care, mostly because those in Illinois were far more likely to still be under state care during this time.

Illinois has been offering foster care until age 21 since 1988. And in 2009, legislators approved legislation (HB 4504) that allows children who opted not to stay in care when they turned 18 to re-enter the system. Michigan is the most recent Midwestern state to extend foster care to the age of 21. A package of bills authorizing the state to do so, HB 435-440, was signed by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder in November.

Under previous law in Michigan, as is still the case in many states, foster children could continue in state care until age 19 if they were still in high school. Some other young people could receive some services until age 20. But the new law allows the state to take advantage of new federal funding and offer complete foster care and guardianship to almost all of these young adults — and for a longer period of time.

A state analysis of the bill anticipates the measure will affect 585 eligible young adults and cost $10.4 million to implement.

“Parents would not kick their children out of their homes just because they turn 18, and we should not do that to foster kids,” says Michigan Republican Sen. Bruce Caswell, the sponsor of HB 435. “Through this bill we provide foster children in their early adult years much-needed support at a time when they face many changes and challenges in their lives.”

In these economic times, it can be difficult to come up with the state’s portion of the funding. Yet some experts argue that while the up-front cost may seem daunting, states can reap benefits from helping foster children transition into adulthood.

“If states adopt a policy of allowing young people to remain in foster care until their 21st birthday … the potential benefits to foster youth and society will more than offset the costs to government,” according to the Chapin Hall report.

Researchers calculated that each $1 invested in extending care beyond age 18 resulted in $2 in increased earnings for foster children.

“Yes, it’s a tough time for states financially, but the fact is that they are probably spending a lot of money on this population anyway — such as on homeless shelters and in the justice system,” Stangler says.

Supporting foster children “aging out” of system: How states can help

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is a private foundation dedicated to ensuring that people aging out of foster care have a successful transition to adulthood. The organization advocates for states to develop services specifically tailored to young adults to help them successfully transition from foster care to independent living.

For example, the initiative’s “Foster Care to 21: Doing it Right” issue brief suggests that states adopt legislation and policies that promote quality foster care to 21 by:

• implementing the federal option to extend foster care to age 21;

• broadly defining the conditions for young people to remain in foster care until age 21 and allowing young people to re-enter care if they decide they need to;

• incorporating the services and outcomes that pertain to young people in foster care to age 21 in regulations, judicial codes and policy; and

• broadly defining the “supervised setting” where young people may independently live while in extended foster care.

States can also support quality foster care to 21 by:

• convening groups of 18-to-21-year-olds to inform the creation of programs impacting that age group;

• identifying staff and foster parents who can work effectively with young people ages 18 to 21;

• informing the judiciary about the developmental needs of older children in foster care and about effective approaches to working with them;

• informing caseworkers and young people about services available to transitioning young people; and

• training adults working with 18-to-21-year-olds to help them recognize and address their attitudes toward young people and the common misperception that extended care creates dependence.

For more information, visit www.jimcaseyyouth.org.
Rural areas on road to infrastructure crisis

As heavily trafficked roadways and bridges crumble, states scramble to fund finding for much-needed maintenance

by Carolyn Orr (corr@sarl.us)

ost rural Midwesterners are well aware that their roads and bridges, designed primarily from the 1930s through the 1960s, are now handling loads and traffic that the original builders could not have imagined.

Heavier grain carts, manure tanks, and trucks hauling commodities, as well as a rising number of non-farm rural residents who work in neighboring metropolitan areas, have increased demands on local roads. Bridges are also being subjected to new, very heavy hauling weights.

Rural road safety is a particular concern. Rural roads, which are narrower, have fewer safety features such as guardrails, and carry less traffic (thus encouraging faster driving), account for about 40 percent of the vehicle miles traveled nationwide but almost 57 percent of the fatalities.

But the condition of rural roads and bridges is also important to our food supply.

A 2010 report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that rural transportation systems are a key factor in food costs and that market changes in both food and fuel would further increase the reliance on rural roads to move products. Increasing ethanol production and new gas fields have significantly increased loads on the Midwest’s rural roads in the last decade. Travel per lane-mile in the region has risen more than 15 percent in the same time frame.

Detours increase farm transport costs

Focusing specifically on the issue of bringing crops to market, a study by the Soy Transportation Coalition (a group of soybean association boards from 10 Midwestern states) looked at the potential economic impact of closed or weight-restricted bridges on farmers. The study shows farmers could lose 5 cents per bushel for each load of grain that is detoured.

Because of high fuel prices, any detours can be costly, and bridge problems can cause detours of as long as 20 miles. These costs drive down the farm value of crops, with transportation often accounting for 30 percent to 60 percent of the difference between on-farm prices and market prices.

Transportation challenges are critical to getting farm products to the market.

TRIP, a national transportation research group, rates 12 percent of the nation’s major rural roads as being in poor condition. Four Midwestern states rank in the bottom 20 in this category: Kansas, with 28 percent, and South Dakota, Michigan and Illinois, each with 17 percent.

TRIP also found that 13 percent of rural bridges are structurally deficient and 10 percent more are functionally obsolete. In the Midwest, Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska and North Dakota are among the 10 states with the highest percentage of obsolete bridges.

Report after report recommends an increase in local and state transportation projects to preserve rural roads, highways and bridges and to accommodate the traffic needed to support a rural economy.

“Their is little question regarding the work to be done; rather, the difficulty arises over how to finance the projects,” notes Republican Tom Saunders, a member of the local government and transportation committees in the Indiana House. For example, building a new asphalt road costs between $200,000 and $300,000 per mile.

According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, the U.S. faces an $846 billion funding gap for all surface transportation infrastructure — and rural roads, which make up 80 percent of all roads, represent a major portion of this gap.

Many charges have occurred over the last few years in the system used to finance local transportation infrastructure. The types of revenues that counties and towns use to finance roads and bridges differ by state, but in the Midwest, they primarily rely on general funds (45 percent), state highway user funds (22 percent), property tax and special assessments (15 percent), bonds (8 percent) and motor fuel taxes (4 percent).

The portion of local road funding borne by the federal government has fallen sharply over the last two decades, to less than 2 percent. Federal funding to counties has declined an average of 49 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars. This is the result of a number of funding changes, such as the elimination of federal general revenue sharing in 1987 and passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, which placed rural highway needs in direct competition with those in urban areas and with other transportation modes.

These changes have created uncertainty for local road administrators who were accustomed to a dedicated source of available revenues.

States have historically viewed fuel taxes as an attractive revenue source for highway construction and maintenance. However, improvements in vehicle fuel economy and the introduction of alternative-fuel vehicles that use no diesel or gas are reducing fuel tax revenues for each vehicle mile traveled.

Midwestern states are responding in various ways to the need for increased funding. Local vehicle registration taxes of various types are already used in nine Midwestern states. For instance, Kansas’ local vehicle levies are based on countywide tax rates, Illinois allows flat registration fees that vary with vehicle type, and South Dakota county fees start at $4 per wheel and rise with vehicle weight.

Looking beyond usual funding sources

But now some states recognize the need for more local road funding and are looking beyond traditional sources.

In Kansas, where 12 percent of the sales tax had already been allocated toward transportation, a 2011 sales tax rate hike from 5.3 to 6.3 percent will add $21 million to the state highway fund over the next three years.

In Nebraska, LB 84 committed a quarter-cent of the state’s 5.5 cent sales tax to roads, beginning in July 2013. It is estimated that the tax could divert approximately $65 million annually to transportation repairs, with local governments eligible for a portion of that.

Nebraska also levies a road property tax and uses transportation improvement districts. These TIDs, also used in Ohio in the Midwest, provide a local structure that coordinates federal, state and local resources in planning, financing, building and operating transportation projects.

In Indiana, the legislature is one year into a three-year review of the state’s roads, bridges and rails. The first year’s hearings focused on the condition of the roads, while hearings in 2012 are expected to focus on funding. Some states, too, allow local government to impose a local tax.

“Many Indiana communities have added a wheel tax [charged on the number of wheels a vehicle has], but the amount of money raised in rural communities from this tax is insufficient to address the needs,” notes Rep. Saunders. Indiana counties can also levy a separate bridge tax.

In some states, local officials have resorted to grinding up paved roads and converting them to gravel to save money. To do so costs about $5,000 a mile, compared with upwards of $300,000 per mile to repave a road.

In Michigan and South Dakota have each downsized more than 100 miles of paved roads in this way.

Some counties have consolidated bridges or reduced traffic to one way at a time over a bridge. In Iowa, Allamakee County decided to build just one new span to replace three bridges across the Upper Iowa River, and the gravel roads leading to the closed bridges were reseeded to cropland.

Because of the ongoing funding and revenue challenges, some states have been field-testing a mileage-based user fee. But this type of tax requires testing and evaluation in the rural Midwest, funding for installation of vehicle and service-station technology, and development of new state and federal legislation.

However, states choose to fund the gap in rural roads, 11 percent of the difference between on-farm prices and market prices. More revenue will be required in order to get the crops and products produced in rural America to consumers across the country.
Sen. Gretchen Whitmer

Senate minority leader once had sights on broadcasting career, but instead embarked on groundbreaking path in Michigan politics

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

A s a college student, given the choice of becoming a state legislative leader or television broadcaster, Gretchen Whitmer wouldn’t have hesitated on the career choice.

“I wanted to be the first woman on ESPN,” she says.

But that all changed when the East Lansing native got her first up-close look at the legislative process — as a college intern working inside the state Capitol during a unique period in Michigan government when co-speakers shared power in an evenly split House.

“I loved it,” she recalls about the work she did for the Democratic co-speaker at the time, Curtis Hertel.

“It got me interested in the process, but more importantly, it made me realize the value in having a voice while public policy was being made.”

Two decades later, Whitmer is one of the leading voices in Michigan politics.

At a time when Republicans control the governor’s office and the Legislature, she is serving as minority leader in the Senate.

Whitmer, who took on the leadership position last year after being chosen by her Democratic colleagues, is the first woman in state history to lead a party caucus in the Senate. The East Lansing resident also holds the distinction of being “the dean of the Legislature,” at “the ripe old age of 40,” she jokes.

Now entering her 12th year as a legislator in the term-limits state (six as a member of the House, six as a senator), Whitmer reflected on her career, the economic and political challenges that Michigan faces, and the year ahead during an interview with CSG Midwest in late 2011.

Here are excerpts from the interview.

Q: Though you had an early interest in sports broadcasting rather than politics, you came from a family steeped in Michigan government and politics. Your mother worked as an assistant attorney general under Attorney General Frank Kelley, and your father worked as head of the Department of Commerce for former Gov. William Milliken. How did your parents shape your political career?

A: One was a Democrat, one was a mother.

But there was a commonality in how they approached being a public servant — putting the public interest ahead of your own or any special interests.

Q: What went into your decision to run for elective office?

A: Because of term limits in Michigan, the woman who represented me couldn’t run again. So I began looking at the field to see who I could help. And I thought, “I could do as good a job as any of these candidates, if not better.” My mom, my dad, everyone said to do it. So at age 29, I decided to run. It was the year of Bush vs. Gore, the hanging chad. I was able to win a tough primary and a tough general election, and I’ve been here ever since.

Q: What are your thoughts on being the first woman in Michigan history to lead a party caucus in the Senate?

A: First, it was surprising to me that there hadn’t been a woman in that position before. It’s such a great opportunity, and what role my gender plays into it I don’t know. But I take the job very seriously and am grateful for the opportunity. With term limits, we’ve seen the ranks of women in the Legislature go down dramatically. Our Legislature has gotten whiter, older and more male since they took effect in Michigan. We were at a historic high of 12 when I came over to the Senate, and now we’re down to four.

Q: What is your perspective overall on the impact of legislative term limits in Michigan?

A: It’s been a terrible experiment, and I like to quote former Republican Gov. Milliken in a speech he made about it: “In no other walk of life would you insist on less experience.”

The result has been that legislators tend to have a more narrowly focused view, because they only have a finite amount of time in office. We’re not talking about what Michigan is going to look like in four years or more. The conversation is more about what it’s going to look like next term. That works to our disadvantage as a state.

Q: You’ve served in the minority party throughout your legislative career, but now you’re in a situation where the Republicans control all the levers of power in government. What do you see as your responsibility as a Democratic leader?

A: Michigan is not a Republican state or a Democratic state. We’re a state that desperately needs leadership. So despite the last election, we believe we’re a 50-50 state. That means at least half of our residents are counting on us to be their voice and advocates. We’ve had to get leaner and meaner because of the budget constraints of being in the minority party, and because of the cuts to the Legislature in general. What we’ve tried to do is create a more focused message using new media with the help of a young, energetic staff.

Q: You became a bit of a new-media star late last year after a speech you gave during debate on an anti-bullying bill, a policy priority for you that ultimately became state law. How did that come about?

A: There were efforts to amend the bill to give exemptions for moral or religious reasons, and I just found the whole process outrageous. So I gave an off-the-cuff, impassioned speech on the floor of the Legislature, and within 96 hours, the video had been viewed 400,000 times. It was an issue that resonated with people; the whole momentum changed based on the response to that YouTube video. We were then able to work on a modified measure that was signed into law. My staff joked with me that I should never write speeches, just go up there and say what’s on your mind because it’s better than anything you try to put together.

Q: The bill that was signed into law (HB 4163) requires schools to develop and enforce anti-bullying policies. How significant of a legislative accomplishment was that for you?

A: I’ve served in the minority for 11 years, so I don’t have a lot of public acts that I can point to. But this one was special. It was named after a constituent of mine who took his life. When we got it signed into law, his dad called and thanked me. That was the most rewarding day I had the whole year — the feeling that we were able to do something meaningful.

Q: Looking to the year ahead, what is going to be the message of your Senate Democratic caucus?

A: We are going to be laser-focused on pushing a middle class agenda. For us, that starts with education. Almost $1 billion was taken out of our K-12 system last year to pay for business tax cuts. … Our higher education system — one of our state’s most important assets — took a huge cut, 15 percent, in our last budget. That’s going in the opposite direction of where I think we should be headed. We are going to push for investment in an educated workforce — restore education funding and get rid of a lot of tax breaks on the books.

Bio-sketch of Gretchen Whitmer

✓ has served as Michigan Senate minority leader since 2011
✓ first woman in state history to lead a party caucus in the Senate
✓ first elected to Legislature in 2000 and spent first six years in House, serving for a time as the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee
✓ a two-time graduate of Michigan State University: undergraduate degree in communications and a law degree
✓ an attorney in private practice specializing in regulatory and administrative litigation
✓ led successful ballot initiative campaign to open up embryonic cell research in the state
✓ a leading proponent of anti-bullying legislation that was signed into law in 2011
Ohio bill aims to make state more competitive in global economy

Initiative’s goal: Foster overseas ties for job-creating businesses

by Ohio Rep. John Barnes (John@BarnesForOhio.com)

I n spite of our economic progress, turbulence and uncertainty remain ongoing challenges for Ohio as its businesses and people seek to compete in the global economy. But amid uncertainty, there is always opportunity. The SellOhio Global Initiative, a measure that I have introduced in the Ohio General Assembly (HB 344), aims to take advantage of that opportunity with a strategy that has the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable economic growth and job creation in our state.

I cannot stop thinking about the untapped global market opportunities that exist — the economic potential of people all over the world building global market opportunities that exist — the economic potential of people all over the world building global opportunities. These partnerships can facilitate relationships and cultural understanding to advance market opportunities, develop our economy and create jobs. Government must provide the leadership to build such ties with other governments around the world.

Ohio Rep. John Barnes, a Democrat from Cleveland, was re-elected to the House in 2011 after also serving from 1986, there was just under $1 million set aside to fund international trade offices in Asia, Africa and Europe to promote these marketing activities. SellOhio would mark a new era in these efforts to help Ohio businesses. We cannot ensure the success of our Ohio-based companies, but we can give them every chance to succeed by establishing the right relationships between our state and the rest of the world.

Small businesses create jobs. Small business could grow if it could tap global markets, but often does not have the resources to make that happen. The state can help with initiatives such as SellOhio.

Building business ties overseas

U nder the legislation creating this new public/private partnership, our state would establish business consulates around the world. These people would promote the mission of SellOhio and report back on their activities and accomplishments. They would act solely in the best interests of Ohio businesses — not spending time helping Indiana or Pennsylvania or other states that directly compete with Ohio businesses. That is not to suggest that there is not a mutual interest among other states as well, because we are all in this together. The initiative has four core components:

1) Establishes Ohio business consulates — These are individuals who are qualified to assist Ohio businesses seeking to enter or enhance their presence in foreign markets. They might help Ohio businesses establish relationships with foreign businesses, industry trade groups or regulatory authorities; serve as intermediaries in business transactions; provide information regarding foreign languages and local business and social customs; or promote Ohio businesses generally.

2) Establishes “Ohio ambassadors” — Under SellOhio, certain members of the General Assembly would become “Ohio ambassadors.” Their functions would include diplomatic efforts; the advancement and promotion of Ohio’s education, economy and people; and legislative initiatives that build reciprocal relationships with foreign governments that are consistent with the new integrated principles of the global economy. Ohio ambassadors will consist of no less than 20 eligible members of the General Assembly, each of whom would represent certain legislative committees.

3) Defines the SellOhio mission — SellOhio would establish an organizational system for building sustainable international relationships and accessing untapped global markets for Ohio businesses. It would strive to achieve the following goals:

- Publish an Ohio Trade Book with information organized by region and by industry. It would be a resource for overseas buyers and investors to learn about Ohio companies looking to expand into new markets.
- Facilitate logistics for Ohio businesses seeking to use foreign ports and for foreign businesses seeking to use Ohio ports.
- Promote reciprocal trade activities such as trade shows.
- Enhance and promote Ohio’s industry of partial manufacturing.
- Attract foreign investment to Ohio.
- Engage in educational exchange.
- It is important that members of the legislature understand not only the Ohio business environment, but also the global business environment in which Ohio businesses must participate.

Ohio has long held a role in promoting business worldwide. As far back as 1972, the General Assembly explicitly authorized the agency then known as the Department of Economic and Community Development to encourage, promote and assist trade and commerce between Ohio and foreign nations. By 1986, there was just under $1 million set aside to fund international trade offices in Asia, Africa and Europe to promote these marketing activities.

SellOhio would mark a new era in these efforts to help Ohio businesses. We cannot ensure the success of our Ohio-based companies, but we can give them every chance to succeed by establishing the right relationships between our state and the rest of the world.

Ohio Rep. John Barnes, a Democrat from Cleveland, was re-elected to the House in 2011 after also serving there from 1999-2002. He was also part of the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) Class of 1999.

Submissions welcome

This page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. We accept submissions on a wide range of public policy issues and state initiatives. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of the Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Responses to any FirstPerson article are welcome, as are pieces written on other topics. For more information, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or tanderson@csg.org.
Region’s newer legislators encouraged to apply for summer leadership program

Midwestern legislators in their first four years of service are encouraged to apply for the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD), the only leadership development program designed specifically for lawmakers from this region. Now in its 18th year, BILLD is a five-day institute held each summer by the Midwestern Legislative Conference. It provides opportunities for professional development and networking with colleagues from around the region.

The 2012 program will be held Aug. 10-14 in Madison, Wis. Applications for the program are due April 2 and are available at www.csgmidwest.org/BILLD/default.aspx.

Fellowships are awarded through a competitive, nonpartisan application process. The fellowship covers the cost of tuition, lodging and meals. Each participant also is eligible for a nominal travel stipend, which helps cover the cost of travel to and from Madison.

This spring, 37 Midwestern lawmakers will be selected to participate in this year’s program by the BILLD Steering Committee, a bipartisan panel of legislators from this region. The committee is led by co-chairs Illinois Rep. Elaine Nekritz and Michigan Rep. Mark Meadows. Ohio Rep. Cliff Hite and Indiana Rep. Edward Cleere serve as vice chairs.

“Our states are facing unprecedented challenges,” Nekritz says. “BILLD develops the leadership skills necessary for newer legislators to play a significant role in developing the solutions.”

Applications available for 2011 program

CSG Midwest staff and members of the BILLD Steering Committee are hard at work planning for this summer’s program, which will be held in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs. This collaboration allows the institute to tap into the expertise of top scholars in a variety of policy areas.

BILLD fellows also receive training from professional development experts and current and former legislative leaders from across the region. The institute features three core areas: leadership training, professional development workshops and policy analysis.

This year’s curriculum will provide training in areas such as leadership styles, consensus building, time management, and communications and public speaking. In addition, the agenda will include discussions on policy issues of importance to lawmakers in this region.

The Bowhay Institute has grown into the premier leadership training program for Midwestern legislators. Nearly 600 Midwestern lawmakers have graduated from BILLD, and many have gone on to hold key leadership positions in their legislatures.

“The relationships developed through the BILLD experience are invaluable,” says Hite, a graduate of the 2008 program. “I have discovered that the confidence and eagerness to serve gets magnified because of BILLD. The BILLD experience energizes one’s desire to lead and be bolder in government.”

For more information, contact Laura A. Tomaka at 630.925.1922 or ltomaka@csg.org.

FAQs about the BILLD program

Who should apply for a BILLD fellowship?
BILLD is the only leadership training program designed exclusively for newer state legislators in the Midwest — primarily those in their first four years of legislative service. This year, the program will be held Aug. 10-14.

Why should I apply?
The BILLD program gives you the opportunity to become part of the next generation of legislative leaders. During the institute, you will
• develop the skills you need to become an effective legislative leader,
• better understand key public policies through workshops led by experts in a variety of fields, and
• meet with the best and brightest emerging leaders in the Midwest.

How much does the program cost?
Each fellowship covers the cost of tuition, lodging and meals related to attending the institute. Each fellow also is eligible to receive a nominal travel stipend, which helps cover the cost of traveling to Madison, Wis.

How can I apply for the program?
Applications can be completed online or via paper form (available at www.csgmidwest.org). The application deadline is April 2.

In addition to an essay and a resume, applications require two letters of recommendation from legislative colleagues or alumni of the BILLD program (including members of the Steering Committee).

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 in 11 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan are MLC affiliate members.

Budish takes reins of MLC in 2012

Ohio Rep. Armound Budish will serve this year as chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference, a nonpartisan association of state legislators that fosters regional cooperation, information sharing and leadership development.

Budish was elected to the top leadership post by fellow Midwestern lawmakers in July and took over as MLC chair on Jan. 1. He is minority leader of the Ohio House of Representatives and previously served as speaker of the chamber.

Now in his third term, Budish came to the legislature after decades of practicing law and founding a law firm. He has written several books, as well as articles for many national publications. For almost 25 years, he wrote a column, “You and the Law,” which was published by the Cleveland Plain Dealer and The Columbus Dispatch.

In his position as MLC chair, Budish will provide leadership and guidance to the decades-old regional association. He will also lead Ohio’s efforts in hosting the 67th Annual Meeting of the MLC. The event will be held in Cleveland on July 15-18. In 2012, Minnesota Rep. Alice Hausman will serve as first vice chair of the MLC and Nebraska Sen. Beau McCoy will serve as second vice chair. Indiana Rep. Scott Reske served as MLC chair in 2011.

Webinar series on Great Lakes begins

State and provincial legislators with an interest in Great Lakes protection and conservation are encouraged to participate in a series of web-based conferences that will be held in 2012.

The “Great Lakes, Great Webinars” series was launched last year by the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus. It gives lawmakers the chance to learn more from experts about critical Great Lakes issues as well as to discuss the state’s role in protecting the ecosystem.

The next webinar will be held Feb. 13 and will examine possible separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds—an issue that has gained national attention due to concerns about Asian carp reaching Lake Michigan via the Chicago Area Waterway System.

To register for this event, e-mail caucus staff Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org) or Lisa Janairo (ljanairo@csg.org) or visit www.greatlakeslegislators.org.
Brazile, Galen, O’Rourke to speak at this summer’s MLC Annual Meeting

Registration is now open for the region’s premier event for state lawmakers: the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting. This year’s conference will be held July 15-18 in Cleveland and will offer a variety of policy sessions and networking opportunities for attendees.

Among the distinguished speakers on this year’s agenda are political commentators Donna Brazile and Rich Galen, who will preview the 2012 elections. Brazile, a Democratic political strategist, author, professor and syndicated columnist, appears regularly on CNN as one of the network’s political contributors. Her decades of work as a political strategist included serving as Al Gore’s presidential campaign manager in 2000.

Galen served as press secretary to former Vice President Dan Quayle and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich when they were in Congress. He also spent six months reporting from Iraq, at the request of the White House, in 2003 and 2004. Galen currently writes an online political column, Mullings, and contributes to publications such as Town Hall. He frequently appears on television programs to provide his expertise on politics and elections.

Political satirist and author P.J. O’Rourke will be a featured luncheon speaker at this year’s MLC Annual Meeting. An Ohio native, O’Rourke is the author of numerous best-selling books and has been called the “funniest writer in America” by Time magazine and The Wall Street Journal.

This year’s keynote address on the future of the Midwestern economy will be delivered by economist Charlie Wheelan, whose work focuses on applying economic principles to solve real-world problems.

Former Midwest correspondent for The Economist and a former gubernatorial speech writer, Wheelan is author of the book “Naked Economics,” as well as the popular Yahoo! column of the same name. He contributes regularly to NPR and lectures on public policy at the University of Chicago.

In addition to hearing from these top speakers, attendees of the MLC Annual Meeting will have the chance to share ideas and innovative solutions with one another in a nonpartisan environment.

Evening events at the MLC meeting give policymakers the opportunity to network with colleagues. This year, the evening program will include an event at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Daytime activities are also being planned for guests of all ages.

RegISTRATION for the meeting can be completed online at www.csgmidwest.org.

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Michigan plots new course on charter schools by removing caps

In one of their final actions of the 2011 legislative session, Michigan lawmakers voted to remove a cap on the state’s number of charter schools. SB 618 was signed into law in early January by Republican Gov. Rick Snyder.

Michigan authorizes four different groups to operate charter schools: local and intermediate school boards, community colleges and universities. Prior to the change in law, the number of university-authorized schools was limited to 150. However, the cap will be raised to 300 in 2012 and completely removed after 2014. The 150-school limit was reached in 1999, the Detroit Free Press reports.

According to the Center for Education Reform, all but eight Midwestern states have charter school laws. Ohio, Indiana, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. In a 2011 review of those laws, the center rated Minnesota’s statute as the second strongest in the country. It also found that Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio all had charter school caps in place.

The center, a proponent of charter schools, uses several factors to rate state laws: the types of groups authorized to run charters; the number of schools allowed; state funding equity; and operational autonomy.

Indiana statute focus of legal debate over state robocalling laws

An Indiana statute that places restrictions on political “robocalls” was upheld in December by the state Supreme Court but still faces an uncertain future due to ongoing federal litigation.

Under the state’s Autodialer Law, automated calls to households are allowed only if a live operator obtains the consumer’s permission or if the recipient has agreed to receive such calls. A group that makes political robocalls challenged Indiana’s law on grounds that it violates free speech protections.

Indiana’s victory in state court came three months after it suffered a setback in federal court. According to the Northwest Indiana Times, a federal judge ruled that Indiana’s law was pre-empted by a U.S. statute governing interstate communications. Indiana is appealing that decision.

A 2010 study by the Illinois General Assembly Legislative Research Unit found that many states have enacted political robocalling laws that are more restrictive than existing federal regulations. For example, along with Indiana, Minnesota and North Dakota have live-operator requirements. Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska and North Dakota are among the states with disclosure rules, the study found, and Nebraska also requires a state permit.

Ohio lawmakers begin decade-long review of state Constitution

Since being adopted, Ohio’s 161-year-old state constitution has been amended more than 160 times. It has much less frequently been given a systematic, thorough review by lawmakers and other state leaders. But starting this year, in a process that will run through 2021, a 32-member group of state legislators and others has been tasked with studying the Ohio Constitution and exploring ideas for changing it. The Constitutional Modernization Commission was established as the result of legislation (HB 188) signed into law in 2011.

Any constitutional amendments proposed by the commission will require a two-thirds vote of members before being sent to the General Assembly for consideration, The Columbus Dispatch reports.

Ohio voters will have the ultimate say on any proposals. They will also decide this year whether the state should hold a constitutional convention. Such a vote takes place once every 20 years. Thirteen other states require periodic votes on whether to hold constitutional conventions, including Illinois (every 20 years), Iowa (every 10 years) and Michigan (every 16 years), according to CSGB’s “The Book of the States.” In recent years, residents in those three states all voted not to hold conventions.

Illinois to be among first states to sell online lottery tickets

Illinois will be one of the first states to take advantage of a recent U.S. Justice Department opinion that could mark the start of a new era in how states run their lotteries.

The Peoria Journal-Star reports that an online version of the Illinois Lottery will be launched this spring, with state residents 18 and older eligible to play. In 2009, lawmakers approved legislation allowing lottery tickets to be sold via the Internet. Illinois and New York were the two states that sought clarification from the federal government on the legality of online lottery operations under the Wire Act. They likely won’t be alone in exploring new gambling-related policy options and revenue sources in 2012 and beyond.

According to the Minneapolis Star Tribune, Minnesota and North Dakota are among the states that already offer online lottery ticket subscriptions.

The issue of online gambling has also attracted the attention of Iowa legislators, who passed a bill in 2011 (SF 526) requiring a study of state-regulated, intrastate Internet poker. A final report of the Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission was issued in December. It explored the societal impact of legalized, state-regulated Internet poker as well as the boost it would give to state revenues — estimated to be between $3 million and $13 million a year.