Use of charter schools rising, and state policies changing

Reforms strengthen state’s role in oversight, accountability

by Ilena Grossman (igrossman@csg.org)

Charter school enrollment is growing every year, and some states in the Midwest are a big part of this trend. This year, an estimated 135,000 Michigan students are attending a charter, while in Indiana, enrollment increased by more than 20 percent. In Ohio alone, data from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools show, 369 charter schools are now in operation.

The movement began 22 years ago in Minnesota, when it became the first U.S. state to authorize these publicly funded schools (they receive a fixed per-pupil fee) that operate outside many of the rules governing traditional public schools.

Today, more than 2 million students are attending 6,000 charter schools across the country. Between 1999 and 2009, enrollment quadrupled.

The goal of state charter school laws (now in place in 42 states), Indiana Republican Rep. Bob Behning says, is to improve student learning across school districts and the entire state — by providing new options for students and parents while also promoting innovation in instruction.

“Charter schools can make traditional public schools look very different at how they provide services,” says Behning, chair of the House Education Committee.

It is this idea of competition that appeals to lawmakers such as Michigan Republican Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood, minority vice chair of the Senate Education Committee.

“What we haven’t done is focus on the good schools — we need to find out why the best ones are succeeding.”

Ohio Republican Sen. Peggy Lehner compares the early years of charter schools in her state to the “wild, wild West.”

“Almost anyone could open a charter school with very little accountability,” says Lehner, chair of the Senate Education Committee.

But she believes her state is now on the right track, noting, for example, that the legislature has enacted “some of the toughest closure laws” in the country.

With states relying more and more on the charter-school model to drive education reform and improve student achievement, questions ranging from how to oversee and evaluate these schools to how they should be authorized and funded will remain priorities for policymakers.

This article explores how three of the leading charter-school states in the Midwest and nation — Indiana, Michigan and Ohio — are addressing some of these questions.

“We have had a very mixed picture in terms of charters, some very mediocre experiences and some good ones,” says Michigan Democratic Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood, minority vice chair of the Senate Education Committee.

“We have to be cautious with charter schools,” 

This issue of Stateline Midwest is published 12 times a year by the Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments.

Annual subscription rate: $60. To order, call 612.925.1922.
**Education**

Proposals across region aim to expand access to early learning

Over the past decade, advocates of early-childhood education and lawmakers such as Rep. Bob Behning worked to secure state funding of all-day kindergarten throughout Indiana. That task is done, and now Behning says it is time to take another step — albeit a baby step — in the push to improve student access to high-quality early-learning programs.

Under a pilot initiative proposed by Behning and overwhelmingly approved by the House (the Senate had not yet acted on the bill as of late February), the families of 1,000 students in five designated Indiana counties would receive an early-learning voucher.

To qualify, these 4- and 5-year-olds would have to be in families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. They would be eligible for up to $6,900 to attend an early-childhood program from a school district or a local private provider that meets quality standards established by the state.

“For years, Indiana was a state that did very little about education reform,” says Rep. Behning, a Republican. “But I think we’re now a national leader.”

He says the pilot program envisioned under HB 1004 would continue that progress — and perhaps mark the beginning of a deeper state funding commitment to early learning.

Indiana is not alone.

Several initiatives have been introduced in states across the Midwest this year to expand access.

A South Dakota bill (HB 1183), for example, would provide low-income preschool children with access to a computer, Internet service and instructional software that prepares them for school.

In Minnesota, the question doesn’t appear to be whether the state will invest more in early-childhood education, but how much more.

Democratic Gov. Mark Dayton has proposed spending $44 million over the next two years on a preschool scholarship program for children from low-income families. A competing measure (SF 481) calls for the state to spend more than $180 million over the next two years on the scholarships.

Meanwhile, governors from states such as Ohio and Michigan have signaled their intentions to invest more in early-childhood education.

Republican Gov. Rick Snyder’s proposed two-year, $130 million investment would expand the reach of Michigan’s 28-year-old Great Start Readiness program, which offers preschool services to 4-year-olds deemed at risk of falling behind their peers in school. Funding for the program flows from the state to intermediate school districts, which then distribute the dollars to local schools or private providers.

The idea to invest more in Great Start Readiness is based in part on evidence showing that it works: Compared to their peers, Michigan students who took part in the program had higher test scores and graduation rates and were less likely to be held back a grade.

Behning hopes for similar results in Indiana if the pilot project is approved. An early-learning advisory committee would be formed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Indiana program, he says, while improvements to the state’s longitudinal-data system would allow officials to track progress from the time a student enters the preschool program to the time he or she leaves the K-12 and higher education systems.

In addition to the push for more funding, states are trying to do a better job of identifying young people who likely will need additional help in the classroom.

Under the state of Wisconsin’s Read to Lead initiative (the result of AB 558/38 461, which passed in 2012), all kindergarten students are assessed on their early-literacy skills.

Republican Gov. Scott Walker is now proposing an expansion of this testing to 4-year-olds.

---

**Economic Development**

Putting retirement on hold: Rise in older workers redefines labor force, impacts economy

For most of the 20th century, thanks in large part to Social Security benefits, the advent of Medicare and widespread access to employee-sponsored pension plans, American workers were retiring earlier and earlier from their jobs.

But over the past two decades, the exact opposite has been occurring: In 1990, 12.1 percent of people 65 and older were in the labor force; U.S. Census Bureau data released earlier this year show that the rate reached 16.1 percent in 2011.

“It is one of the most significant trends in the labor force in the past 25 years,” says Richard Johnson, director of the Urban Institute Program on Retirement Policy.

That is especially true in parts of the aging Midwest, where seven of the region’s 11 states (Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin) have higher proportions of elderly residents than the national average.

According to Johnson, policymakers should expect more and more of their state’s seniors to delay or forgo retirement in the future.

Because of improved health, the rise in less physically demanding jobs and higher levels of education than previous generations, more of today’s seniors can choose to work and have more employment options.

Others have to work, due to factors such as a lack of retirement savings and no access to retiree health care or pensions (the number of private companies offering defined-benefit plans has dwindled, and some states are eliminating them as well).

“When people work, they make more money and pay taxes,” says Johnson, noting that one way to avoid what some have called the nation’s coming “aging crisis” is to simply redefine “what it means to be old.”

He adds, too, that an expanding workforce tends to be a predictor of economic growth and can improve overall productivity by allowing for more specialization.

However, this trend has potentially negative consequences as well. With today’s rates of unemployed and under-employed workers already high, Johnson says, adding more people to the labor force could exacerbate the problem.
Midwestern states split on crucial decision of whether to expand Medicaid programs

States in the Midwest appear to be split on whether to expand their Medicaid programs, and a leading national expert says it's the most consequential decision for policymakers since states were first given the chance to opt into the state-federal partnership 48 years ago.

The topic of Medicaid expansion was explored at a special briefing held last month in South Dakota.

The session was presented by CSG Midwest with support from a bipartisan group of South Dakota legislative leaders. Vern Smith, a health economist with Health Management Associates and a former Michigan Medicaid director, spoke to lawmakers about the option to expand the program under the federal Affordable Care Act.

Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard has told lawmakers that he opposes the Medicaid expansion, at least in 2014. He's said he is skeptical that the federal government would be able to keep its promise to cover 90 percent or more of the cost of expanding eligibility to 138 percent of the federal poverty level.

Smith began the February briefing by citing the major arguments of opponents of Medicaid expansion — namely that the expansion is too costly and risky.

Michael Cannon of the Cato Institute, for example, has written that the public insurance program is "rife with waste and fraud," crowds out private insurers and discourages people from rising out of poverty.

But as Smith noted at the briefing in South Dakota, the expansion has many supporters as well, who cite the chance to reduce the rates of uninsured residents at a low cost (due to the high federal match) and also bring in more federal dollars to the state.

Along with South Dakota, the governors of Iowa and Wisconsin have announced they will not loosen eligibility requirements (see accompanying map for status of all Midwestern states).

States moving ahead with expansion expect to see savings in state-funded health programs. A 2011 Urban Institute report points out, for example, that states' spending on uncompensated care will decrease because more people will have health coverage. And some states are already covering people in the expansion population — but now will receive a significantly higher federal match.

The Oklahoma Health Care Authority projects savings of $34 million to the Department of Mental Health, $11.2 million to the Department of Corrections and $2.4 million to the Department of Health.

In Michigan, Smith's home state, a House fiscal analysis is projecting net savings of $1.1 billion over 10 years. The Senate analysis estimated general-fund savings of at least $200 million each year through 2017.

"Each state has a unique set of budget and health care interests to be weighed by state policymakers," Smith told South Dakota lawmakers, "but this ultimately is a political decision for the governor and the Legislature."

Great Lakes

Funding questions swirl over future of Great Lakes restoration

Since 2009, an unprecedented amount of federal money has been flowing into this region to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

On top of other existing programs in place, more than $1 billion has been allocated through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative — viewed at the time and now as a historic commitment by the federal government to clean up the lakes and protect them from ongoing threats such as invasive species.

But it is unclear whether similar levels of help can be expected on Great Lakes projects in the future, due to budget concerns and policy gridlock in the national capital.

The program has been operating at a level of $300 million a year under a continuing federal budget resolution for fiscal year 2013.

Funding for the program has already been cut since its first-year high to FY 2010's $475 million, and there have since been congressional attempts to reduce levels below $300 million a year.

The initiative may not be facing a fiscal cliff, Andy Buschbaum of the National Wildlife Federation wrote in February, but "it's more like we're sliding down a fiscal cliff."

He said regional advocacy on behalf of the initiative, along with continued bipartisan support from the Great Lakes congressional delegation, is critical to helping keep the initiative afloat during this period in the nation's capital.

The initiative provides funding to a mix of federal agencies, states, local governments and non-governmental entities for programs that:

- prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species;
- reduce polluted runoff to improve the lakes' near-shore health;
- protect habitat;
- remove toxic substances from the lakes and target "Areas of Concern;" and
- measure the progress of restoration efforts.

"We are starting to see results, which is incredibly important," Cameron Davis, the point person on the initiative for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, told legislators during a February webinar hosted by the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus.

As evidence, Davis pointed to reduced beach closings in cities such as Chicago, the protection of more than 20,000 acres of Great Lakes habitat, and the unprecedented effort to keep Asian carp out of the lakes.

Addressing the problem of toxic pollutants in the Great Lakes has received the most GLRI money — about 33 percent of the funds spent in the first three years of the program. These pollutants are concentrated in "Areas of Concern," parts of the Great Lakes basin identified as severely environmentally degraded. These areas all have some type of beneficial-use impairment — such as tainted drinking water, beach closings, degraded fish and wildlife populations, or the presence of contaminated sediment.

Since implementation of the GLRI, Davis said, 14 beneficial-use impairments have been removed from 11 different Areas of Concern. That is more than double the number removed in the previous 22 years.

In February, Presque Isle Bay in Pennsylvania was officially delisted as an Area of Concern. The area had been degraded due to a history of industrial and domestic wastewater contaminating the bay. It is one of only two sites on the U.S. side to have been delisted since Areas of Concern were identified in 1987. There are still 38 Areas of Concern scattered in different parts of the Great Lakes.
States vary on gun rules in capitol buildings

When Minnesota legislators opened hearings on a series of gun control proposals in February, interested onlookers packed committee hearings.

And some of those in attendance were likely packing heat.

Minnesota is one of three states in the region that allows guns to be carried inside its capitol building, according to a CSG Midwest survey of state police and capitol security.

In Minnesota, an individual must have a permit to carry a weapon and notify the state’s Department of Public Safety in advance. During the first two months of this year, as the legislature prepared to consider new gun laws, the agency had received 250 such notifications — quadruple the usual number for an entire year. Michigan and Wisconsin are the other two states where citizens can carry guns in the capitol.

Wisconsin’s policies are relatively new — the result of legislation passed in 2011 allowing individuals to carry concealed weapons. (Every state but Illinois now provides concealed-carry permits.)

Guns are allowed inside the Wisconsin Capitol, but can be restricted in certain areas. State Assembly and Senate committees developed the firearms rules for their respective chambers. The Assembly allows guns on the chamber floor and in the gallery; the Senate permits guns on the floor but not in the gallery.

Wisconsin legislators can also post signs designating their Capitol offices as gun-free zones.

Carrying of guns in state capitols

Allowed  Banned

Metal detectors at entrance of state capitols

Source: CSG Midwest

Lower jobless rates, but declining workforce in much of rural Midwest

One sign that the economy continues on a path to recovery is the continuing decline in unemployment rates since 2010. But in some parts of the rural Midwest, rates never hit high levels even during the depths of the recession.

Instead, another question about the labor force is being asked: Why is it dwindling, and what can be done to bring workers back?

Historically, rural unemployment rates have exceeded unemployment in urban areas by between 2 and 3 percent, but that has been changing since the recession.

Nationally, the unemployment rate at the beginning of 2013 in rural and exurban counties stood at 7.3 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively, compared to 7.4 percent in urban counties. (Exurban counties are rural in character, but are in metropolitan areas, within easy commuting distance of urban centers.)

In the Midwest, where overall unemployment rates in most states are below the national average, more than half of the rural and exurban counties had jobless figures below the U.S. average of 7.4 percent.

In the western portion of the Midwest — Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota — unemployment rates have dipped below 4 percent in many rural counties.

These low jobless rates are seemingly good news for the rural Midwest, but researched done by Bill Bishop of the online publication Daily Yonder points to another piece of workforce data that is a cause for concern among policy-makers: In more than half of the nation’s rural counties, the number of people working or looking for work is on the decline.

Several reasons have been cited as potentially contributing to the declining workforce in rural areas: the retirement of older workers, for example, or a rise in the people who imply quit looking for work.

Indiana Republican Rep. Bill Friend points to a third factor that he sees occurring in his rural north-central Indiana district.

Younger people are moving to exurban and urban areas, he says, at least in part because of a greater array of employment opportunities.

“State job creation efforts seem to focus on the cities, and the donut [exurban] areas around them feel the benefits as well,” he says. “But when you get out to the tier, these rural counties are often left out of the equation, whether it’s economic development efforts or infrastructure maintenance.”

The concern for state lawmakers such as Friend is that the loss of workers will limit the ability of rural areas to grow and diversify their economies.

With the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicting a decrease in agriculture employment over the next decade due to increased automation on the farm, the Midwest’s rural counties will need to attract a greater variety of jobs.

One potential area for growth is the manufacturing sector.

Jobs in this sector have long been a vital source of employment in rural counties, and they are making a comeback in the Midwest.

Federal data show that more than a half-million U.S. manufacturing jobs have been newly created since 2010, and six Midwestern states ranked in the top 10: Michigan (one), Indiana (two), Ohio (three), Illinois (five), Wisconsin (seven) and Iowa (10). In 2012, the number of manufacturing jobs in rural counties grew by more than 133,000.

Some states, meanwhile, are considering new ways to bring young people back to bolster the rural workforce.

In Kansas, the Legislature passed SB 198 two years ago to create the Rural Opportunities Zone program.

The program offers full income tax rebates for up to five years and pays up to $15,000 in student loan debt ($3,000 per year) for people who move to one of 50 rural counties in the state. Eligibility is open to young people recently out of school as well as out-of-state residents.

More than 628 people have applied since the program’s inception. While many of the applications have come from recent in-state graduates, 322 came from people who moved to Kansas from 38 other states.

Article written by Carolyn Orr (corris@dailyyonder.com) and Laura Tomaka (tomaka@csy.org). Carolyn provides staffing services for the Midwest Legislative Conference Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee. Laura provides staffing services for the MLC Economic Development Committee.
QUESTION OF THE MONTH

The Question of the Month section highlights an inquiry received by this office through its Information Help Line, a research service intended to help lawmakers, legislative staff and state officials from across the region. To request assistance through CSG Midwest’s Information Help Line, call 630.925.1922 or send us an e-mail at csgm@cs.gov.

QUESTION: Which states in the Midwest offer tax credits for K-12 education-related expenses?

Three states in the Midwest, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota, allow income tax credits or deductions for parents and guardians of students in elementary and secondary schools.

Iowa and Indiana offer a tax credit for charitable contributions to nonprofit scholarship-funding organizations.

The exact types of expenses eligible for tax credits or deductions — and the amount of the credits and deductions — vary from state to state.

Minnesota offers tax deductions for education expenses, such as tuition, textbooks and other fees for both public and private schools. It allows $2,500 for each dependent in grades seven through 12 and up to $1,625 for each dependent in kindergarten through sixth grade.

In addition to this tax deduction, the state provides an income tax credit for 75 percent of K-12 education-related expenses. The credit is for up to $1,000 for each child in kindergarten through 12th grade and is subject to a phaseout that begins when a family’s income exceeds $33,500.

Illinois taxpayers are eligible for a credit of up to $500 for education-related expenses in excess of $250, including tuition, book fees and lab fees.

Iowa’s K-12 education tax credit is the only one in the Midwest that includes extracurricular activities such as driver’s education, sporting events and speech activities. (Arizona also provides such a credit.) The credit amounts to 25 percent of the first $1,000 paid for each dependent; it also applies to textbooks and for tuition at any state-accredited public or nonprofit private K-12 school.

In addition, Iowa offers a credit — 65 percent of the donation — to individuals and corporations that make contributions to non-public scholarship-granting organizations.

In Indiana, contributors to such organizations are eligible for a corporate or individual state tax credit of 50 percent against their total liability.

In both Indiana and Iowa, there is no limit to how much an individual can contribute to these scholarship granting organizations, but both states cap the total amount of tax credits they grant: $5 million per fiscal year in Indiana and $8.75 million in Iowa.

Article written by Laura Tomaka, senior program manager for CSG Midwest. She can be reached at ltomaka@csg.org.
ers should there be? A local school district is usually one such entity, but Todd Ziebarth of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools notes that school boards are not always supportive of charter schools.

“It is important to ensure that charters have at least two paths for approval, the local school district plus another authorizer,” says Ziebarth, the alliance’s senior vice president for state advocacy and support.

Other authorizers may include universities, state education agencies, mayors or not-for-profit groups. Five states in the Midwest — Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio — provide a path for at least two different types of entities to authorize a charter school. (Wisconsin allows this only in Milwaukee.)

For several years, Indiana’s authorizers have included local school districts, state universities and the mayor of Indianapolis.

The state added two new entities under legislation passed in 2011 (HB 1002): private universities and the Indiana Charter School Board.

“The No. 1 reason to have multiple authorizers is that they each develop their own focus area and brand,” says Claire Fiddian-Green, executive director of the Indiana Charter School Board.

The three authorizers, she adds, the better chance of finding the right fit with a charter school operator or applicant.

The mission of Indiana’s new independent Charter School Board is to grow the state’s supply of high-performing public charter schools. (A Stanford University study of Indiana’s charter schools found that most were doing well, but that some of the newer schools were not performing up to standards.)

The board is a seven-member body, with appointments made by the governor, the state superintendent of education and the four legislative leaders. It will perform annual reviews and site visits of the schools it charters. Every five years, before renewal of the charter school, the board will employ a third-party evaluator to review the school’s operations.

Indiana’s addition of a statewide board as a charter school authorizer is part of a national trend, notes Greg Richmond, president of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Indiana and Illinois are among the 13 U.S. states that now have such independent charter school boards.

A second part of Indiana’s 2011 legislation, Rep. Behning says, was to improve oversight of Indiana’s existing charter schools.

“The Indiana” has both very high- and low-performing schools, which had not been scrutinized enough. … The purpose of charter schools is to meet the needs of children, and they have to close if they don’t do that,” he adds.

Under the new law, the State Board of Education for the first time has the ability to oversee the authorizers themselves.

For example, if a charter school has a “lowest-performance” designation for a certain number of years in a row, the State Board of Education can ask the charter authorizer to explain why it has not acted to revoke the charter.

If the state board is not satisfied with the response, it can take one of several actions: for example, shutting down the school, revoking its charter, or taking it away from the authorizer and putting it in the hands of the State Charter Board.

“The goal is to have rigor in authorizing charter schools,” Behning says.

Under a bill introduced this year (HB 1338), the state could take away the power to approve charters from authorizers whose schools are not performing well.

Michigan: With enrollment already high, state removes charter-school cap

Michigan has more students attending charter schools than any other state in the Midwest and the fifth-largest charter student population in the country (behind only California, Texas, Florida and Arizona).

It has more than 30 charter-school authorizers, many of which are universities, and that number has been growing by four to five per year.

As in Indiana, many of the questions raised about charter schools center on oversight and accountability.

According to Sen. Pavlov, accountability does indeed exist, as evidenced by the fact that charter authorizers in Michigan have closed down 61 schools, including 12 in 2012 alone.

“You don’t have traditional public schools shut down for poor performance in Michigan,” he notes.

Pavlov was a strong supporter of 2011 legislation (SB 618) that lifted a cap on the number of charter school operators. (Universities, along with local education agencies, are the two types of authorizers allowed in Michigan.)

University authorizers have had oversight of some of Michigan’s best-performing charters, he says, yet they were statutorily limited on the number of schools they could charter. Prior to passage of the bill, the cap had been 150. It was raised to 300 last year, will increase to 500 by the end of 2014 and will then be completely abolished.

Policymakers in Michigan, meanwhile, are making data about charter schools more readily available. All charter school operators, including for-profit companies, must now divulge data about administrator and staff salaries, evaluation processes and other information.

Michigan also includes charter schools in its annual Top to Bottom School Ranking. Both charter and traditional public schools in the list’s bottom 5 percent get assigned to the state’s Educational Achievement Authority, a statewide school district that has the authority to bring in new staff and a new curriculum to a school building.

Sen. Hoggood says some charter schools in Michigan are doing good things, but he is skeptical about their overall impact on the state’s public education system.

“They positive impacts on traditional public schools have been very, very limited,” he believes.

What they are doing to improve student performance, he says, often cannot be replicated by a
There are now 25 “eSchools” in Ohio, with 7 students complete coursework and classes online. In the use of virtual charter schools, in which was eliminated under HB 153. For poor performance, the number of schools it their existing schools were not performing well; cited authorizers from sponsoring new schools if length of time it takes to close an underperforming charter school operators and their authorizers. 

Ohio: Lawmakers tighten laws governing charter schools

A the start of this school year, Ohio was one of only four states in the country (Arizona, California and Florida are the others) that had more than 300 charter schools up and running. “We have a very wide range of performance in charter schools,” Sen. Lehner says. “We have some absolutely outstanding charter schools in the state, and a whole host of them that are not doing very well.” Early on in the development of charter schools in Ohio, Lehner explains, “almost anyone could open a charter school with very little accountability.” According to Richmond, the result of this approach was a large number of charter school authorizers only overseeing a few schools and often not following model practices. Joni Hoffman, director of the Office of Community Schools at the Ohio Department of Education, says the state has since adopted a number of reforms to improve the practices of charter school operators and their authorizers. The department, for example, now has over-sight responsibilities over the authorizers and will review all 69 of them before the end of the academic year.

Hoffman says that if a charter school has failing grades — a rating in the category of “academic emergency” in the state’s six-tier rating system — for two of the last three school years, it could be closed. Since Ohio’s closure law first took effect in 2008-09, 20 charter schools have shut down, and two years ago, Ohio legislators passed a bill (HB 153) strengthening the law by decreasing the length of time it takes to close an underperforming charter school.

Also as part of HB 153, the legislature prohibit-ized authorizers from sponsoring new schools if their existing schools were not performing well; the state Department of Education has thus far taken action on one authorizer under this law. Prior to 2011, if an authorizer closed a school for poor performance, the number of schools it could manage was reduced by one. This created a disincentive to close schools, Hoffman says, and was eliminated under HB 153.

Another policy issue in Ohio has been a rise in the use of virtual charter schools, in which students complete coursework and classes online. There are now 25 “Schools” in Ohio, with 7 percent of the state’s charter student population attending a virtual school.

More than seven years ago, the state instituted a moratorium on the opening of new virtual schools, but did not place a limit on the number of students who could enroll in them. More recently, the state adopted new rules to better hold virtual schools accountable. Those rules are based on standards developed by the International Association for K-12 On-line Learning. The standards include guidelines for reviewing academic content, instructional design, student assessment, and the evaluation of and support for students and instructors.

With those standards in place, Ohio has lifted the moratorium on new virtual charter schools: Up to five can now be opened every year. Some of Ohio’s other charter schools have very specific areas of specialization, with one of the most prominent being those that focus on dropout prevention and recovery.

Because they serve a student population more at risk of academic failure, these schools have been exempt from closure rules. But SB 316, passed in 2012, lifted this exemption. The Ohio Department of Education is now working on a performance-measurement system for these dropout prevention and recovery schools — they will have their own report cards and will eventually be subject to closure criteria, based upon their performance.

Ohio Democratic Rep. Ronald Gerberry says there are good charter schools in the state, but that they are the exception and not the rule. When charter schools were originally proposed in Ohio, he says, the state missed an opportunity to implement them as a pilot project — which would have allowed for a thorough review of whether they were actually working.

That thorough review did not happen, he says, and the result is that charter schools have become a permanent part of Ohio’s education landscape despite their lackluster performance.

Gerberry remains concerned that charter schools do not have to live by the same rules as traditional public schools, but he says some prog-ress has been made. For example, he points to a requirement that fiscal officers in charter schools now meet the same licensing requirements as those serving in traditional public schools.

Another step, he says, would be to ensure that when a charter closes for poor academic performance, it is shut down for good — and doesn’t simply reopen with a change in a few board members and a new name and charter. “We have seen this happen,” Gerberry says. “I saw this happen in my own hometown.” Whether they are proponents or skeptics, lawmakers in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio appear to agree on at least one aspect of charter schools: They are here to stay, as are the decisions that legislatures will be asked to make about oversight and accountability.
In 1990, Susan Wagle was searching high and low for a good candidate to fill an open legislative seat. Little did she know that the search would end with herself.

Wagle had been approached by local leaders who were concerned about a new state policy on property taxes. The law had caused taxes in her community, eastern Wichita, to skyrocket. They asked Wagle to run for the seat — but politics had never been a goal of hers, she says.

But Wagle had a difficult time finding a fellow fiscal conservative who was ready to take on the role, or who could take three months away from work to attend the legislative session. “Finally, my husband said, ‘Susan, you just need to run,’” she recalls.

Run, she did — and after serving 10 years in the Kansas House, she is now serving her fourth term in the Senate. And the woman who wasn’t sure if politics was for her is now the first female in Kansas history to hold a top leadership post in the state Legislature. She is the president of the Kansas Senate.

Despite the historic nature of her leadership position (she also served two terms as speaker pro tem in the House), Wagle is reluctant to get caught up in labels. “I haven’t looked at leadership as male or female,” she says. “You get ahead in life by earning your position, so being a female leader is not that significant to me. If I were male, I would have earned it the same way.”

Eye on eliminating state income tax

Wagle brings to the Legislature a strong business background; she currently runs a real estate management and leasing company with her husband. The couple started the business while they were both teaching elementary school. They would purchase properties and then spend the summers fixing them up. They soon left their teaching jobs to manage the properties full-time.

In part because of her business background, Wagle is interested in tax policy, the issue that brought her to the Legislature in the first place. One of her legislative priorities is to reduce — and eventually eliminate — income taxes in her state.

CSG Midwest talked about this tax proposal as well as Sen. Wagle’s other legislative priorities in an interview last month. Here are some excerpts.

Q: You list health care as a top priority of yours. Can you talk about why it’s so important to you?

A: I am a cancer survivor, and my young son is also a cancer survivor, so I have been on the front lines in using the health care system and working with others who were also in treatment. I am very concerned about keeping the quality health care system that we have. I am very concerned about rationing. I think that there is a possibility that the setup here [with the federal Affordable Care Act] might ultimately be to go to a single-payer system. I don’t think that’s good for America. … Our health care delivery system is in a huge dilemma right now, and I hope we can find a way to continue to deliver quality services that are needed in order to keep people alive.

Q: You are particularly proud of a bill you sponsored regarding chemotherapy. What did it accomplish?

A: After my battle with cancer and my son’s, I was able to pass [in 2010] a bill that required insurance companies to pay for oral chemotherapy drugs in the same way that they were paying for IV drugs. We are having tremendous success in research and a lot of new drugs coming on the market that can be taken orally instead of by IV for the treatment of cancer. Patients were finding that the oral drugs were cost-prohibitive, yet they could go in and get a similar drug by IV with a $20 co-pay. I was able to pass through the Legislature a parity-payment bill when it came to cancer therapies.

Q: You are a former House Tax Committee chair and passionate about tax policy. Tell us about what you’d like to see in your state’s future.

A: The governor has proposed eliminating income taxes in Kansas. We have taken a step in that direction. Last year we lowered income taxes, and this year we are trying to put in place a long-term tax policy that ratchets down all personal income tax to zero over time.

Q: Eliminating income taxes would make Kansas only the second Midwestern state without such a tax (South Dakota has no income tax). What impact do you hope this change would make?

A: We think it will keep people here who are considering moving. We have a lot of retirees who were successful entrepreneurs who moved to a no-income-tax state. We don’t like losing those people. We believe the legislation that we have already enacted — which eliminates taxes on small businesses — will grow our economy despite what is happening at the federal level, where things are very sluggish. … We want to provide that security to people who want to grow their businesses that they can come to Kansas — or they can stay here — and thrive in good economic times and in bad.
For better or worse, gaming has become a major source of tax revenue in Indiana. Since 2010, our state has collected the second-most gaming revenue in the country.

Indiana authorized gaming in 1993 — three years before I was elected to office — and the state’s first riverboat casino opened in 1995. Since then, the gaming industry has generated more than $10 billion in tax revenue from wagering and admissions, and Indiana’s 13 gaming facilities brought in $875 million in tax revenue in 2010.

However, increased competition from new casino facilities in surrounding states is forcing lawmakers to re-evaluate our dependency on gaming revenue.

State’s casino clientele shrinking

Currently, 10 of 13 Indiana casinos are located along state lines, meaning they add to Indiana’s economy by attracting out-of-state visitors. But this also means that as our neighbors expand their own casino facilities, Indiana’s gaming clientele will leave us for casinos located closer to home.

• In Michigan, four casinos are located within 120 miles of the Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City, Ind. A fifth casino, Four Winds Dowagiac, is expected to open this year and is less than an hour away from Blue Chip Casino. This means the estimated 68 percent of Lake Michigan casino patrons who are nonresidents will have more gaming options in their own state instead of traveling to Indiana.

• In Ohio, a number of new casinos opened in 2012, the first year of casino-style gambling in that state, and collected $142 million in new revenue. Three casinos are now operating around major metropolitan regions and were built far enough apart so as not to compete with one another.

The Horseshoe Casino in Cincinnati is scheduled to open next month, and will feature 100,000 square feet of gaming space — a structure larger than all but two of Indiana’s casinos. It is projected to attract nearly 6 million annual visitors to downtown Cincinnati. These new casinos are expected to negatively impact southeastern Indiana casinos with lost income of between $73.2 million and $93.9 million.

• In Illinois, a new casino located 17 miles from downtown Chicago is having a greater impact on surrounding casinos than originally anticipated. In 2012, Rivers Casino in Des Plaines brought in $416 million, the highest revenue of any casino in Illinois, and nearly doubled the amount of revenue generated by the state’s second-place casino. It’s also worth noting that 4 million patrons visited this facility in 2012.

• In Kentucky, casinos and racinos are taking a different approach to gaming. We are now seeing “instant racing machines,” which are similar to slot machines and are beginning to appear at racetracks. Gov. Steve Beshear, who has stated he would like to legalize gambling and casinos, faces opposition from his legislature and the horse-racing industry.

Kentucky’s latest developments are projected to amount to $310 million in decreased income to southern Indiana casinos annually.

All of the added competition, it’s no surprise that riverboat wagering is on the decline in Indiana. The amount Indiana expects to receive from riverboat wagering in the current fiscal year is down 15 percent from 2007. Experts predict another 9 percent drop in 2013.

Horse-racing industry also ailing

It’s also important to point out the unique circumstances surrounding Indiana’s two horse-racing tracks — Hoosier Park and Indiana Downs.

In an effort to raise money for property tax relief and support the state’s ailing horse-racing industry, the Indiana General Assembly authorized slot machines for the two facilities in 2008. Each track paid a one-time fee of $250 million for slots licenses and an additional $150 million in annual state tax.

Each of these facilities has since filed for bankruptcy, though they have both survived the process and now appear solvent. To a lesser but not insignificant degree, each of these facilities is also impacted by the growth of gaming in our neighboring states.

This ongoing loss of state revenue has ramifications. It will certainly impact our two-year state budget, especially when one considers that casino taxes are the third-largest revenue source for the state.

We are facing a “game-changing” decision: Should we find ways to increase gaming revenue by attempting to out-compete our neighbors, or should we live with the status quo and thus “draw the line” against any further expansions of gaming? Any solution will have to treat each of our gaming facilities fairly and avoid favoring one facility over another. As one can imagine, such a solution could prove elusive.

Clearly, Hoosier lawmakers have a serious decision to make moving forward and several options to consider:

• do nothing and allow gaming revenues to continue their decline;
• provide relief to casinos by giving them incentives that will improve their facilities and help them to better compete with neighboring states;
• allow casinos to increase the number of gaming stations at their facilities with the hope of eliminating the loss of revenue; or
• some hybrid of the above.

While some are urging quick action on this decision, it might be wise to pause and take the time to study our options for the future of gaming in our state. The fact that there are a number of new anti-gaming legislators today shows that Hoosier voters are likely also divided as to which solution could prove elusive.

Ultimately, casino gaming in Indiana faces some clear challenges that, at some point, will likely require a legislative solution. What form that solution takes will have a profound impact upon the future of legalized gambling in Indiana.

We are facing a “game-changer” for Indiana. Casino competition from other states is forcing lawmakers to re-evaluate our dependency on gaming revenue. Loss of patrons, revenue will continue without legislative action

by Indiana Sen. David Long (dlong@iga.in.gov)

FIRST PERSON
A FORUM FOR LEGISLATORS AND CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

Casino competition from other states a ‘game changer’ for Indiana

Gaming revenue in Midwest states (FY 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gaming revenue as % of state’s own-source revenue U.S. rank*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Commercial casino tax revenue in Midwest, 2009-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>$495.6 million</td>
<td>$489.4 million</td>
<td>-1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$873.0 million</td>
<td>$946.4 million</td>
<td>-3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>$316.3 million</td>
<td>$321.5 million</td>
<td>+1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$901.1 million</td>
<td>$933.1 million</td>
<td>+3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>$120.0 million</td>
<td>$127.0 million</td>
<td>+5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>$16.0 million</td>
<td>$16.4 million</td>
<td>+2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Sen. David Long, a Republican from Fort Wayne, serves as president pro tempore of the Indiana Senate. He was first elected senator in 1996.

Submissions welcome

This page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwest 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.
Great Lakes Legislative Caucus helping region’s lawmakers protect the lakes

I t is a water resource that defines how the region lives, works and plays — relied upon by 40 million people for their drinking water and 1.5 million people for their jobs.

The Great Lakes supply the basin’s eight U.S. states and two Canadian provinces with a seemingly endless amount of benefits and economic advantages. But it is also a freshwater system at risk. Today’s threats range from invasive species and climate change, to coastal development, nutrient runoff and sewage overflows.

Few groups do more to protect and restore the lakes than the region’s state and provincial legislators. With that in mind, and with assistance from a Joyce Foundation grant, CSG Midwest provides staffing services for the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus.

The nonpartisan caucus, open to all lawmakers from the basin, provides a forum for the regional exchange of ideas and information on key Great Lakes issues. Its goal is to strengthen the role of state and provincial legislators in Great Lakes policymaking.

In the past, for example, the caucus has facilitated regional discussions on implementation of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. It has also pushed for federal passage of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, an improved Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and completion of a federal study on how to keep Asian carp out of the lakes. More recently, the caucus has expanded its programming for legislators (see below), created a formal membership process (see above) and established a leadership structure to guide its work. The group’s new 12-member Executive Committee is made up of one legislator from each of the basin’s 10 jurisdictions as well as two officers: Minnesota Sen. Ann Rest, caucus chair; and Michigan Sen. Darwin Booher, vice chair.

If you are interested in the Great Lakes, we encourage you to get involved. For more information, visit the caucus website (www.greatlakeslegislators.org) or call CSG Midwest at 630.925.1922.

Overview of caucus programs and services for legislators

✓ Legislative trackers and newsletter — The caucus keeps members updated on legislation in Washington, D.C., and state and provincial capitals. The legislative trackers are available at www.greatlakeslegislators.org. An e-newsletter is also sent to members four times a year.

✓ Great Lakes, Great Webinars series — The caucus regularly holds free one-hour webinars on key Great Lakes issues. Please contact Lisa Janairo (ljanairo@csg.org) or visit www.greatlakeslegislators.org for information on upcoming events.

✓ In-state policy workshops — The caucus recently held policy workshops in Michigan and Minnesota, the goal of which were to generate discussion and ideas on what legislators in those two states can do to protect the Great Lakes.

✓ Advocacy on key Great Lakes issues — The caucus has written letters to federal officials urging changes to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and swift action to prevent the introduction of Asian carp into the lakes.

✓ Annual caucus meeting — The caucus meets annually to explore key Great Lakes issues and examine the policymaking role of states and provinces. The group will next meet July 29 and 30 in Duluth, Minn.

How to become a caucus member

• The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus has established a formal membership process. Becoming a member is free and open to all legislators from the eight states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes basin.

• Members have the opportunity to propose and vote on caucus resolutions and statements of policy; they are also eligible to receive travel reimbursement to meetings and to assume leadership positions within the caucus.

• If you would like to join, click on the membership tab on the caucus website: www.greatlakeslegislators.org. You can also contact Lisa Janairo (ljanairo@csg.org) or call CSG Midwest office at 630.925.1922.

Medicaid briefing part of ongoing CSG training

More than 100 people gathered in the South Dakota Capitol last month to hear top Medicaid expert talk about the pros and cons of expanding the public insurance program. The session was organized by CSG Midwest with support from a bipartisan group of legislative leaders.

The idea to hold a special briefing came about during the CSG Midwest annual visit to Pierre, when legislative leaders sought more information about the potential costs and benefits of expanding Medicaid.

As part of its work on behalf of the Midwestern Legislative Conference, CSG Midwest has been seeking opportunities to bring more in-state training and programming to capitol. It has helped host a seminar on civil discourse in Columbus; sessions on effective communication in Michigan and Wisconsin; and workshops on Great Lakes issues in Michigan and Minnesota. Future training sessions will be crafted with input from legislators in the region.

In memoriam: Arch Lustberg

The Council of State Governments mourns the passing of Arch Lustberg, who died on Feb. 8. A nationally renowned expert on the art of communication, Lustberg was a frequent CSG contributor for almost 20 years and a regular presenter at the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) and CSG’s Toll Fellowship Program.

Prior to establishing his own training firm in 1984, Lustberg taught at the Catholic University of America and produced and directed award-winning musicals and record albums. He also wrote four best-selling books and coached governors, congressional leaders, presidential appointees, business leaders, and state officials on effective communication.

An infantry veteran of World War II, Lustberg trained more than 600 Midwestern state legislators as a member of the BILLD faculty since 1996. In 2010, he became the first recipient of CSG’s highest honor, the Distinguished Service to the States Award.

Lustberg is survived by his bride of 61 years, Jean Anne, their three children and three grandchildren. He was 87 years old.
Deadline nears to apply for region’s premier leadership program for newer legislators

April 8 is the deadline to apply for the only leadership training program designed exclusively for the region’s newer lawmakers.

Each summer, the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development brings together a select group of Midwestern legislators for a five-day institute aimed at improving policymaking skills and fostering relationships with colleagues from other states.

The 2013 Bowhay Institute will be held Aug. 9-13 in Madison, Wis. Applications are available at www.csgmidwest.org.

The BILLD program uses a multi-state approach to explore key policy issues in state government. In addition, the institute offers participants a nonpartisan environment in which to discuss the meaning of leadership and strategies for more-effective policymaking.

“I discovered my true strengths and opportunities for growth as a lawmaker, especially in time management and consensus building,” says Nebraska Sen. Heath Mello, a 2012 graduate of the program. “Honing these key abilities has become a personal priority for me during my second term.”

More than 600 regional lawmakers have completed BILLD since its inception in 1995. Many of the graduates have gone on to hold key leadership positions in their legislatures; others are now serving in the U.S. Congress.

The highly interactive curriculum, which is designed for legislators in their first four years of service, includes a series of leadership training courses, policy seminars and professional-development workshops.

Another important aspect of BILLD is the opportunity it affords participants to meet and work with lawmakers from across the region.

“The relationships developed through the BILLD experience are invaluable,” says Ohio Sen. Cliff Hite, co-chair of the BILLD Steering Committee, which is made up of lawmakers from around the region and oversees the program.

Each year, participants are chosen by this committee in a nonpartisan competitive process, and 2013 fellowships will be awarded in early May.

CSG’s Midwestern Legislative Conference conducts the annual program in partnership with The Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Fellows pay only for travel to and from Madison, although CSG offers a stipend to offset this cost.

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

MLC Annual Meeting to feature Jon Meacham; discounted registration available through May 7

Discounted registration is available online for the premier event for Midwestern state legislators to exchange policy ideas in a nonpartisan environment.

Participants who register for the Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting before May 7 are eligible for a reduced registration fee. Discounts are also available for legislators attending the conference for the first time.

Registration materials can be accessed online at www.csgmidwest.org. The site will also be updated regularly with information about the agenda for this summer’s conference, which will be held July 14-17 in St. Paul, Minn. This year’s MLC chair, Minnesota Rep. Alice Hausman, is leading her state’s efforts to host the meeting.

The conference offers policy sessions, professional-development seminars and networking opportunities for lawmakers from 11 Midwestern states and four affiliated Canadian provinces.

During the meeting, attendees will hear from one of America’s most prominent historians, Jon Meacham, a bestselling author who won the Pulitzer Prize for his 2008 biography of Andrew Jackson, “American Lion.” His most recent book is “Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power,” which reached No. 1 on the New York Times bestseller list. Meacham will speak about leadership, drawing from his extensive work about U.S. presidents and other influential historical figures.

The keynote address at this year’s conference will be delivered by Jonathan Haidt, author of “The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion.”

Haidt’s speech will draw on his research about human morality to explore how policymakers can repair differences by finding the reasons for which they disagree in the first place.

Attendees of the conference will also hear a presentation by polar explorer Ann Bancroft, a Minnesota native who will talk about the importance of inspiring young people to achieve their dreams.

In addition to a business agenda full of engaging speakers and public policy sessions, the MLC Annual Meeting features opportunities for lawmakers to network with colleagues from around the Midwest. The family-friendly conference also offers daytime activities for spouses, other adult guests and children. For information, please contact CSG Midwest at 630.925.1922.
Drone use, restrictions now on radar of many state legislatures

As part of what the American Civil Liberties Union calls “an unprecedented surge of activity” to address the domestic use of drones, legislatures in three Midwestern states were considering new privacy protections as of late February.

In all, bills in at least 20 U.S. states — including Illinois, Nebraska and North Dakota — had been introduced early in 2013. Most of these measures would require law enforcement to obtain a probable-cause warrant before deploying an unmanned aircraft for surveillance. Moratoriums have been proposed in Montana and Virginia, the ACLU reports.

The North Dakota House passed HB 1373 in February. According to The Bismarck Tribune, the bill aims to remove “gray area” in state law regarding when and how drones are used.

Along with the probable-cause requirement, the North Dakota measure would ban all drones with weapons. The state would also be prohibited from authorizing “one private person to conduct surveillance on any other private person.” A third restriction ensures that surveillance is not conducted on people exercising their constitutional rights of free-dom of speech and assembly. HB 1373 allows for the use of drones within 25 miles of the U.S.-Canada border and in certain emergency situations.

Prospect of automated vehicles drives new proposal in Michigan

Early in the last century, Michigan emerged as the global hub of automotive production. Could it become the center of testing for a new vehicle for this century — the driverless car?

SB 169 takes a first step in making that at least a possibility. It would allow the testing of automated vehicles on Michigan roadways through the use of a special “manufacturer” license plate. Republican Gov. Rick Snyder called for passage of the legislation earlier this year, noting that three other states (none in the Midwest) had already enacted automated-driving laws.

The bill was introduced in February. State officials have said that automated cars could reduce traffic accidents and improve fuel efficiency. They add that Michigan has an economic stake in keeping development of the technology inside the state.

Michigan’s reliance on the automobile industry is well known, but a 2010 Center For Automotive Research study underscores the importance of this economic sector to much of the Midwest. The study’s authors found that the auto industry contributed to 21.8 percent of the Midwest’s economy. The report’s authors found that the auto industry contributed to 21.8 percent of the labor force in Michigan, 13.9 percent in Indiana and 12.4 percent in Ohio — the three highest rates in the nation. Illinois and Wisconsin were also above the U.S. average.

Minnesota goes from paper to plastic with tax refunds on debit cards

Starting next year, Minnesota will begin issuing individual income-tax refunds via debit cards instead of paper checks. While most refunds are deposited directly into checking accounts, the state has still been printing 1 million paper checks each year, according to the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Money on the new debit cards can be spent at stores or withdrawn at banks.

State officials say the transition to plastic will save about $400,000, reduce check fraud, and deliver refunds to taxpayers a month earlier (paper checks have had to pass through three state agencies). The change in state policy is also expected to help individuals who don’t use banks and, as a result, have had to incur check-cashing fees.

Minnesota is the first state in the Midwest to move from paper to plastic, according to the Federation of Tax Administrators. Georgia was the first state to issue debit cards, in 2011, and five other states followed suit last year. The FTA reports that states have seen $14.5 million over two years, the report found.

Critics point out, however, that debit cards can include fees. And some people, such as the elderly, are not accustomed to the technology.

Election-day registration considered in Illinois, its end mulled in Wisconsin

While at least one Midwestern state may adopt same-day voter registration this year, officials in another have said they want to repeal it.

If approved, HB 68 would make Illinois the fourth state in the region to allow voter registration on election day. Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin are among the eight states nationwide that do so already. North Dakota does not require voters to register.

Proponents of same-day registration say it improves turnout and access. Connecticut and California passed laws last year to allow it.

But citing concerns about the administrative burden placed on poll workers, Wisconsin Republican Gov. Scott Walker and other lawmakers have advocated getting rid of same-day registration. A report released last month by the state’s Government Accountability Board points out, though, that doing so would force Wisconsin to comply with a federal “motor voter” law, which requires states to offer people voter-registration materials when they obtain driver’s licenses or apply for public assistance. Compliance costs could reach $74.5 million over two years, the report found.

In other Midwestern states, voters must register anywhere from 15 days (in South Dakota) to 30 days (in Michigan and Ohio) in advance. In Nebraska, the registration deadline is the second Friday before the election.

CAPITOL CLIPS

March 2013

The Council of State Governments
701 E. 22nd Street, Suite 110
Pembroke Pines, Florida 33024-4365
Phone: 954-327-3000
Fax: 954-327-3190
E-mail: clippings@csg.org
www.csg.org

MONOPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 7706

Registered to deliver refunds on debit cards through the use of a special “manufacturer” license plate. Republican Gov. Rick Snyder called for passage of the legislation earlier this year, noting that three other states (none in the Midwest) had already enacted automated-driving laws.

Money on the new debit cards can be spent at stores or withdrawn at banks.

Election-day registration considered in Illinois, its end mulled in Wisconsin

While at least one Midwestern state may adopt same-day voter registration this year, officials in another have said they want to repeal it.

If approved, HB 68 would make Illinois the fourth state in the region to allow voter registration on election day. Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin are among the eight states nationwide that do so already. North Dakota does not require voters to register.

Proponents of same-day registration say it improves turnout and access. Connecticut and California passed laws last year to allow it.

But citing concerns about the administrative burden placed on poll workers, Wisconsin Republican Gov. Scott Walker and other lawmakers have advocated getting rid of same-day registration. A report released last month by the state’s Government Accountability Board points out, though, that doing so would force Wisconsin to comply with a federal “motor voter” law, which requires states to offer people voter-registration materials when they obtain driver’s licenses or apply for public assistance. Compliance costs could reach $74.5 million over two years, the report found.

In other Midwestern states, voters must register anywhere from 15 days (in South Dakota) to 30 days (in Michigan and Ohio) in advance. In Nebraska, the registration deadline is the second Friday before the election.

The Council of State Governments
701 E. 22nd Street, Suite 110
Pembroke Pines, Florida 33024-4365
Phone: 954-327-3000
Fax: 954-327-3190
E-mail: clippings@csg.org
www.csg.org

MONOPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 7706

Registered to