Rethinking health policy

New state strategies look beyond access to care, focus on other factors that lead to poor health outcomes and higher costs

 Kate Tormey (ktormey@csg.org)

When it comes to improving health outcomes, many policymakers look first to strategies that can provide better care for people who are ill. But some experts argue that medical care itself accounts only for a small part of positive health outcomes.

The vast majority of interventions that can make people healthier, and reduce spending on health care, need to happen long before someone enters a doctor's office.

That's why states across the Midwest are exploring ways to address so-called "social determinants" to health — from low levels of income and education, to high levels of community violence, to a lack of access to housing and transportation.

For example, a 25-year-old male who has a college degree will live, on average, another 56 years. For males who did not complete high school, life expectancy is cut by more than nine years. This disparity is similar among females, according to National Center for Health Statistics data.

Infant mortality, too, appears to vary depending on the mother's level of education.

Among mothers who do not complete high school, 7.7 infants in 1,000 do not survive. For mothers who have graduated from college, the rate drops to 3.3.

But what exactly causes this link between education (a non-medical indicator) and health?

Researchers from the Center for Social Disparities in Health point out that those with less education are also less likely to have health knowledge, literacy or access to care.

Disparities in Health points out that those with low incomes are also more likely to be unemployed or to be working in low-wage jobs. They can then lead to poor diet, a lack of exercise and higher rates of smoking.

Those with lower educational attainment are also more likely to be unemployed or to be working in low-wage jobs. That's why states across the Midwest are exploring ways to address so-called "social determinants" to health.
### Economic Development

Policymakers, businesses push to expand technical training as skilled-worker shortage persists

Ask employers what their biggest challenges are, and one of the first responses will often be the difficulty in filling jobs with qualified workers.

Ask policymakers what the biggest challenges facing their state’s economy are, and it won’t be long before they mention the need to build a trained workforce—one that can fill good-paying jobs and enable individual economic mobility.

This policy challenge is particularly acute in regard to middle-skill jobs—those requiring more than a high school diploma, such as an associate’s degree, certificate or other postsecondary credential, but not necessarily a bachelor’s degree. Last year, in fact, none of the 10 fastest-growing occupations required a bachelor’s degree, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Workers could instead qualify for these high-skill jobs through such means as skills certificates, on-the-job training or apprenticeships.

In an effort to match state policy with these labor-market realities, new legislation is being introduced and innovative programs are being implemented across the Midwest that target middle-skill jobs and workers.

In Wisconsin, Gov. Scott Walker has proposed a $10.4 million increase in grant funding for his state’s Fast Forward program, which was begun in 2013 to better train people for high-demand jobs. Program grants go to employer-led skills training—of workers and students in high-demand fields and to K-12 programs that graduate students with industry-recognized credentials.

Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton, meanwhile, has proposed expanding eligibility for the state’s Dislocated Worker Program. Currently, only unemployed workers can receive the career planning and training that the program offers. Dayton wants it to also serve people who are employed but could benefit from additional training.

In his State of the Address and in his budget proposal this year, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder has also emphasized the importance of investing in the state’s workers. It is a policy priority that resonates with Sen. Ken Horn, chair of the Economic Development and International Investment Committee.

“Skilled trades are in high demand and engineers are at a premium,” he says. “We need to fill all those jobs.”

Snyder has proposed spending close to $18 million to expand career and technical education programs. He also wants to double the state’s investment in its Skilled Trades Training Fund, which helps employers pay for demand-driven training that addresses talent shortages hampering growth of Michigan’s priority industries.

That training may lead to a new industry credential for a student or worker, for example. In 2014, 10,000 Michigan workers got training through the fund, many earning higher wages as a result.

“I know of manufacturers who are creating their own academies to begin solving internally their employee gaps and skilled-trade needs,” Horn says.

“Welding schools, tool and die institutes, and others are being implemented privately all over the state. Colleges and universities are growing some strong programs, and industry is getting involved. I think it needs to be ‘all hands on deck’ to solve this talent gap.”

Part of that approach, he adds, should be an increased emphasis on public-private partnerships—for example, between community colleges and employers.

Horn would also like to see more training options for Michigan’s high school students.

“Every student should have access to a shop class or technical class as well as college prep,” he says. “If schools don’t have the resources [for this], then we should seek strong partnerships with industry for internships or apprenticeship programs.”

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### Great Lakes

More states taking steps to ban products with plastic microbeads

Across the Great Lakes region this year, bills have been introduced to ban the manufacture and sale of certain products containing plastic microbeads.

This legislative trend began last year, in response to a two-year scientific study of plastic pollution in the Great Lakes. Its conclusion: Microbeads (tiny particles that are often too small to be captured by wastewater systems and that are also part of the trash left on beaches) account for the highest count of plastic particles that are often too small to be captured by wastewater systems.

In February, Indiana lawmakers overwhelmingly approved legislation (HB 1185) to phase in a ban on personal care products and over-the-counter drugs that contain “synthetic plastic microbeads.”

Similar to other state proposals, Indiana’s would first prohibit the manufacture of personal care products with plastic microbeads, starting in 2018. A ban on the sale of these products would take effect a year later.

Current state legislative proposals usually establish a longer time frame for prohibitions on over-the-counter drugs with plastic microbeads (in Indiana, for example, the manufacturing ban begins in 2019 and the sales ban in 2020).

Plastic microbeads (5 millimeters or smaller in diameter) are added to skin care products as exfoliators, and can also be found in toothpaste, moisturizers, fragrances and shampoo.

“Destructive ingredients can easily be replaced with natural, biodegradable alternatives,” says Tim Anderson, who helps provide CSG Midwest’s staff support to the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus. He can be reached at tanderson@csg.org. The caucus is a nonpartisan group of state and provincial legislators with an interest in Great Lakes protection and restoration. Wisconsin Rep. Cory Mason serves as caucus chair.

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**Economic Development**

**Great Lakes**

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**Issue Briefs cover topics of interest to the various groups and policy committees of CSG Midwest, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, Great Lakes Legislative Caucus, Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission and Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Committee.**

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**Economic Development**

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**Great Lakes**

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**Status of bills to ban plastic microbeads in certain products (as of March)**

* A bill has been introduced in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.
Border bottlenecks expected to ease after U.S., Canada agree to allow traveler prescreening

The United States and Canada signed a preclearance agreement in March that will allow people traveling from one country to the other to be prescreened before they cross the border.

When fully implemented, this Agreement on Land, Rail, Marine, and Air Transport will allow U.S. agents to be stationed in Canada (and Canadian agents in the United States) and to carry out immigration, customs and agriculture inspections of people entering the U.S. from Canada by any mode of transportation. A preclearance program for airline passengers is already in place at eight of the largest Canadian airports; it will be expanded under the new accord.

“For the first time, the U.S. and Canada have a framework for preclearance for land, marine and rail,” notes Maryscott Greenwood, senior adviser to the Canadian-American Business Council.

“Up until now, we have only had air preclearance — and even that was an outdated agreement negotiated before 9/11/01.”

The goal of the new procedures is to relieve bottleneck at the border. Often the roads to these crossings can be backed up as trucks, buses and passenger vehicles approach a port of entry, and then may go into separate lanes.

Though the details of the new accord must still be worked out, inspection facilities could now be placed several miles from the border.

“Tourists will be the first to notice the benefits of preclearance because of the new, expedited services that will be offered — from rail service to ferries to cruise liners,” Greenwood says.

Some U.S. inspectors could be shifted to the Canadian side of the border to conduct the prescreenings; they would be allowed to carry weapons while working at a facility in Canada.

Three ports of entry in the Midwest are among the top five U.S.-Canadian border crossings in terms of the value of goods traded. Detroit-Windsor is the busiest commercial port in the United States, with over $2.1 billion in goods having crossed the border there last year. Port Huron, Mich., ranks second, and Pembina, N.D., ranks fourth. The other two busiest ports of entry are in New York state.

This agreement could affect more remote ports of entry as well, where both countries can agree to jointly co-locate a facility rather than keeping small posts open on each side of the border.

The agreement will require congressional approval, but Greenwood notes it is likely to garner bipartisan support.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Probe clears U.S. research center in Nebraska of ‘devastating’ animal-mistreatment charges

Earlier this year, a headline in The New York Times set off a firestorm in both the livestock industry and the research community.

“U.S. Research Lab Lets Livestock Suffer in Quest for Profit,” the headline read.

The laboratory at the heart of the story was a U.S. Department of Agriculture facility in southeast Nebraska where research is conducted on farm animals. The goal of the USDA’s Meat Animal Research Center is to improve the efficiency of production while also maintaining the quality of meat products.

But the article raised questions about whether the welfare of animals at the facility was being compromised — for example, by breeding research that has led to “weakened or deformed” calves and crowded conditions that are causing piglets to be crushed. In response, animal-welfare organizations called for shutting down the facility and even ending all animal agriculture research across the country. And federal legislation was introduced to include farm animals under the Animal Welfare Act, the law that governs research use of laboratory animals.

“People who understand agriculture were devastated by the accusations [in the article],” says Nebraska Sen. John Kuehn. “The employees who work 24/7, through all kinds of weather to ensure that the animals are well cared for, felt shatetered — their efforts diminished.”

Kuehn’s district includes the Meat Animal Research Center. But he also has a personal connection: A veterinarian, he spent part of his education training at the facility.

“The 11-state Midwest is home to 17 USDA research centers in Midwest, which employ more than 1,400 people and have operating budgets of more than $600 million. Nebraska’s Meat Animal Research Center employs more than 100 people, but Sen. Al Davis says it means much more than direct jobs in his state — the nation’s No. 1 producer of red meat. ”

“[It] provides our producers with access to cutting-edge research,” he says.

Kuehn notes, too, that the center’s research into animal genomes has helped lead “to the biotech revolution of today. Operated under a cooperative agreement between the University of Nebraska and the USDA, the center houses more than 30,000 animals and is conducting some of the longest-running genetic and production research trials in the world. In praising the work of the research center, Sens. Davis and Kuehn also take issue with some of the reporting in the Times article. For example, it mentioned the “unsettling side effects” of developing a breed of twinning cows — female calves born with deformed reproductive tracts. For cattle producers, though, the presence of “freemartins” (the term used for these heifers) is as old as cattle raising itself.

“There that research hered me the opportunity to learn how to manage multiple births, something most veterinary students never see, “Kuehn says about his own personal experiences at the USDA facility. “The center, the only one of its kind in the world, provided training for thousands of veterinarians, resulting in saving hundreds of thousands of animals.”

The article also chastised research that increased lamb production with triplets, but there are commercial breeds of sheep that often produce triplets or quadruplets. And the center provides producers with production methods to save the lives of these multiple births.

Under significant public pressure, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack directed the head of the Agriculture Research Service to initiate an independent review of the center. The USDA will also provide updated training for all employees who handle animals.

The panel of outside researchers found no evidence of animal mistreatment at the center: “Without exception, the panel observed healthy and well-cared-for animals.”

The panel, however, found that there was a lack of documentation on employee-training programs and said more accountability is needed at the center to ensure that animal-welfare standards are upheld. Until these administrative deficiencies are corrected, a moratorium on new research projects is in place.

The USDA has also appointed an animal-welfare ombudsman and authorized new training for all who work with animals in Agriculture Research Service labs. (The University of Nebraska-Lincoln holds accreditation from the leading animal-care association, indicating that the university’s standards exceed federal requirements.)

Brief written by Ilene Grossman, staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Midwest-Canada Relations Committee. She can be reached at igrossman@csg.org.
Jobless numbers are falling, but so are rates of labor participation

In 2014, year-over-year unemployment rates fell in all 50 states. That hadn’t happened since 1984, and the news was greeted as another positive sign of economic recovery. But there is another trend getting more attention from economists and state policymakers: the continuing decline in rates of labor participation. Close to six years after the official end of the Great Recession, these rates continue to fall.

The labor force includes people who have jobs and those who are actively seeking work (the unemployed).

Four states in the Midwest (North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota) have the highest labor-participation rates in the country. But with the exception of North Dakota, every state in this region has been following the national trend: declines in participation since 2000 (see table).

For state policymakers, the causes for this drop can serve as an indicator of a state’s economic health — for example, more people are long-term unemployed, become discouraged about finding work and drop out of the labor market. That has contributed to the decline in participation rates, but there are other factors as well, notes Eugene Steuerle, a fellow at the Urban Institute.

People are retiring earlier and living longer, he says, and state populations are aging. More people, too, simply aren’t entering the labor force, and are instead staying in school longer or raising children, a 2013 Urban Institute study notes.

And while labor-participation rates fall, the number of people on federal disability rolls is on the rise — a 77.3 percent increase between 2000 and 2013. In comparison, the U.S. population has increased by 12.0 percent over that time.

Earlier this year, Express Employment Professionals (a provider of staffing for businesses) released a report examining state-by-state increases in the number of people on federal disability. Between 2008 and 2013, two Midwestern states had the largest increases in the nation: Michigan (29.1 percent) and Ohio (28.2 percent). North Dakota had the Midwest’s lowest rate of increase, 12.8 percent (fifth-lowest among the 50 states.)

Law on religious freedom, LGBT rights garner national attention

Following backlash over its Religious Freedom Restoration Act, Indiana adds new protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity

O f all the bills considered and signed into law so far this year in the Midwest’s state capitols, one has captured the most attention around the country: Indiana’s Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

Passed by comfortable margins (mostly along partisan lines) in the Republican-led House and Senate, SB 101 was signed into law in late March. What followed were calls for boycotts of Indiana (Connecticut’s governor, for example, signed an executive order banning state-funded travel there), concerns raised by top business leaders, and a front-page editorial in The Indianapolis Star to “Fix This Now.”

The backlash over Indiana’s RFRA centered on its potential impact on gay and lesbian rights. Would a business, for example, be legally protected if it refused to provide services to a gay patron or same-sex couple?

In early April, a legislative “fix,” or “clarification,” was signed into law.

The language in SB 50 states that Indiana’s new RFRA does not “authorize a provider to refuse to offer or provide services, facilities, use of public accommodations, goods, employment, or housing to any member or members of the general public on the basis of … sexual orientation and gender identity.” (Several other personal characteristics, such as race and religion, are listed as well.)

Supporters of Indiana’s RFRA noted that 19 other states, as well as the federal government, already had religious freedom laws on the books. Indiana Gov. Mike Pence defended the legislation for “raising the judicial standard that would be used when government action intrudes upon the religious liberty of Hoosiers.”

Opponents, though, noted some important differences between Indiana’s RFRA and that of most other states — for example, making the “free exercise” of religion a defense not only in legal disputes between an individual and the government, but also in lawsuits between private citizens.

Some states, too, have laws that bar discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (including Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin in the Midwest). Indiana had no such statutory language, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

The ACLU, which tracks legislative activity on the issue across the country, says RFRA bills have been introduced this year in 15 states, including South Dakota (HB 1220) and Michigan (SB 4).

The South Dakota Legislature adjourned for the year without passing the bill, and in Michigan, Gov. Rick Snyder has said he would veto an RFRA bill unless the state also expands its civil rights law to bar discrimination against gays and lesbians.

Last year, the Kansas House passed HB 2453, but the measure never made it out of the Senate. That measure would have given individuals and religious entities the right to refuse to engage in activities or provide services that were contrary to their “sincerely held religious beliefs regarding sex or gender.”

Laws on religious freedom, LGBT rights garner national attention

Status of “religious freedom restoration acts,” or RFRA, in the Midwest

States’ antidiscrimination laws for LGBT populations

Bars discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing and public accommodations

Bars discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing and public accommodations; gender identity not protected

% of adults who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), 2012

- Indiana’s SB 50, signed into law this year, states that its new Religious Freedom Restoration Act does not “authorize a provider to refuse to offer or provide services, facilities, use of public accommodations, goods, employment, or housing to any member or members of the general public based on sexual orientation or gender identity.”
A pioneer in dual enrollment, Minnesota now considering plan to deepen investment in program that brings college to high school

by Katelyn Tye (ktye@csg.org)

In 1985, Minnesota became the first U.S. state to allow and provide funding for high school juniors and seniors to take college-level courses.

Thirty years later, the program has evolved and grown, and it may expand once again this year under a plan to improve affordability and accessibility to "concurrent enrollment": students taking college-level courses at their own high schools.

This opportunity to earn college credits without leaving a high school campus has clearly caught on: Since 2009, participation in concurrent enrollment has grown by 24 percent. But Minnesota Sen. Greg Clausen, a principal for 15 years in the Twin Cities area, says the state's current level of support for the program — $2 million in net aid per year — isn't enough to address student demand for these courses.

"It's an underfunded program right now," says Clausen, who has proposed an increase in state funding, to $9 million a year, under legislation introduced this year (SF 995).

"We allocated (up to) $150 per student registration, and right now, that does not cover the cost. So we have our secondary schools paying out of their own pocket."

Additional state dollars would be used to reimburse school districts, expand the number of courses offered by postsecondary institutions, and pay for teacher and staff development.

The bill would also make ninth- and 10th-graders eligible for concurrent enrollment, at the discretion of their districts.

 Principals, teachers, students, college instructors and representatives of Minnesota’s business sector have all voiced support for passing this year’s SF 995 and expanding concurrent enrollment.

They say it has not only added rigor to the high school curriculum, but also eased the financial burden of college-bound students and their families.

Clausen cites his own community as an example. Last year, students at five area high schools earned the equivalent of $2.5 million in college credits. Across the state, nearly 209,000 credits were earned and more than $35 million in college tuition saved.

Before introducing SF 995, Clausen visited 15 secondary schools in Minnesota and talked to teachers, students, school board members, principals and superintendents about the impact of concurrent enrollment. At each school visit, he also invited the area’s state legislators, a move that has helped gather strong bipartisan support for this year’s legislation.

Across the Midwest and country, states have concurrent- or dual-enrollment options for high school students, but the primary funding sources for these programs differ from state to state.

Throughout the year, a series of articles will appear in Stateline Midwest about policies and proposals that prepare soon-to-be high school graduates for college and careers. North Dakota Sen. Tim Flakoll, Midwestern Legislative Conference chair, has chosen this topic as his MLC chair’s initiative.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH


In the Midwest, 43 percent of all full- and part-time workers do not have paid sick leave — the highest percentage of any U.S. region.

In 2012, Connecticut became the first state to mandate paid sick leave. Under its law, which applies only to non-exempt workers in certain service occupations, employers with 50 or more employees must provide a minimum of one hour of paid sick leave per 40 hours worked (after an initial 680 hours of employment), with a maximum accrual of 40 hours per year.

California and Massachusetts are the other two states with laws requiring paid sick leave. Their laws take effect July 1 and require an initial 90-day employment period before accrued sick leave can be used.

California’s law applies to all employers: With some exceptions, any employee who works 30 or more days within a year of commencing employment is entitled to accrue paid sick leave at a minimum of one hour for every 30 hours worked. In Massachusetts, employers having 11 or more employees must allow workers to earn and use up to 40 hours of paid sick leave per year. The employees of small companies can earn and use up to 40 hours of unpaid sick leave annually.

All three of these state laws allow sick time to be used to care for a family member.

While no Midwestern state currently mandates that employers provide paid sick leave, bills have been introduced this year in at least five states: Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota (see table).

To date, more than a dozen cities (none in the Midwest) have adopted local sick-leave ordinances. In February, Chicago voters overwhelmingly approved a nonbinding referendum to require employers to provide employees with paid sick leave. Eleven states — including Indiana, Kansas and Wisconsin — have laws banning municipalities from passing paid-sick-leave ordinances.

Article written by Laura Kliwer (lkliwer@csg.org), CSG senior policy analyst. Question of the Month highlights an inquiry sent to the CSG Midwest Information Help Line. To request assistance, please contact us at csgrm@csg.org or 630.925.1922.
New options give states chance to expand use of community health workers

are also more prone to live in unsafe housing or dangerous neighborhoods, and less likely to have easy access to healthy food (or be able to afford it).

“Much of the policy focus around reducing health disparities has been geared toward improving access, coverage, quality and the intensity of health care,” according to a 2008 study led by researchers at Harvard University.

“However, health is more a function of lifestyles linked to living and working conditions rather than health care.”

Focusing on health, not health care

States are now experimenting with new ways to address these “upstream” causes of common illnesses.

In South Dakota, for example, Gov. Dennis Daugaard made it a goal to improve his state’s infant-mortality rate, which was among the highest in the Midwest.

A state task force researched the causes of infant mortality — lack of prenatal care, smoking during pregnancy and unsafe sleep practices in infancy — and developed ideas to address them.

South Dakota’s new strategies have included expanding access to prenatal care, community support systems for expectant and new mothers (including home visits), and a statewide awareness campaign (“For Baby’s Sake”) about safe sleep practices.

Through a partnership with a private donor, “safe sleep” kits are distributed to low-income practices.

In this year’s State of the State addresses, several governors in the Midwest mentioned the need for eliminating “silos” in government services.

Several governors in the Midwest mentioned the need for eliminating “silos” in government services. Nebraska and Indiana provide state-led training.

For community health workers, via a new federal rule on community health workers, states can submit a plan amendment with the federal rule allows nonlicensed providers to be reimbursed under Medicaid. For community health workers eligible for Medicaid payments

• home visiting,
• care coordination,
• health education,
• care coordination and health screenings. Here are strategies to bolster the role of these workers in state health systems.

✓ Provide Medicaid payments — A new federal rule allows nonlicensed providers to be reimbursed under Medicaid. For community health workers to become eligible, though, states must get federal approval. Minnesota was the first state in the Midwest to seek such a state plan amendment.

✓ Provide training, develop statewide certification standards — In 2014, Illinois lawmakers passed a bill that will eventually lead to formal certification and training standards for community health workers. Nebraska and Indiana provide state-led training.

✓ Expand the use of “health homes” — Health homes (generally a primary-care facility or doctor’s office) coordinate the care of a patient. That care coordination can include the use of community health workers.

Community health workers are connected to their communities. They are instrumental in being connectors between health professionals and people [who need care].”

Jill Rosenthal, senior program director, National Academy for State Health Policy

A nother strategy for states is to bring help directly to individuals in their communities. Community health workers can educate underserved and at-risk populations about how to stay healthy, and also connect individuals with medical care if they need it.

Because they are recruited from the communities they serve, these health workers often are able to provide culturally sensitive information and translation services.

“Are lay health providers that are connected to their communities,” Rosenthal says. “They are instrumental in being connectors between health professionals and people [who need care].”

“Community health worker” is a broad term. It encompasses a number of different types of workers, with duties and training that can vary widely.

Some can provide basic information about public programs (such as medical assistance, food stamps or child care) or make referrals to appropriate medical professionals.

Others coordinate transportation, schedule appointments and/or offer follow-up care. Some are volunteers; others are paid by local programs or nonprofit organizations.

But states also now have a chance to pay community health workers, via a new federal rule on Medicaid.

This new rule, adopted last year by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, allows Medicaid reimbursement for preventive services delivered by nonlicensed providers. These services include:

• health education,
• care coordination,
• home visiting,
• lactation consultation,
• diabetes prevention, and
• parenting education.

In order for these services to be eligible for reimbursement, they require a referral from a licensed Medicaid provider.

To take advantage of this new federal funding flexibility, states can submit a plan amendment with the federal government. Once the plan is approved, these services are eligible for the traditional federal Medicaid match.

Minnesota became the first Midwestern state to take advantage of this new federal funding
source. (Community health workers have participated in Minnesota’s public health programs since legislation was passed in 2007.) These workers must be certified by completing a curriculum approved by Minnesota’s university system and then be supervised by a health professional (for example, a physician, advanced-practice nurse or mental-health provider).

Ohio legislation dating back to 2003 created certification requirements for community health workers. Under state law, these workers must complete a state training program and pass a criminal background check. They cannot perform any services that require a professional license. And just as they do in Minnesota, community health workers in Ohio must be supervised by a health professional.

**State’s role in training, certification**

Illinois lawmakers passed a bill last year (HB 5412) that creates an advisory board to develop training and certification requirements for community health workers. The newly created board is currently working on a recommendation to the legislature regarding curricula and reimbursement options.

The 2014 Illinois law also gives these workers new legal recognition.

“[It] will help people in the community by creating a path for these workers to become respected members of the health care team,” Illinois Rep. Robyn Gabel, sponsor of the legislation, said when the bill was signed into law. “Their role is critical because they help implement the patient’s health care plan, and help patients better understand their conditions to achieve a path of good health.”

Two other Midwestern states have put in place programs that also offer training and certification, though they do not include reimbursement for community health workers through Medicaid.

Indiana’s program was established in 2013 by its Division of Mental Health and Addiction. Upon completion of a three-day training program, community health workers receive a certificate and can serve individuals in settings such as hospitals, schools, churches and community centers.

Nebraska’s Department of Health and Human Services, meanwhile, has developed a training and certification program that includes online and in-person education.

The federal Affordable Care Act also provides some new opportunities for states to strengthen community-based services, including incentives to place patients with chronic conditions in health care homes.

These health care homes are primary-care facilities or physicians’ offices that agree to take on coordinating all of a patient’s care.

They receive an additional payment from Medicaid or a private insurer — beyond the normal fees for individual services.

The extra payment allows a medical practice to offer chronic-disease management, health education and other wellness services. (These typically aren’t incentivized in a fee-for-service system.)

As part of their coordination of care, health care homes can partner with community health workers to address acute care or social-service needs.

### On measures of poverty, income, and health insurance, some positive signs in the 11-state Midwest

Every year, the U.S. Census Bureau releases data on three factors with links to health outcomes: poverty rates, access to health insurance, and levels of household income.

The Great Recession (which lasted 18 months, from December 2007 to June 2009) and its aftermath caused poverty rates to rise and income levels to fall in many Midwestern states. But the most recent federal statistics point to some more-promising trends.

- Poverty rates have at least stabilized or begun to fall in many Midwestern states. Still, across the region (with the lone exception of North Dakota), the percentage of people living in poverty in 2013 is higher than pre-recession levels.
- The Midwest has traditionally had lower rates of people without health insurance. In 2013, for every state in the region, the percentage of people without health coverage was below the U.S. rate of 14.5 percent. Uninsured rates, both nationally and regionally, are expected to fall significantly under the Affordable Care Act. During the first two months of 2015, for example, the national uninsured rate had dropped to 12.3 percent, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.

- One striking difference among the 11 states in the Midwest are trends in median household income. For most of the Plains states, income levels are considerably higher than they were prior to the national economic downturn. In contrast, as of 2013, income levels had not yet returned to pre-recession levels in three Great Lakes states: Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. But between 2012 and 2013, median household income levels rose in most Midwestern states and did not fall in any of them.

- With the exception of Illinois, income inequality is less pronounced in the Midwest than it is across the country. Between 2012 and 2013, income inequality rose nationally and in four Midwestern states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Nebraska, according to The Washington Post.

### Trends in poverty rates

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<th>2013</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
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</table>

### Trends in median household income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>% change from 2012</th>
<th>Change from 2007 (pre-recession)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>$55,759</td>
<td>+0.4%</td>
<td>$48,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$52,229</td>
<td>+1.4%</td>
<td>$60,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>$51,467</td>
<td>+0.4%</td>
<td>$57,529</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$50,972</td>
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<td>$58,672</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>+1.7%</td>
<td>$46,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>$56,702</td>
<td>+5.1%</td>
<td>$56,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>$55,759</td>
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<td>$54,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$48,273</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>$48,273</td>
<td>+0.8%</td>
<td>$47,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$51,467</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
<td>$52,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>$52,229</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
<td>$53,072</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### % of population without health insurance in 2013 (change from 2012)

- **Illinois:** 14.7% (lay 14.5%)
- **Indiana:** 15.9% (lay 15.6%)
- **Iowa:** 12.7% (lay 12.7%)
- **Kansas:** 14.0% (lay 14.0%)
- **Michigan:** 17.0% (lay 17.4%)
- **Minnesota:** 11.2% (lay 11.4%)
- **Nebraska:** 12.2% (lay 13.0%)
- **North Dakota:** 11.8% (lay 11.2%)
- **Ohio:** 16.0% (lay 16.3%)
- **South Dakota:** 14.2% (lay 13.4%)
- **Wisconsin:** 13.5% (lay 13.2%)
- **United States:** 15.8% (lay 15.9%)

### Income inequality in the Midwest in 2013, as measured by the Gini Index

- **Illinois:** 0.471
- **Indiana:** 0.470
- **Iowa:** 0.455
- **Kansas:** 0.440
- **Michigan:** 0.445
- **Minnesota:** 0.440
- **Nebraska:** 0.440
- **North Dakota:** 0.445
- **Ohio:** 0.445
- **South Dakota:** 0.445
- **Wisconsin:** 0.445
- **United States:** 0.481

* A score of 0 on the index means “complete income equality.” A score of 1 means “complete income inequality.” The U.S. Gini Index score was 0.481.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Nebraska Speaker Galen Hadley

Top leader in unique unicameral system puts emphasis on helping new members and forging legislative compromise

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

F or many years, some of the people closest to Galen Hadley had been a part of Nebraska’s unique legislative branch. His father-in-law, Kenneth Bowen, had once served as speaker of the unicameral, and his wife, Marilyn, had been a legislative page. But a life in politics didn’t necessarily appeal to Hadley himself, a professor and higher education administrator at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. “I really had considered myself apolitical,” he recalls.

Hadley, though, was also committed to helping and being involved in his community. So when a seat opened on the Kearney City Council, he decided to run. That turned into a stint as the town’s mayor, and when the state’s term-limits law opened up a seat in the Legislature, Hadley took the first steps toward following in his father-in-law’s political footsteps.

“I was retired and I had the time to do it,” Hadley recalls about his initial decision to run for the Legislature in 2008. “And I have really come to enjoy debating the issues and learning more about them.”

As the first certified public accountant to serve in the unicameral Legislature, Hadley soon found a comfortable policy fit on the Revenue Committee — first as a member and later as its chair — taking a lead role on many of the state’s recent changes in economic development and tax policy (including hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts).

Now, six years after being elected, and only two years before he will be term-limited out of office, Hadley is serving as the 33rd speaker in the Nebraska unicameral Legislature’s 78-year history. It has meant a big change in not only what he does inside the Capitol, but what he doesn’t do.

“Over the last two years, I carried 35 bills and got 26 of them signed into law,” he says. “This year I have about four. My job is not to push any particular policy issue.”

The speakership position in Nebraska leadership is unlike any other in U.S. state governments, and also one that fits well with Hadley’s personable style and an approach to politics that values compromise over partisanship.

“I have none of the powers that most of the speakers have in the 49 other state legislatures,” he notes. Nebraska’s nonpartisan unicameral Legislature has no party caucuses. Committee chairs are chosen not by leadership, but by a secret ballot of the full body.

The membership of those committees also falls outside of Hadley’s control, and every bill introduced by an individual senator must get a hearing in committee. Each senator, too, is able to assign one “priority bill” that gets heard by the full Legislature. (Each committee can assign two priority bills, and as speaker, Hadley can have up to 25.)

So what is the role of the speaker of the Nebraska Unicameral?

Hadley sets the session calendar, works with the governor and serves as the “public face” for the legislative branch. But above all else, especially as the end of session nears, he is prioritizing one particular duty as speaker: “Make sure we get things done.”

“Part of that is setting the schedule,” he says, “but it also means trying to find compromise, focusing on how to get people to work together.”

In his first year as speaker, the Nebraska Unicameral is considering some important issues with wide-ranging policy implications — for example, Medicaid expansion, a bill on nondiscrimination in the workplace, and a series of measures to reform the state’s criminal justice system. (On that latter issue, The Council of State Governments Justice Center helped lawmakers develop many of this year’s recommendations.)

When compromise on these and other legislative proposals is needed, Hadley will likely take a lead role in trying to find it. CSG Midwest recently interviewed Speaker Hadley about this year’s session and his role as Nebraska’s top legislative leader. Here are excerpts.

Q: You’ve talked about finding compromise as being an essential leadership role for the speaker. How do you try to forge compromise in the unicameral?

A: It’s very similar in some ways to being a dean or a vice chancellor [at the University of Nebraska-Kearney], where I couldn’t order faculty to do things. In the same way, I can’t order senators to do anything. So that leaves you with compromise as the way to get things done. You get people together, try to find the areas you agree on, and you work from there.”

Q: What is your view of the term-limits law in Nebraska, which restricts senators to two-year terms?

A: I think term limits are good, but ours are too short — especially with our unicameral model where members can’t switch from one house to the other. I think it would be better to have a maximum of 12 years.

Right now, you just aren’t able to learn everything you need to learn to be an effective legislator, and what happens is it gives much more power to the lobbyists and to the bureaucrats, the executive branch, because they’ve been around. They understand the system better than the senators do.

Q: What kind of impact does the strong belief in Nebraska’s nonpartisan unicameral system have on the legislative process?

A: A lot of times, people will come here with at least a little bit of a partisan [mindset], but it isn’t very long before most of them buy into the unicameral, nonpartisan model. And the reason is that it takes 25 out of 49 legislators to move a bill, and the coalition that you need to build to get to 25 may be different on every bill. I think it’s absolutely the greatest way to go. I understand why other legislatures aren’t going to change, but for us, this system just works really well, and we are well aware of how unique it is.

A different kind of speaker: A look at this leadership role in Nebraska’s unicameral system

✓ Chosen by secret-ballot vote of entire Legislature
✓ Does not lead a party caucus; Nebraska unicameral Legislature is nonpartisan
✓ Does not appoint committee chairs or members of committees
✓ Sets session calendar and daily agenda, but individual senators can assign one priority bill each to be heard by full Legislature; committees can assign two priority bills to be heard by full Legislature
✓ Able to assign 25 priority bills

Bio-sketch: Speaker Hadley

✓ first elected to Nebraska Legislature in 2008
✓ served as chair of Revenue Committee
✓ serving first year as speaker of Unicameral Legislature
✓ former mayor and member of Kearney City Council in Nebraska
✓ former professor, higher education administrator at University of Nebraska-Kearney
✓ member of U.S. Marine Corps reserve from 1960 to 1966
✓ a 2009 graduate of CSG Midwest’s Bouwhouse Institute for Legislative Leadership Development
To protect privacy, states must keep pace with technology

Wisconsin laws provide new safeguards for users of social media, cell phones

by Wisconsin Rep. Melissa Sargent (rep.sargent@legis.wi.gov)

I was running for election to the Wisconsin State Assembly in the fall of 2012 when I unknowingly knocked on the door of a woman who would give me the idea for my first bill.

She said she had been applying for jobs and had recently filled out several applications. On one application in particular, she said, she had been asked to provide her Facebook login information.

"Is that right?" she asked.

Without a doubt, I knew that it certainly didn't feel or sound right, but whether it was legal or not, I didn't know.

As it turned out, it was perfectly within the law for employers or landlords — even teachers — to ask for another person's social-media login information, and in the case of employees or tenants, forfeiture of their logins could be used as a condition of employment or housing.

This discovery made me uneasy. It seemed to me that if someone were to demand my Facebook password, I would feel extremely uncomfortable, even violated. What's more, I was equally unsettled by the fact that had I refused, someone could have denied me an employment opportunity or even basic housing.

Changes demand innovative laws

It was those feelings of unease and discomfort that made me want to push for change.

My social-media bill, which restricted employers, teachers and landlords from requiring access to personal Internet accounts or discriminating against anyone for refusing access to personal Internet information, was passed in 2013 (Wisconsin Act 208).

Act 208 challenged my perceptions about the laws we create, and it changed who I wanted to be as a legislator. Because of that bill, I work every day to find ways to make innovative laws that reflect our society and the ways that we are perceiving issues such as privacy.

As technology and the Internet grow and change, our laws must continue to adapt to and incorporate those changes and our shifting perspectives.

Such constant change demands that we be ever vigilant in ensuring that our laws are still relevant in protecting our people, and that they cover new, sophisticated technologies and modern uses.

While technological developments and progress yield endless advantages, not the least of which is our access to unlimited information, the other side to the coin is that it provides ample opportunity for some people to misuse or abuse the power of technology in ways that are detrimental to our people and our privacy.

Prior to 2014 in Wisconsin, for example, law enforcement officials were allowed to track the location of a person's cell phone without obtaining consent or a warrant. Law enforcement officers could have gone to my cell phone provider at any time without probable cause and asked for any or all of my recent locations.

The problem with using technology in this way, however, is that most citizens in Wisconsin were unfortunately unaware that anyone could be tracking their movements via their cell phones — and more important, were probably unaware that their phones even had that capability.

This is a prime example of technology outgrowing and outpacing our laws — they had no specific consideration for cell phones being tracked, nor did they even account for the majority of people who carry cell phones today.

Thus, I passed legislation to update Wisconsin's laws, which now require a warrant for tracking a person's cell phone and location (2013 Wisconsin Act 375). In continuing to advocate for laws that address modern technology, this session I introduced a bill to create an offense punishing the crime of upskirting (AB 8). Upskirting — as the word implies — is the act of using a camera or video recording device to take photos or videos up a person's skirt or, more broadly, the use of any device to record under the outer clothing of a person without their consent.

Similar legislation has been taking the country by storm since the high court in Massachusetts found a legislative loophole allowing upskirting offenders to go unpunished.

Wisconsin has a similar loophole in its statutes, and depending upon the type or presence of an undergarment that is worn when the photo is taken, the photo could be perfectly legal in the state. Multiple upskirting offenders have been caught in Wisconsin and charged only with disorderly conduct — far less of a punishment than the crime itself deserves.

States at forefront of protecting privacy

A decade ago, things like upskirting or cell phone tracking would not have been a concern, or even possible, really. The ways that technology is being used in our society are (or should be) changing the way we approach lawmakers and protecting the people in our state.

We are seeing and defining issues such as privacy through entirely different lenses than we did even a mere five years ago, and technology is requiring us to shift our perspectives.

Wisconsin, as well as other states, for example, is looking at how we preserve and manage digital assets for the deceased. Other states, such as California, are looking at how schools are using biometric information of their students and how they are storing that data. Many states have or are working toward introducing similar upskirting bills.

Measures like these are crucial, and we should continue to take proactive approaches to technology and privacy. Technology is being used in our society for great purposes, expanding learning opportunities and often making lives more convenient, but we must take care not to forget that our laws should reflect all of these changes.

Rep. Melissa Sargent, a Democrat from Madison, was first elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in 2012.
At MLC meeting, legislators learn from experts, collaborate with one another

Premier regional event offering discounted registration through May 5

For the 70th consecutive year, hundreds of legislators from across the Midwest will be gathering this summer for the only annual event designed exclusively for them. The family-friendly Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting will be held July 12-15 in North Dakota's capital city of Bismarck. A special discount on meeting registration is available for legislators who register by May 5. The final deadline to register for the conference and to reserve a hotel room is June 5.

Meeting registration can be completed at www.csgmidwest.org.

This regional conference has stood the test of time because of what it continues to deliver to the region's state legislators — the chance to advance state policy by working with legislative colleagues from the Midwest and learning from nationally renowned policy experts in a welcoming, nonpartisan environment.

This year's agenda includes a mix of professional development opportunities, policy sessions that focus on the Midwest and its states, and highly renowned speakers (see below). Scheduled sessions include:

- how states can employ advances in technology to better serve citizens and save taxpayer dollars;
- a look at the future of energy sources and public policy in the Midwest;
- policy strategies to help the state's youngest learners and to help better prepare high school students for college and careers;
- a look at the role of states in preventing and preparing for emergencies in public health; and
- a review of trends in state budgets and fiscal policy.

On the first day of the conference, the MLC's five policy committees — Agriculture & Natural Resources, Economic Development, Education, Energy, and Midwest-Canada Relations — will hold a series of policy sessions open to all meeting attendees.

This year's featured speakers at the MLC Annual Meeting

LOOK TO THE STARS
Astronaut Buzz Aldrin, second person to walk on the moon

BIG IDEAS FOR A NEW AMERICA
Anne-Marie Slaughter, president and CEO of the New America Foundation

TRENDS THAT WILL CHANGE GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND OUR LIVES
John Zogby, best-selling author and pollster

FIVE DAYS IN NOVEMBER
Clint Hill, a tale of tragedy, heroism and courage the day JFK was assassinated

Checklist for MLC meeting registrants

✓ The meeting will be held July 12-15 in Bismarck, N.D.

✓ A discounted registration rate for government attendees is available through May 5; the regular registration deadline is June 5

✓ The family-friendly event will have special events and activities for guests of all ages on all four days of the conference; separate registration forms for the spouses, adult guests and children of attendees must be completed.

✓ Registration forms are available at www.csgmidwest.org.

✓ Hotel reservations must be made separately; a discounted rate at the Radisson Hotel Bismarck is available for meeting attendees.

On all four days, special events will be held for attendees and their spouses, adult guests and children — a trip to a local science center for kids, for example, and a trip on a riverboat cruise for adult guests. The Opening Night Reception will be held at the North Dakota Heritage Center, and State Museum, and Family Night will be held at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park.

A full preliminary agenda of the meeting is available at www.csgmidwest.org.

Great Lakes Caucus will meet this fall in Buffalo

Legislators from across the Great Lakes basin are invited to attend a meeting this fall that will explore policies that help restore and protect the largest surface freshwater system in the world.

The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus meeting will be held Sept. 25-26 in Buffalo, N.Y. Staff support for the caucus is provided by CSG Midwest; grant support for its work comes from the Joyce Foundation.

Meeting registration will open in May. For more information, including the availability of travel scholarships, please contact Lisa Janairo at gllc@csg.org or visit the caucus web page at www.csgmidwest.org.

In advance of the meeting, legislators who are not yet caucus members are encouraged to enroll. There is no cost to being a member — only benefits. A one-page membership form can be found on the caucus web page.

Membership is open to any legislator from the eight Great Lakes states or two Canadian provinces. There currently are about 150 caucus members.

This bipartisan group is led by two officers — Wisconsin Rep. Cory Mason, chair; and Michigan Sen. Darwin Booher, vice chair — along with an 11-person Executive Committee (at least one legislator from each of the region’s 10 jurisdictions).

In addition to its annual meeting, the caucus is holding in-state workshops for legislators on Great Lakes policy in state capitals and is continuing to host its Great Lakes, Great Webinars series.

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 Midwest 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.
Proposed reforms to criminal justice system advance in Nebraska Legislature

CSG Justice Center helped develop strategies to cut costs, improve public safety

A

s of late March, a Nebraska bill designed to improve the state's criminal justice system had advanced out of committee and been sent to the full Legislature for consideration.

LB 605 was developed by all three branches of government with assistance from The Council of State Governments Justice Center. Its various provisions aim to address prison overcrowding, spend state dollars on criminal justice more wisely, and invest in evidence-based strategies that protect public safety.

In 2014, with expert guidance from the CSG Justice Center, a 19-member working group spent months analyzing Nebraska's criminal justice system. That working group included three current Nebraska senators: Sens. Bob Krist, Heath Mello and Les Seiler. The governor, chief State Supreme Court justice and unicameral legislature speaker served as the group's co-chairs.

The result of its work was 15 different policy recommendations that, if enacted, would cut the prison population by 10 percent and avert $306 million in corrections spending over the next five years.

That savings could then be reinvested into evidence-based strategies. Under this policy framework, for example, more individuals would be supervised after completing prison sentences, the needs of crime victims would be addressed through expanded restitution collection, and crime-reduction strategies would be implemented to tackle the current "revolving door" to state prisons.

Nebraska prisons currently house more than one-and-a-half times as many men and women as they were designed to hold. It would cost the state an estimated $261.6 million to add enough space to bring the system down to 128 percent of its design capacity by fiscal year 2019, according to the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services.

To date, the CSG Justice Center has employed its data-driven approach to justice reinvestment in six Midwestern states: Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin. It also is working with state officials in Kansas and Nebraska to improve their juvenile justice systems.

Bipartisan committee set to select new BILLD fellows

Legislators who served on Nebraska Justice Reinvestment Working Group


Legislative leaders of BILLD Steering Committee


Minnesotta Rep. Roger Reinert, co-vice chair  Nebraska Sen. Kate Sullivan, co-vice chair

be available at www.csgmidwest.org. This marks the 21st year of the BILLD program.

CSG also has a national leadership training program, Toll Fellows, which is open to legislators as well as leaders in state executive and judicial branches.

UPCOMING MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS EVENTS

70TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
July 12-15, 2015
Bismarck, North Dakota
Contact: Gail Meyer (gmyer@csg.org) 630.925.1922
www.csgmidwest.org

21ST ANNUAL BOWHAY INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (BILLD)
August 21-25, 2015
Madison, Wisconsin
Application deadline: April 8
Contact: Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org) 630.925.1922
www.csgmidwest.org

HENRY TOLL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM
August 28-September 2, 2015
Lexington, Kentucky
Application deadline: April 15
Contact: Kelley Arnold (karnold@csg.org) 800.800.1910
www.csg.org/LeadershipCenter/TollFellows.aspx

GREAT LAKES LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS MEETING
September 25-26, 2015
Buffalo, New York
Contact: Lisa Janaio (janaio@csg.org) 920.458.5910
www.greatlakeslegislators.org

CSG NATIONAL CONFERENCE
December 10-13, 2015
Nashville, Tennessee
Contact: Kelley Arnold (karnold@csg.org) 800.800.1910
www.csg.org

71ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
July 17-20, 2016
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Contact: Kelley Arnold (karnold@csg.org) 800.800.1910
www.csg.org

A full list of 2015 BILLD fellows will appear in the May edition of Stateline Midwest and will soon be available at www.csgmidwest.org. This marks the 21st year of the BILLD program.

CSG also has a national leadership training program, Toll Fellows, which is open to legislators as well as leaders in state executive and judicial branches.
South Dakota adopts major reforms of juvenile justice system

Two years after passing milestone legislation to reform the state’s criminal justice system for adults, lawmakers in South Dakota have changed the state’s approach to managing and treating juvenile offenders.

SB 73 was signed into law in March. Its goals are to cut costs, invest more in proven intervention programs and reduce recidivism among young people.

Under the bill, new financial incentives will be created for counties to keep juveniles out of the court system by having them instead participate in and complete diversion programs. The legislation also expands access to community-based programs that address substance abuse or behavioral and family issues. The state’s residential facilities, Gov. Dennis Daugaard says, will now be reserved for serious offenders. By 2020, he expects a 50 percent reduction in the number of youths being placed in these facilities.

Several other states also continue to pursue juvenile-justice reform initiatives — some expanded legislative priorities and a 29 percent decline in the number of youths being placed in these facilities.

In March, the Kansas Senate passed a bill (SB 2351) to open up birth records for adult adoptees. According to the National Agricultural Law Center, 14 states have changed their laws to provide open access for adult adoptees. But then other periods.

Under the new Ohio law (SB 23, signed in December 2013), birth parents were first given a year to request that their names be removed from adoption and birth records. Illinois legislators passed a similar law (HB 5428) in 2010. According to the American Adoption Congress, Kansas is also an “open access” state.

In March, the Indiana Senate passed a bill (SB 352) to open up birth records for adult adoptees.

North Dakota adds exemptions to ban on corporate farming

A bill approved this year by the North Dakota legislature will provide new exemptions to the state’s decades-old ban on corporate farming, but it might also face a future challenge at the ballot box.

SB 2351 was signed into law in March. According to The Bismarck Tribune, the measure exempts pork and dairy operations. Up to 640 acres of land, per facility, can now be leased or owned by a domestic corporation or a limited liability company. State restrictions had to be eased, SB 2351 supporters say, in order to boost investment in North Dakota’s livestock industry and revive this economic sector.

Today, another shift is occurring. In March, Ohio opened up the birth records of about 400,000 adoptees born between 1964 and 1996. Records had already been opened for those born in other periods.

But North Dakota Farmers Union president Mark Watne says the statutory change goes a long way to reversing the state’s decades-old ban on corporate farming, but it might also face a future challenge at the ballot box.

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Ohio law aims to keep nutrient runoff from reaching Lake Erie

Less than a year after a harmful algal bloom temporarily cut off the city of Toledo’s drinking water supply, Ohio lawmakers have passed groundbreaking legislation to keep pollutants out of Lake Erie.

SB 1, signed into law in early April, establishes several new provisions to prevent nutrient runoff.

For farms located in the western Lake Erie watershed, manure and fertilizers containing phosphorus and nitrogen cannot be spread on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground. According to the Toledo Blade, that ban also applies to days when heavy rain is forecast. The penalty for noncompliance is as much as $10,000.

The new law also bans the open-lake disposal of dredged material, requires additional phosphorus monitoring at wastewater treatment facilities, and creates the state-level position of harmful algae management and response coordinator.

A coalition of Great Lakes advocacy groups hailed SB 1 as a “good step,” but also urged policymakers to do more. It wants Lake Erie states and provinces to develop new monitoring plans and a timetable to cut the flow of phosphorus pollution into the lake by 40 percent.