We are all familiar with the challenges that can arise when emergencies strike. Whether it’s a disease outbreak or a natural disaster, we feel the consequences of not being prepared. But public health leaders know that being ready for anything is out of the ordinary.

But public health experts say that during an emergency, the response should feel as familiar and routine as possible. That’s because in order to successfully handle a disaster, the preparation and practice should happen before trouble is on the horizon.

Take the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus, a deadly disease that is ravaging western Africa. As of early November, there were more than 13,000 cases of the illness there, with a mortality rate of about 70 percent.

With nine Ebola patients having been treated here in the United States, health officials at the state and federal levels are bracing to handle additional cases.

But Ebola is just the current threat to public health in America. Recent outbreaks of infectious diseases such as measles and whooping cough, and natural disasters such as tornadoes and blizzards, have long tested preparedness measures in our region and beyond. And the threat of man-made disasters, including bioterrorism, is on the minds of many emergency experts too.

Preparing for a variety of risks

How do our states prepare for public health emergencies, and how can policymakers support systems designed to prevent and address these events? The federal government has a role in handling large-scale emergencies that affect multiple states or that involve national security. But states are generally responsible for the health and well-being of their own citizens, because these powers are not specifically assigned to the federal government in the U.S. Constitution.

States public health departments, however, receive the bulk of their preparedness funding from the federal government, through grants offered by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response. Last year, the agency’s grants to 50 states, four major cities (including Chicago) and eight territories totaled $585 million. In fiscal year 2013, states in the Midwest received more than $100 million in grants.

States can spend these funds on planning, training and other activities in order to be prepared in 15 specific areas in which the CDC tracks progress. Each year, the center releases a report assessing how well states are improving their capabilities in everything from public information and warning systems to laboratory testing and epidemiological investigation.

The CDC’s goal is to provide guidance and support to states using an “all hazards” approach. In other words, states are encouraged to use the funding not just to react to the latest public health threat, but instead develop systems that could be used to address anything from a pandemic to an earthquake.

“That is the advantage to this funding stream,” says Steve Boedigheimer, deputy director of the CDC’s Division of State and Local Readiness. “If it were earmarked for the disease of the month, you’re only prepared to address that disease. When it comes to preparing for an emergency that could put people in harm’s way, preparing for a variety of risks that could emerge in our communities is a good investment.”

Being strategic about investing this funding has become even more crucial in recent years because the CDC’s public health preparedness grant program has seen a dramatic decline (a 40 percent drop) since its inception in 2001, when $1 billion in federal funds was distributed to states.

This decrease in federal support, coupled with states’ own fiscal challenges, has put a strain on public health departments. In part because of funding gaps, more than 45,000 jobs have been lost in state and local health departments since 2008, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
World’s first commercial-scale carbon-capture coal plant opens

In early October, a facility in the province of Saskatchewan became the first commercial-scale coal-fired plant with carbon capture and storage capability in the world.

The Boundary Dam Power Station is run by SaskPower, a crown corporation — meaning it is owned by the provincial government but operates like a private company. The plant uses clean coal technology to prevent most of its carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide emissions from being released into the atmosphere.

It will provide power to about 100,000 homes and businesses. Some of the carbon that is captured will be stored underground, and some will be used for enhanced oil recovery to help extract oil that is difficult to reach.

Boundary Dam cost more than $1.2 billion (a mix of provincial and federal funding was used); in the future, the facility expects to offset higher costs by selling the captured carbon for enhanced oil recovery.

At the facility’s opening, Bill Boyd, Saskatchewan’s minister of the economy, said, “This project is important because it is applicable to about 95 percent of the world’s coal plants.”

Like many states in the Midwest, Saskatchewan has an abundance of coal, enough to last an estimated 300 years. In 2014, coal was used for 39 percent of the electricity generated in the U.S. and continues to be the largest fuel source for electricity, followed by natural gas (27 percent), nuclear (19 percent) and renewables (19 percent).

In the Midwest, coal is the primary source for electricity generation in most states (see table), with the lone exceptions being Illinois (nuclear energy) and South Dakota (hydropower).

In the four Canadian provinces affiliated with the Midwestern Legislative Conference, coal is the major source for electricity in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Manitoba relies on hydropower almost exclusively, and Ontario uses nuclear power for more than 60 percent of its electricity. Ontario, in fact, no longer generates electricity from coal, meeting a commitment from the provincial government to close all coal-burning plants by 2014. (Provincial data in the table are for 2013.)

While commercial-scale carbon capture and storage (CCS) has not come to the United States yet, there are a number of projects in the planning and construction phases.

These projects are likely to be needed, even as the U.S. increases energy efficiency and the use of renewables. The federal government projects that although coal use will drop over the next 15 years, it will still be used to produce a third of the electricity generated in 2030.

Developing and commercializing CCS facilities is expensive, and while many would like to see the U.S. move away from fossil fuels, it will be a slow process. Federal emissions regulations may encourage the development of CCS facilities, but so far, many have required federal assistance.

According to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, large-scale power plants with CCS capability are under construction in Mississippi and Texas, with several others, including FutureGen in Illinois, in the construction or planning stages. FutureGen, developed by a number of coal companies and industry suppliers, plans to capture and store 1.1 million metric tons of carbon per year.

The project will retrofit an existing coal plant and sequester the carbon in four underground wells. The facility is expected to cost $1.65 billion, with $1 billion coming from the U.S. Department of Energy. In September, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency authorized permits for the facility to store carbon underground.

Brief written by Rene Grossman, staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Midwest-Canada Relations Committee. She can be reached at rgrossman@csg.org. The committee’s co-chairs are Kansas House-Speaker Ray Merrick and Saskatchewan MLA Wayne Elhard.

### Great Lakes

**States, provinces collaborate to address invasive-species threat**

In September, more than 60 people from across the Great Lakes basin came to western Lake Erie for three days of fishing. But it was far from a pleasure trip. Instead, these employees from 10 different government agencies (state, federal and provincial) were testing the region’s capabilities to respond to future crises involving invasive species.

Ever since Asian carp were found to be dangerous close to entering the lakes, the region’s states and provinces have been on high alert. And part of their response has been to work more closely together — for example, sharing personnel, expertise and supplies such as Rotenone, the chemical used to stop the carp’s advance.

Earlier this year, at a meeting of the Council of Great Lakes Governors, the region’s governors and premiers signed a mutual-aid agreement that formalizes the process for how jurisdictions assist each other when an invasive-species threat arises.

The September exercise in western Lake Erie focused on the logistics for implementing an inter-jurisdictional response through this aid agreement. What would be the basinwide response, for example, if bighead and silver carp were detected in this part of the basin?

The Michigan and Ohio departments of natural resources directed the exercise, which had crews using electrofishing and netting in the search for grass carp, bighead carp and silver carp.

Earlier this year, Illinois and Indiana officials led inter-jurisdictional crews on a search for Eurasian ruffe — an invasive fish first discovered in Lake Superior in 1986. This exercise was the first of its kind in which provisions of the new mutual-aid agreement were used.

Pete Johnson, deputy director of the Council of Great Lakes Governors, says that while the new agreement was based in part on existing interstate emergency-management pact, there was no model for a pact that addresses aquatic invasive species. The new agreement focuses specifically on these species, while also addressing issues ranging from communication protocols and the sharing of scientific information, to liability and reimbursement.

By establishing these procedures ahead of time, he says, states and provinces can then focus squarely on an invasive-species problem when it occurs. And as the recent exercises in lakens Erie and Michigan illustrate, the agreement is not just designed to respond to a crisis. It will also help states and provinces work proactively to keep invasive species from entering the basin.

“Look at what we know and have seen with invasives like zebra mussels, quagga mussels and sea lamprey, they travel,” Johnson says. “What affects one part of the lakes could affect all parts of the lakes.”

A basinwide threat such as invasive species, he says, warrants a basinwide response.
Agriculture & Natural Resources

To keep state fairs thriving, organizers tap multiple revenue sources — including tax dollars

In Kansas, some visitors come to the State Fair for the carnivale rides, others for the food, music and entertainment. But organizers and legislators alike also don’t lose sight of one of the fair’s more important missions — as a source of boundless agricultural education for the young and old alike.

The annual event is promoted as the “state’s largest classroom,” and as Kansas Sen. Larry Powell notes, legislators themselves are among those getting lessons as part of an event that has them team up with a 4-H member who teaches them the finer points of cattle showmanship. A contest is then held, “much to the delight of the crowd,” Powell says. Illinois has a similar event with legislators driving harness horses in a race.

Beyond the fun and education, state fairs can also help boost the economies of host cities and surrounding regions. Some studies, for example, have put the impact at over $100 million a year.

But state fairs also cost money to operate and maintain, and in recent years, states in the Midwest have had to grapple with this question: Should tax dollars be used to help keep the fairs going?

“The key to long-term viability is maintaining the infrastructure to put on a top-notch event,” says Jim Tucker, president of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions.

If this is true, Nebraska is leading the way. In 2008, the Legislature agreed to move the fairgrounds from Lincoln to the city of Grand Island. The new fairgrounds required a $50 million investment — $21.5 million from the University of Nebraska, $7 million from Grand Island and $5 million from the state. Another $6 million was invested this year by the university, Nebraska State Parks and commodity groups to build a permanent home for the fair and other exhibits.

And under a constitutional amendment approved by Nebraskans in 2004, 10 percent of the state’s lottery proceeds go to the fair’s operational or capital funds.

“This amounts to about $4 million, and Grand Island, the host city, has to match it,” explains Joe McDermott, the fair’s executive director. Lastly, individuals can donate to the fair on their income tax forms.

Nebraska is not alone in using multiple sources of revenue to help its state fair thrive. In Indiana, for example, the state devotes a portion of its riverboat admissions tax to the fair (up to $6.2 million annually), and the General Assembly makes a general-fund appropriation of about $600,000. Another popular funding mechanism has been the use of nonprofit foundations.

Since 1993, the Iowa Blue Ribbon Foundation has raised more than $100 million to renovate and preserve the state’s historic fairgrounds and buildings. That money has come from a mix of individual contributions, grants and state appropriations.

The Wisconsin State Fair also operates a nonprofit foundation and gets $1.5 million annually from the Legislature for capital improvements. In South Dakota, the state budget provides $268,000 for operating expenses, and a separate foundation is working to raise $4 million to replace a building at the fairgrounds.

The Kansas State Fair, one of the oldest in the nation, gets approximately $300,000 annually from the state to match investments made by the fair itself.

The Illinois State Fair is one of the few fairs that operate as a part of a department of agriculture; as a result, it receives funds for operations and capital improvements as part of the department’s budget. (Illinois also runs a second event, the DuQuoin State Fair.)

In contrast to other states, Minnesota Rep. Rick Hansen says, taxes are not used to fund the fair in his state. Held in the Twin Cities area, it attracts nearly 2 million people every year (largest attendance in the region).

The lowest-attended state fair is in Michigan (see map). In fact, it ceased to exist for a time when Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed legislation in 2009 to fund it. Subsequent legislation (SB 515 and HB 4803) transferred the fairgrounds to the Michigan Land Bank, which is overseeing its transfer to the private sector. In 2013, the fair returned as a much smaller and shorter, privately run event.

Education

Minnesota making strides in closing achievement gap

C ompare the overall test scores or graduation rates of students in the Midwest to the rest of the nation’s, and most states in this region fare quite well — sometimes even at or near the top of U.S. rankings.

That certainly is the case for Minnesota, a high-performing state on traditional measures of student achievement.

But as Greg Keith, director of school support for the Minnesota Department of Education, notes, that level of achievement is far from uniform among different groups of students.

“We could look at our overall scores and say, ‘We’re in the top five [in the nation], so we’re doing it right,’” he says. “It takes a whole change in our mindset to understand we have to do better for our different groups of students.

Closing the achievement gap — between white and minority students or low-income and higher-income students, for example — is a top priority right now of Minnesota legislators and school administrators alike.

At the start of the 2013 legislative session, Rep. Paul Marquart called that gap “the No. 1 threat to our future economic success and vitality.”

Part of the state’s strategy has been to invest more in early-childhood education and to provide new incentives for schools to implement “achievement and integration plans” that focus on closing achievement gaps. Also, under its No Child Left Behind Act waiver with the federal government, Minnesota has set a goal of cutting its achievement gap in half by 2017.

To meet this objective, the state has established Regional Centers of Excellence to work with schools where overall student achievement is low or where achievement gaps are especially high. State-trained staff from these centers work with each school in developing leadership teams (administrators, teachers and others) and school improvement plans (focused mostly on enhancing instructional practices). Once these teams and plans are in place, a regional center and the school itself use data to track whether student achievement is improving.

“What’s successful in one school might not be successful in another school,” Keith says, noting the importance of customizing plans.

Thus far, the Regional Centers of Excellence appear to be making a difference.

According to data released by the state in October, gaps have closed in most of the schools where the Regional Centers have worked. Overall student achievement has improved in most of these schools as well.
**In most Midwestern states, GOP expands legislative majorities**

With the notable exceptions of Illinois and Minnesota, this November’s elections did little to change the partisan balance of power in Midwestern states. When legislatures meet next year, the Republican Party will continue to have control of them and the governors’ offices in Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Democrats, meanwhile, lost single-party control in the only two states where they had it. The GOP now holds a majority of seats in the Minnesota House, and Illinois Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn lost his re-election bid.

Ever since the turning-point election of 2010 — when Democrats lost nearly 200 seats in the Midwest’s 20 partisan legislative chambers — Republicans have had firm control of power in most of the region’s states. In fact, in the year ahead, the GOP will hold more legislative seats in the Midwest than it did even after the “wave” elections of 1994 and 2010 (see line graph). Regardless of party, a large majority of legislative incumbents won their races for re-election. However, legislative turnover will still be quite high, in part because of term-limits laws in states such as Michigan, Nebraska and South Dakota (see table). Below is the expected partisan breakdown for each Midwestern state and legislative chamber in 2015. (Exact numbers are based on unofficial election results and subject to change.)

- **Illinois** — House, 71-47, and Senate, 39-20, Democratic majorities in both chambers;
- **Indiana** — House, 71-28, and Senate, 40-10, Republican majorities in both chambers;
- **Iowa** — House, 57-43, Republican majority; and Senate, 26-24, Democratic majority;
- **Kansas** — House, 98-27, and Senate, 32-8, Republican majorities in both chambers;
- **Michigan** — House, 64-46, and Senate, 27-11, Republican majorities in both chambers;
- **Minnesota** — House, 72-62, Republican majority; and Senate, 39-28, Democratic majority;
- **North Dakota** — House, 71-23, and Senate, 32-15, Republican majorities in both chambers;
- **Ohio** — House, 65-34, and Senate, 23-10, Republican majorities in both chambers;
- **South Dakota** — House, 58-12, and Senate, 27-8, Republican majorities in both chambers; and
- **Wisconsin** — House, 63-36, and Senate, 19-14, Republican majorities in both chambers.

**Estimated partisan seat gains in state legislatures due to 2014 elections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Estimated % of new members in 2015*</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
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<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>Kansas</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>36%</td>
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**Turnover in Midwest’s legislatures**

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**In most Midwestern states, GOP expands legislative majorities**

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**Estimated partisan seat gains in state legislatures due to 2014 elections**

1. **Democratic control of legislature, Republican governor**
2. **Split partisan control of legislature, Democratic governor**
3. **Split partisan control of legislature, Republican governor**
4. **Republican control of legislature, Republican governor**
5. **Nonpartisan legislature, Republican governor**

* Figures based on unofficial election results and are subject to change.

**Number of seats held by two major parties in Midwest’s 20 partisan legislative chambers (1993-2015)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Seats held by Republicans</th>
<th>Seats held by Democrats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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**Partisan control in Midwest’s states entering 2015 legislative sessions**

1. **Democratic control of legislature, Republican governor**
2. **Split partisan control of legislature, Democratic governor**
3. **Split partisan control of legislature, Republican governor**
4. **Republican control of legislature, Republican governor**
5. **Nonpartisan legislature, Republican governor**

* Partisan control only shifted in two states as the result of the 2014 elections: Minnesota (due to Republican takeover of House) and Illinois (due to defeat of incumbent Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn).

**Laws on direct democracy in Midwest**

- **Proposed constitutional amendments, statutes can be initiated by citizens and appear on the ballot without legislative approval**
- **Citizen-initiated proposal can only amend legislative article of Illinois Constitution**
- **Legislative approval required for measures to appear on ballot**

Source: Ballotpedia and CSG "The Book of the States"
Across the Midwest, legislators rely on the work of nonpartisan staff, but the structure and oversight of these agencies vary
by Ilene Grossman (igrossman@csg.org)

More than 100 years ago, the state of Wisconsin started what has since become an indispensable part of the daily work of state legislatures — the nonpartisan legislative service agency.

From bill drafting to a host of research services, agency staff help make the legislative process work in capitols across the country, as political scientist Gary Moncrief noted this summer in a presentation to the Midwest's state legislators.

Since the 1970s, he said, state legislatures have been professionalized and their role in public policy enhanced thanks to a series of reforms, among them a rise in legislative staff. For example, between 1979 and 2009, the median number of legislative staff per member of the legislature has risen from 2.7 to 3.9. (That also includes partisan staff and staff for individual legislators.)

"These reforms were largely effective in making legislatures co-equal branches of government," Moncrief told the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

But while all states rely heavily on nonpartisan staff, the structure and duties of these agencies can vary.

In Indiana, Iowa and North Dakota, a full menu of services is offered by a single, centralized office. In contrast, the other eight Midwestern states employ multiple nonpartisan agencies. Illinois, for example, has 10 separate and specialized offices serving the legislature — from an Office of the Architect and a Legislative Service Bureau for bill drafting, to a Forecasting and Accountability Commission and a Legislative Research Unit.

Regardless of the structure, though, these agencies are typically given a host of responsibilities: staffing committees, maintaining legislative websites, providing fiscal analysis on bills and advice on legislative procedure, conducting program audits and performance evaluations, maintaining legislative websites, and monitoring how state agencies implement bills passed by the legislature.

Given all of these responsibilities, how are these agencies overseen by the legislature?

In the Midwest, oversight responsibilities are generally handled by a joint committee of legislators, often top legislative leadership, whose duties include hiring agency directors. Legislative service agency staff may then be required to report to the oversight body, or to its chair. In some states, the oversight committee requires the service agency to issue an annual written report; in others, the process is more informal.

Nearly all of these nonpartisan service agencies provide services to both legislative chambers, but there are exceptions. The Minnesota House and Senate, for example, have their own nonpartisan support agencies that report to legislators in their respective chambers. In Michigan, the House and Senate have separate fiscal agencies.

In states that have multiple legislative service agencies, legislatures have not established a formal mechanism for communication among agencies. However, most directors and staff keep each other informed when working together to staff committees or draft bills, and in some states, the directors meet on a regular basis.

The vetoes in Illinois left standing an ordinance set by the Chicago City Council. Under that ordinance, ride-sharing companies are considered "transportation network providers" and must pay an annual registration fee of $25,000. The vehicles used for the ride-sharing services are subject to annual inspections, and drivers must hold commercial liability insurance.

In Detroit, officials initially banned ride-sharing but eventually signed a two-year agreement with Lyft Inc. Under the agreement, drivers must undergo background checks and have commercial auto insurance. Several other Midwestern cities, including Columbus, Detroit and Minneapolis, have also taken action to allow ride-sharing companies to continue operating. Earlier this year, Seattle became the first city to restrict the number of vehicles that a ride-sharing company can operate (150).

The structure, oversight of nonpartisan legislative service agencies in Midwest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Centralized agency overseen by joint legislative committee</td>
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<td>Multiple agencies overseen by joint legislative committee (House and Senate have separate fiscal agencies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Multiple agencies overseen by joint legislative committee (House and Senate also have separate support agencies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>Multiple agencies overseen by joint legislative committee</td>
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Previous articles from CSG Midwest’s Capital Closeup series are available at www.csgmidwest.org. This article is based on a survey of legislative service agencies in the Midwest.
Bracing for potential for Ebola cases puts state public-health systems to the test

When funding erodes, it can be tempting to cut back on investments in preparedness. But experts in this area warn that recent history proves this strategy can backfire.

“Public health preparedness needs to be seen as part and parcel of everyday operations in state and local government. It really is part of not only the public health foundation, but also the larger public-safety and emergency-response arms,” says Paul Kuehnert, a former county health director and deputy state health director now with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

One of the ways states can improve their preparedness is to make sure everyone who could be involved in response efforts — from local health directors to senior government officials — gets to know one another by taking part in drills, training and exercises together.

“People need to have these relationships in place before a disaster or major outbreak strikes,” he says. “Those don’t get built in the middle of an emergency.”

Boedigheimer agrees: “An emergency-operations center is not the place to be exchanging business cards.”

Good communication is something that the Minnesota Department of Health’s infectious-disease team practices each day in its morning meeting, says division director Kristen Ehresmann. And she works to stay connected with her counterparts in emergency preparedness, environmental health and elsewhere.

She says that connection is possible in part because Minnesota has invested well in its public health infrastructure. She remembers reading after 9/11 about the importance of infrastructure, which she admits isn’t very “exciting.” But she tells policymakers again and again that without it, the state can’t successfully respond in an emergency; it takes too long to figure out, for example, how and where to find enough medical professionals to treat an influx of patients.

“If you have not invested in public health in your state, and then there is a crisis, there is no way you can just say, ‘We’ll put money into it now’ and be able to respond,” Ehresmann says.

Minnesota’s public health infrastructure has already been tested this year. In April, a suspected case of Ebola turned out to be Lassa Fever, which is also a viral hemorrhagic illness. Word of the infection came in on the department’s 24-hour provider hot line; state officials then worked with the hospital to prevent the illness from spreading and to get a specimen to the laboratory for testing. The system worked well, Ehresmann says, and it was a good test run for any potential Ebola cases.

Last month, Minnesota health officials tested at least five patients for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, or MERS, a severe viral illness with a 30 percent mortality rate. The state had put out an alert to health providers around the state to be aware of the symptoms and to ask about international travel.

All infectious diseases are logged in the state’s real-time disease surveillance system, which allows state officials to track trends in illness or suspected cases. The system is tracking everything from measles to foodborne illness. And despite the widespread fear about Ebola, Ehresmann says, it doesn’t change Minnesota’s public health strategy.

“The risk to public health really comes with complacency about supporting the system,” she says. “If we have a strong system, we can feel confident we’ll be able to respond to anything.”

‘All disasters are local’

While Minnesota has had success in turning attention to public health by investing in surveillance and response, other states are now working to strengthen their systems.

In Indiana, public-health officials have been working closely with local officials to prepare them for emergencies.

“In a sense, all disasters are local,” says Lee Christenson, director of public health preparedness and response for the Indiana Department of Public Health. “We think the best approach to defense is to get those folks prepared as best we can.”

The department has built 10 health care coalitions throughout the state — teams made up of hospitals, rural health clinics, local health departments, emergency managers and even philanthropic organizations such as the Red Cross.

“It is very important for them to get used to working together,” Christenson says, “because in an emergency they’ll have to do that quickly.”

Indiana’s approach to emergency management focuses largely on using existing resources and private partners, in part because the state has not tradition-
States set Ebola monitoring policies

Many state public-health systems are being put to the test as they prepare for one of the biggest public-health threats in recent history: Ebola. As of early November, there had been four cases confirmed in the United States and five patients treated here after being diagnosed with the virus while working in Africa. Two patients were treated at the Nebraska Medical Center. With travelers coming into the United States each day from the center of the outbreak, officials in this region are setting policies to monitor those who arrive in their states. Flights from western Africa arrive at one of five U.S. airports (including Chicago’s O’Hare), at which point they are screened for symptoms. If they are free of any signs of the virus, they are asked to provide information about where they’re going next. States then receive information about travelers entering their jurisdictions, and public health officials set policies to closely monitor people with potential risk of developing Ebola.

The CDC recommends that people potentially exposed to Ebola be sorted into one of four categories. The highest-risk individuals would include anyone who had direct contact with an Ebola patient’s bodily fluids or who cared for a patient without wearing proper personal protective equipment.

“Some risk” includes being within 3 feet of someone sick with Ebola for an extended period of time. “Low risk” includes situations such as shaking hands with a patient or being on an airplane with someone who is ill with the virus. Some travelers will be deemed to have no risk: for example, if they had contact with a healthy person who later showed symptoms of Ebola.

The CDC says its guidelines are based on evidence showing that unless a patient has physical symptoms of Ebola, he or she cannot transmit it to other people and is not a danger to the public. Most states have chosen to closely follow those guidelines. Minnesota, for example, uses risk categories similar to those laid out by the CDC. The state’s active monitoring system is based on risk and exposure, and as of early November, Ehresmann was not aware of any high-risk residents or visitors. If any were identified, the state would ask the person to voluntarily restrict movement, avoiding mass transit and public places. But going for a walk or doing other activities that don’t involve contact with other people would still be OK. Meanwhile, public health officials would be checking in with the high-risk individual, either in person or by video, to monitor possible symptoms. But for now, lower-risk individuals are being asked to monitor their own temperatures and symptoms and to check in with state health officials.

The policy in Minnesota was crafted with the goal of balancing individual rights with the public good, Ehresmann says. And under Minnesota statute, the state has to make a compelling case that an individual represents a health threat to the public in order to invoke mandatory quarantine or isolation.

“If you’re not following the science, then when push comes to shove, you don’t have a leg to stand on,” Ehresmann says. “You have to have data to show someone is a health risk as you exercise your quarantine and isolation authority.”

In Indiana, field staff from the state Department of Health are visiting local health departments and hospitals to provide information and answer questions about Ebola. They’re making sure, too, that providers and local health departments are ready for anything, from monitoring at-risk individuals for 21 days to isolating a patient until infectious-disease experts can arrive.

Right now, the state is monitoring only low-risk individuals, and local officials are using a variety of methods — in-person visits, Skype and telephone calls — to keep an eye on individuals who may have been exposed to Ebola.

Providers have access to a 24/7 hot line for questions or concerns. There is also a hot line for the public to call with questions, which is important, Duwve says, in quelling fears and providing fact-based information to citizens.

Quarantine policies in the Midwest differ from the high-profile announcements in states such as New Jersey, where health workers returning from west Africa will face a mandatory 21-day home quarantine. Illinois has put in place a mandatory home quarantine for individuals in the “high risk” category. As of early November, no one returning to Illinois had been deemed “high risk.”

While states sort out how to prepare for the possibility of more Ebola cases in the United States, many public health experts view the Ebola outbreak as a good reminder of the importance of being ready for anything.

“One of the illnesses that can easily spread to large numbers of people is influenza. Though most people recover from the flu, tens of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands die in the United States from the illness. The CDC recommends a flu shot not only to protect oneself, but to provide “herd immunity” to protect certain populations (infants, the very elderly) who cannot get a vaccination.

“Our best preparation for something like an influenza pandemic is to vaccinate as many people as we can now [in order] to practice,” Wharton says. “It gets manufacturing capacity up, it gets our systems prepared, and it gets our providers prepared and signed up to use the vaccination registry.

“The more of these things we can work out in a normal year, the better shape we’ll be in if we have a new strain of influenza.”

One of the illnesses that can easily spread to large numbers of people is influenza. Though most people recover from the flu, tens of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands die in the United States from the illness. The CDC recommends a flu shot not only to protect oneself, but to provide “herd immunity” to protect certain populations (infants, the very elderly) who cannot get a vaccination.

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Wisconsin Sen. Sheila Harsdorf

Family farmer first ran to advocate for rural issues; more than 20 years later, goals include closing skills gap, reducing tax burden

by Kate Turner (ktormey@csg.org)

Wisconsin Sen. Sheila Harsdorf grew up in a family in which two things were part of the fabric of daily life: farming and public service.

Harsdorf was born on a farm in Minnesota, but her family moved to River Falls, Wis., when she was a teenager. In her youth, she was active in her rural community through 4-H and learned the importance of service from her father, who was on the town board.

After completing her degree in animal science at the University of Minnesota, and a short stint as an agricultural loan officer, Harsdorf returned to River Falls to take over the family farm. She joined her father and brother Jim to run the family business. Jim had been elected to the state Assembly and then the Senate, and after 11 years of service, he decided to leave the Legislature — and encouraged Sheila to consider running.

“There were many issues being decided in Madison that affected me both as a farmer and as a rural resident, but they were being decided by many who didn’t have a good understanding of what our rural communities and agriculture needed in our state,” she says.

Harsdorf was elected in 1988 and served 10 years in the Assembly. She was elected to the Senate in 2000. Since then, Harsdorf’s policy interests have expanded to include higher education, fiscal issues and combatting drug abuse.

Harsdorf serves as chair of the Senate University and Technical Colleges Committee, where she has worked specifically on ways to address the gap between the skills of Wisconsin workers and the needs of the state’s businesses. Her legislative district includes two university campuses and two technical college districts.

“It really is through higher education that we provide opportunities for mobility in our society and create opportunities for our youth and citizens,” she says.

Harsdorf is also chair of the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, an alliance of states that brings together policymakers and education leaders to promote interstate cooperation.

Harsdorf’s northwestern Wisconsin district borders the Twin Cities, which she says can be a tremendous asset in terms of drawing businesses to the area. In fact, her district is one of the fastest-growing in the state. But she also sees some challenges to business growth. Next session, she plans to work on addressing issues ranging from education to taxes.

“How can we maximize our investment and outcomes in higher education?” she says. “We want to make sure our graduates are ready to go to work, and make [postsecondary education] affordable as well as accessible.”

Last month, CSG Midwest talked with Harsdorf about her commitment to service and leadership, as well as her policy priorities. Here is an excerpt from the interview.

Q: This session, you were the lead sponsor of a package of bills aimed at preventing drug abuse. Can you talk about the legislation and your reasons for supporting it?

A: Drug abuse is a huge issue in northwestern Wisconsin. In 2013, in the city of Hudson alone — which is not a large community — we lost seven young people to drug overdose. That has been an important issue that our communities and our region are trying to address. … I was the lead Senate sponsor on a package of bills put together by Rep. John Nygren. It was aimed at saving lives by [creating] the “Good Samaritan” law, which provides immunity from simple drug possession charges. Often when someone is using heroin, they are with a group of people — and if someone is overdosing, their friends desert them. This law encourages them to stick around and help the person.

One of the bills dealt with allowing first-responders to carry Narcan, which is very effective in countering an overdose. And we also dealt with curbing abuse of prescription drugs, because we know that is often how people start down the road of drug abuse. In addition, we passed a couple of bills dealing with treatment. The Heroin Opiate Prevention and Education legislation will help save lives and hopefully prevent addiction. It passed with strong bipartisan support. We tend to focus on the things that are controversial, and consequently people think that we never agree — so it’s always nice to also focus on those things where there is bipartisan support.

Q: Your work in higher education has focused in part on the skills gap. Can you talk about your work this year to address that issue?

A: I was the lead sponsor on a couple of bills this past session expanding apprenticeship programs, both for youth and adults, and encouraging opportunities for collaboration between businesses and our technical colleges. We put more resources into our [existing] youth apprenticeship programs to expand those opportunities. And we are working closely with businesses to find out how we can best address their workforce needs.

A: One of the controversial issues in this past legislative session was legislation surrounding DNA collection by law enforcement. Can you explain the legislation?

A: [The new law will require] DNA collection at felony arrest rather than conviction. There is a national effort to pass this in every state — “DNA Saves,” which is led by Jayann Sepich of New Mexico, who lost her daughter to a rape and murder. At least 29 states have adopted it, as well as the federal government.

I am convinced that this is a way of saving lives, solving cold cases and minimizing future tragedies. The DNA Saves measure passed in the budget this past session. I advocated for it and had also introduced similar legislation.

Q: You have long been an advocate for rural issues; what do you think the challenges are for rural areas of the Midwest?

A: We have great opportunities in our rural areas, but one of the things that is so very important to maintain those opportunities is the availability of high-speed Internet. We know that is important in encouraging those coming out of school to come back to their rural communities and to agriculture.

Many of the issues affecting agriculture really are governed at the federal level, but one of the things that is important in our communities is controlling taxes and maintaining affordability — and not taxing people out of their homes and their businesses. That is why reducing the tax burden in Wisconsin is a primary focus of our efforts. … One of the big challenges in my district is getting access to Wisconsin news. Because of our proximity to the Twin Cities, we are in that media market. There are many parts of the district where people do not get a Wisconsin TV station, myself included.

Q: What is one of the top concerns your constituents are bringing to you now?

A: One of the issues that comes up very frequently is trying to reinstate the tax reciprocity agreement with Minnesota. That border is there on paper, but western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota really work as a region. That is an issue of tremendous concern to those who are impacted: not creating excessive burden for people who live in one state and work in another.

Bio-sketch: Sen. Harsdorf

✓ first elected to Wisconsin Assembly in 1988; served 10 years
✓ now serving fourth term in Senate; chair of Senate Republican Caucus
✓ represents northwestern Wisconsin district, along the Minnesota border
✓ grew up on a family dairy farm; after college, she returned to River Falls to run the farm with her dad and brother
✓ chair of the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges and member of the Joint Committee on Finance
✓ holds a degree in animal science from the University of Minnesota
Benjamin Franklin once said, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” These words exemplify efforts underway in Illinois to reform the state’s education funding system and improve the educational experience for students and families.

Developments as significant as those of the last six months regarding how the state funds elementary and secondary education have not been seen in Illinois since the early 2000s, when the state made major changes to its formula for general state aid and created the Education Funding Advisory Board. During the spring legislative session, the speaker of the Illinois House authorized me and several other members to begin examining and proposing reforms to Illinois’ education funding structure. Additionally, following months of hearings, the Illinois Senate passed legislation, SB 16, with the goal of equalizing funding for Illinois schools.

New opportunity for reform

These exciting developments constitute one of the best opportunities in years to reform an education funding system in which there are wide disparities in the amount of resources and academic options available to students.

For fiscal year 2015, 19 percent of Illinois’ general-funds budget is dedicated to elementary and secondary education. When coupled with local and federal spending, Illinois ranks fourth in the nation in total education spending; however, because of the regressive nature of the current funding system, the disparity between wealthy and poor school districts in overall education spending continues to grow.

During the 2012-13 school year, total per-pupil spending by districts ranged from a high of $28,497 to a low of $6,353, depending on district type, according to the Illinois State Board of Education. Pursuant to the Illinois Constitution, the state bears the responsibility for providing “an efficient system of high quality public educational institutions and services” (emphases mine). The state fulfills this responsibility, in part, through local school districts that are granted limited taxing authority.

Should a district be unable to generate adequate income from local property taxes, it receives “equalization” funding. Unfortunately, state equalization funds are often insufficient to compensate for differences in local wealth, creating a structural imbalance and inefficiencies in the resources available to school districts.

The disparity in funding is the result of three main factors: local property wealth, local tax effort and state equalization funding.

Under Illinois’ current funding structure, the value of real property determines the amount of money a school district can generate for its schools from local property taxes. Therefore, property-wealthy districts are able to invest greater resources and provide more academic options to their students with less tax effort. Conversely, property-poor districts are often forced to levy higher taxes in an effort to meet local obligations, yet remain unable to fully fund basic educational needs.

Illinois’ main source of state funding to school districts comes in the form of general state aid, which provides funding on a per-pupil basis to school districts after accounting for what the formula defines as “available local resources.”

Despite significant investments in general state aid — for which over $4.5 billion is appropriated in the fiscal year 2015 budget — a school district relying on it as the primary source of funding has far less resources at its disposal than a district that is able to rely primarily on local property wealth for the majority of the resources it invests in the classroom.

Ultimately, more resources alone will not create a higher-quality education for students; however, equitable funding helps ensure that school districts with a large percentage of low-income students have the resources necessary to provide them with the same academic opportunities that students from wealthy areas receive.

In his dissent in Committee for Educational Rights v. Edgar, an Illinois Supreme Court case addressing issues of equity in education funding, Justice Charles Freeman referenced two neighboring school districts, one property-wealthy and one property-poor; in his analysis he suggests that available resources have a direct impact on all aspects of a student’s educational experience, such as teacher recruitment and retention, course offerings, the age of textbooks available and the physical infrastructure of a district.

One example of this situation is a recent salary study of Illinois teachers, which shows that the lowest starting salary for a teacher was $23,879, while the highest was $57,456, depending on the type of district.

Disparities continue to grow

A recent study by Stanford University’s Center for Education Policy Analysis suggests that the disparities outlined in Edgar still exist and have gotten worse, as the achievement gap between affluent and low-income students is now four times what it was in the 1960s.

The structural inequities of the current education funding system have been debated for years. However, recent developments show real promise for implementing reforms that allow Illinois to continue living by our state’s constitutional mandate: “the educational development of all persons to the limits of their capacities.”

The final resolution will not be easy; it will require difficult discussions regarding complex educational issues, including the adequacy of education funding, the quality of educational offerings, and how to equalize funding and close the resource gap.

Despite these challenging discussions ahead, Illinois is poised to make the reforms that are necessary to make its education funding system more beneficial to taxpayers, parents, and most importantly, students.

Closing schools’ resource gap

Illinois legislators look to reform funding structure under which richer, poorer districts diverge widely in educational outcomes

by Illinois Rep. Elgie Sims (repelgies34@gmail.com)

% of K-12 public school revenues provided by property taxes in Midwestern states, 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local/intermediate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics
The new year will bring close to 250 new legislators to state capitals across the region, and The Council of State Governments is committed to being a trusted resource for these recently elected officials.

With that in mind, CSG Midwest staff will travel to every state capital in the region over the first few months of 2015. One of the primary goals of these visits will be to introduce new legislators to CSG and its various products and services. This personal outreach began in some states only weeks after the election, through CSG Midwest’s participation in legislatures’ new-member orientations.

For every state in the Midwest, CSG has a staff person dedicated as the point person for providing assistance (research or otherwise) to legislators and legislative staff. These staff members also organize the office’s annual visits to state capitals. Please contact the staff liaisons below to learn exact dates of the upcoming CSG Midwest visits. Both new and veteran state legislators are encouraged to set up a time to meet with CSG staff.

- Illinois — Cindy Andrews, candrews@csg.org
- Indiana — Ilene Grossman, igrossman@csg.org
- Iowa — Ilene Grossman, igrossman@csg.org
- Kansas — Laura Kliewer, lkliewer@csg.org
- Michigan — Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- Minnesota — Kate Tormey, ktormey@csg.org
- Nebraska — Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- North Dakota — Laura Tomaka, ltomaka@csg.org
- Ohio — Laura Tomaka, ltomaka@csg.org
- South Dakota — Cindy Andrews, candrews@csg.org
- Wisconsin — Kate Tormey, ktormey@csg.org

CSG’s products, services and events

Here are some ways for legislators to take full advantage of their membership in CSG (every member of the legislature is a member).

- Take part in CSG meetings and events — The Midwestern Legislative Conference — a group of all legislators from the 11-state Midwest — will next meet July 12-15 in Bismarck, N.D. Next year’s CSG National Conference will be held Dec. 10-13 in Nashville, Tenn. CSG also regularly holds policy academies for legislators on issues such as health care, education and transportation. CSG Midwest brings customized policy and professional development workshops to the region’s capitals through its Under the Dome Initiative.

- Read CSG publications — StateLine Midwest highlights policy trends from this region and is published 12 times a year. CSG’s national publication, Capitol Ideas, is produced six times a year.

- Take part in professional development opportunities — Every year, CSG offers several leadership-training programs. The Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, or BILLD, is designed for lawmakers from the Midwest in their first four years of service. The national Toll Fellows leadership program is for longer-serving state officials from all three branches of government.

- Get research assistance — Throughout the year, CSG Midwest provides tailored research assistance for legislators and legislative staff through its Information Helpline (csginfo@csg.org or 630.925.1922).

- Use online resources — All of CSG’s policy research is available via its Knowledge Center (knowledgecenter.csg.org). In addition, CSG’s eCademy Series offers web-based seminars for legislators and their staff.

- Tap into CSG’s policy expertise — CSG advances public policy through its Justice Center and the National Center for Interstate Compacts. The Justice Center has helped many states improve their criminal justice systems, while the Center for Interstate Compacts provides a mechanism for states to solve cross-border policy problems together.

- Get involved in an interstate committee, caucus or task force of legislators — CSG Midwest provides staff support for the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s committees on agriculture, economic development, education, health care and Midwest-Canada relations. It also supports regional groups focusing on the Great Lakes, passenger rail and radioactive materials transportation. Please call 630.925.1922 to learn how to get involved.

Online enrollment as % of total enrollment at degree-granting postsecondary institutions (2002-2012)

The Council of State Governments is one of several groups that played a part in developing the agreement. CSG is the home of the National Center for Interstate Compacts.

The center provides training and technical assistance and helps states review existing interstate compacts or consider creating new ones. It is currently involved in the development of several potential interstate compacts — for example, agreements on transmission siting and professional licensing.

Information is available at www.csg.org/nicc.

Cindy deGolian (cdelongian@csg.org) serves as the center’s director.

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, information transfer, sponsored 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.
Directors, senior staff of Midwest’s legislative service agencies meet in Chicago

Nonpartisan legislative service agency directors and senior staff from nine states in the Midwest met in Chicago on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1. The annual meeting gives LSA directors and staff the opportunity to share information about management and technology issues.

This year’s meeting focused on intergenerational management, strategic planning, compensation plans and strategies, and the use of social media by nonpartisan legislative agencies. The meeting traditionally includes a session on new technologies being employed in the legislatures and by legislative service agencies. This year, participants focused on ways to authenticate legislative documents and to provide up-to-date bill information through the use of scanning technology.

Gordon Self, the revisor of statutes in Kansas, is serving as chair of the group this year. CSG Midwest provides staff support for the Midwestern Legislative Services Agency/Research Directors Group.

Great Lakes Caucus sets 2015 meeting date, plans more training for legislators

The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus will meet next year for the first time in New York and also has plans in 2015 to continue expanding the services that it provides to legislators.

Open to lawmakers from the 10 Great Lakes states and provinces, the nonpartisan organization provides a forum for the regional exchange of ideas and information on Great Lakes protection and restoration.

CSG Midwest provides staff support to the group.

The caucus’s annual meeting will be held Sept. 25 and 26 in Buffalo, N.Y. The event will begin with a site visit and reception on Friday, Sept. 25, an all-day meeting of the caucus will take place on Saturday, Sept. 26. All legislators in the Great Lakes region are encouraged to join the caucus and attend the meeting; membership forms are available at www.greatlakeslegislators.org.

Registration for the annual meeting will open in early 2015.

Other planned caucus activities include Great Lakes Policy Workshops for legislators in Ohio, Ontario and Wisconsin and a series of webinars on Great Lakes-related issues. The caucus will also continue to maintain its legislative trackers on state, provincial and federal bills and produce its quarterly e-newsletter, Great Lakes News for Legislators.

To sign up to receive meeting and webinar announcements and the caucus’s e-newsletter, please contact Lisa Janairo at ljanairo@csg.org.

Wisconsin Rep. Cory Mason will soon begin duties as chair of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus. Minnesota Sen. Ann Rest, current chair of the caucus, will continue to serve on the group’s Executive Committee. Michigan Sen. Darwin Booher remains the vice chair. The Executive Committee includes at least one legislator from each jurisdiction in the Great Lakes basin.

In addition to its focus on strengthening the role of states in Great Lakes protection, the caucus also weighs in on federal programs and legislation. Most recently, for example, close to 50 caucus members signed on to a letter opposing a congressional proposal that would greatly limit states’ ability to regulate ballast water discharges from transoceanic vessels.

Please visit www.greatlakeslegislators.org for information on upcoming caucus events.

Wisconsin Rep. Cory Mason, chair
Michigan Sen. Darwin Booher, vice chair

Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

Caucus officers in 2015

UPCOMING MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS EVENTS

LEGISLATIVE AGRICULTURAL CHAIRS SUMMIT
January 2-4, 2015
Clearwater, Florida
Contact: Carolyn Orr (c Orr@csg.org)
www.agandruralleaders.org

70TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
July 12-15, 2015
Bismarck, North Dakota
Contact: Gail Meyer (gmeyer@csg.org)
610.925.1922
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)
610.925.1922
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 Janairo (ljanairo@csg.org)
920.438.5910
www.greatlakeslegislators.org

CSG NATIONAL CONFERENCE
December 10-13, 2015
Nashville, Tennessee
Contact: Kelley Arnold (karnold@csg.org)
800.800.1910
www.csg.org
New Michigan law gives patients ‘right to try’ experimental drugs

Michigan has become the fourth U.S. state — and first in the Midwest — to pass a law giving terminally ill patients the right to try experimental medications. SB 991 applies to drugs that have not yet been approved by the U.S. Federal Drug Administration, but have successfully completed Phase I of an FDA-approved clinical trial. The bill provides liability protections to drug manufacturers, and under a separate measure (HB 5649), health care providers cannot be sanctioned by the state for giving patients access to the drugs.

According to The Detroit News, insurance companies will not be required to cover the experimental treatments. And unlike clinical trials, manufacturers may not cover the costs.

The two bills were signed into law in October after receiving overwhelming bipartisan support in the Legislature. Some critics, though, warn that the law will provide “false hope” to patients and their families, and that the drugs — because they are not fully tested — could cause adverse reactions in the patients who use them.

As of October, Colorado, Louisiana and Missouri were the other states with “right to try” laws, according to the Goldwater Institute.

Iowa giving teachers more leadership roles, and higher pay

Teachers in Iowa are getting a chance at more leadership positions and higher pay under a new system that began to be implemented this year.

State legislators established the Teacher Leadership and Compensation system in 2013. When fully in place (in 2016), the system will cost the state $150 million a year. Close to 40 Iowa school districts were selected to participate in 2014.

For newer teachers, minimum salaries are being raised (to $33,500 per year) and more on-the-job support is being offered — for example, additional time set aside to observe other instructors or to take part in peer mentoring. Veteran teachers, meanwhile, have a greater chance to take on leadership roles. Those roles may include serving as an “instructional coach” for other teachers or as a leader in developing the school’s curriculum. Higher pay for these teachers comes with these additional responsibilities.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average U.S. teacher salary in 2012-13 was $56,383. In the Midwest, the average ranges from a low of $39,580 in South Dakota to a high of $61,560 in Michigan. Along with Michigan, teacher salaries were higher than the U.S. average in two other Midwestern states: Illinois and Ohio.

Nebraska finds new funding stream to protect water resources

Nebraska will be making a $32 million investment over the next two years in a new fund designed to improve water management and sustainability. At least initially, dollars for the Water Sustainability Fund will come from the state’s cash reserves.

Creation of the fund came a few months after a task force created by the Legislature (LB 517) concluded that “Nebraska stands at a critical juncture with water issues” — for example, the depletion of aquifers, reduced flow of surface water (due to groundwater pumping), and an interstate dispute with Kansas over use of the Republican River. (That dispute has reached the U.S. Supreme Court.)

In addition to creating a new funding stream for water projects, LB 1098 (signed into law this year) requires local natural resources districts to work together on basinwide plans for managing shared water resources.

The state’s Natural Resources Commission, which will administer the new fund, has also been restructured. The governor will now appoint a majority of the commission members. Previously, most members were elected to represent particular river basins across the state, according to Unicomment Update (the newsletter of the Nebraska Legislature).

Laws in Midwest put new limits on minors’ use of tanning beds

Minnesota has become the second state in the Midwest to prohibit anyone under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning beds. Under HF 2402, tanning-bed owners and operators will be charged with a misdemeanor for violating the state statute. Illinois’ under-18 ban (HB 188) was signed into law last year.

According to the Melanoma Research Institute, six other U.S. states have under-18 prohibitions in place. Earlier this year, with passage of SB 50, Indiana joined Wisconsin in banning the use of tanning beds for anyone under 15 and under.

Other Midwestern states have chosen to allow teenagers to use tanning beds, but require some kind of parental consent. Nebraska lawmakers passed a bill this year requiring parents to accompany a child under the age of 16 to a tanning bed. LB 132 also requires parents to sign a consent form and the tanning-bed owner or operator to post a sign warning about the danger of overexposure to ultraviolet radiation.

In September, The Council of State Governments published an issue brief on the dangers of overexposure and state regulation of tanning facilities. It is available at the CSJ Knowledge Center: knowledgecenter.csg.org.