

STATELINE MIDWEST



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‘PROTEST TO PROGRESS’

States such as Illinois, Kansas and Minnesota have taken ‘deep dives’ into issues of race and equity; a mix of new laws and legislative proposals have been the result

by Laura Kliewer (lkiewer@csg.org)

The death of George Floyd at the hands of police brought people across the country to the streets in protest.

Some were state legislators. Among them: Kimberly Lightford, the Illinois Senate majority leader and chair of the state’s Legislative Black Caucus. “I realized I was standing next to people from all across the state who didn’t look like me, but they were just as in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and wanting justice for all,” Lightford recalls.

“It moved me to think, ‘We’re ready as a community and as a country to undo many of these policies and procedures that actually created these inequities.’”

She saw a real chance to “move from protest to progress” — with the Illinois General Assembly helping lead the way.

In only a few months’ time, after many hours of legislative hearings and subsequent

negotiations, major policy changes in areas such as criminal justice, education and economic development went from the study stage to the desk of Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker for signing.

“We all learned together,” Lightford says. “I think that is why it was so successful, because of the inclusion, because of the collaboration with our colleagues, because we worked from a place of research and data and best practices.”

“And we had the support of our governor, Senate president and House speaker.”

Policymakers in other Midwestern states, such as Kansas and Minnesota, also have taken this kind of comprehensive approach. Leaders in all three of these states report notable, though varying, progress since the summer.



Illinois Sen. Kimberly Lightford

UNIQUE LEGISLATIVE YEAR, AND A CHANCE TO LEARN

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the

policymaking environment for state legislators, and in some ways, it provided some unforeseen opportunities for legislators to focus on issues of racial justice.

In Illinois, for example, the Senate only met sporadically last year, but adopted a rule allowing for hearings to take place via Zoom.

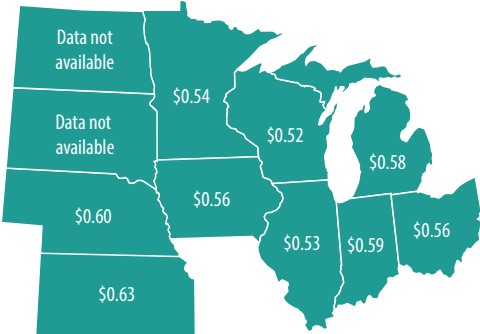
That decision enabled lawmakers to study a wide range of issues, setting the stage for legislative action in late 2020 and early 2021.

The Minnesota Legislature, meanwhile, held seven special sessions between June and December, primarily to address Gov. Tim Walz’s pandemic-related emergency declarations.

A bill on police accountability was signed into law during one of these sessions (see page 6 for details). In addition, the Minnesota House passed a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis and creating a select committee with this task:

“studying, evaluating, and conducting an assessment of the existing policies and practices of the Minnesota House of

ESTIMATED MEDIAN INCOME OF BLACK HOUSEHOLDS FOR EVERY \$1 OF MEDIAN INCOME OF WHITE HOUSEHOLDS (2019)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2019, and CSG Midwest calculations

ESTIMATED CHILD POVERTY RATES IN MIDWEST, BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2019)

State	American Indian ¹	Asian	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Non-Hispanic White
Illinois	9%	10%	34%	20%	9%
Indiana	*	13%	34%	20%	11%
Iowa	*	7%	37%	22%	10%
Kansas	28%	16%	34%	27%	9%
Michigan	30%	9%	36%	31%	12%
Minnesota	26%	12%	37%	17%	6%
Nebraska	*	*	32%	19%	7%
North Dakota	*	*	*	*	6%
Ohio	38%	10%	39%	30%	13%
South Dakota	47%	*	*	*	8%
Wisconsin	29%	17%	36%	25%	8%

¹ Data for American Indians include “American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more other races.”

* Data on state-specific child poverty rates for this race/ethnicity were not available.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2019

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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Legislatures form new standing committees on mental health in 2021 to improve policy focus, outcomes

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

The one-two punch of the opioid crisis and COVID-19 has propelled mental and behavioral health to the top of state legislatures’ agendas, so much so that new standing committees have been created in 2021 in the Illinois Senate and Ohio House.

They join extant committees in the Illinois House (Mental Health & Addiction) and Wisconsin Assembly (Mental Health), as well as the Minnesota House’s Behavioral Health Policy Division.

Proponents of separate mental/behavioral health committees say pushing that specific issue out of broader health committees gives legislators enough time for “deep dives” into a

complex subject that defies quick and easy answers.

“A lot of times, HHS [committees] can get overwhelmed with a lot of things,” says Ohio Rep. Sara Carruthers, noting that her chamber’s health and human services committee



Ohio Rep. Sara Carruthers

handled 99 bills last session.

This year, she is serving as chair of the

newly formed Ohio House Behavioral Health and Supports Committee.

“It’s something we all knew was necessary because it’s been necessary for quite some time,” she says. “It’s something we all knew was an issue and will be even bigger with COVID.”

Illinois Sen. Laura Fine, chair of her chamber’s new Behavioral and Mental Health Committee, agrees.

“Historically, mental health has gotten the short end of the stick, and we’ve seen the repercussions of that,” she says, noting the effects on individuals and families, as well as costs to the state.

“This issue deserves its own committee. Everyone is impacted by mental health, whether that’s yourself or someone in your family or a friend.”

Pending the assigning of bills, Fine says the committee will begin its work by holding issue-oriented hearings on medical necessity — the question of medical providers, not insurers, determining a patient’s course of treatment — and how to reduce the suicide rate in the Black community.



Illinois Sen. Laura Fine

Indiana legislators chose a different approach to focusing more on behavioral health: instead of a new standing committee, they passed a bill in 2020 (SB 273) establishing a new commission to advise the General Assembly and make recommendations “on issues related to the overall improvement of the behavioral and mental health of Indiana residents.”

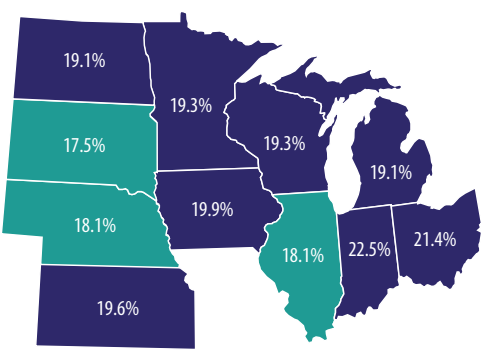
The panel, which began meeting last year, includes a mix of legislators, directors of various state agencies, and experts in mental health.

It has been charged with preparing reports that address mental health system assessment and inventory, funding and data, services to youth and families, and system design and access.

Another common legislative strategy, in Indiana and elsewhere, has been to make mental health the subject of interim study committees.

“That’s a good idea, but whenever you have a committee that big in terms of what it can study, as important as behavioral health is, you don’t have a lot of time when you only meet four times a summer,” says Stephen McCaffrey, the CEO of Mental Health America of Indiana and an inaugural member of the state’s Behavioral Health Commission.

SHARE OF ADULTS WITH ANY MENTAL ILLNESS IN MIDWEST STATES (2017-'18)



● Rate is higher than national average: 19.0%
● Rate is lower than national average: 19.0%

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

He adds that subjects such as mental health in schools have been gaining more and more attention during Indiana’s regular sessions.

“The idea became, ‘How can we find a forum to bring everybody together?’” McCaffrey says. “Hopefully it becomes a place where behavioral health issues that are difficult go for more study and in-depth discussion.”

Jon Davis serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s Health & Human Services Committee.

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

In Michigan, a portion of a tax on mining now helps fund rural development in many sectors

by Carolyn Orr (carolyn@strawridgefarm.us)

Across the Midwest, income levels among rural residents tend to lag those of their urban counterparts, and the gap has been growing.

Since 2010, inflation-adjusted income rose 14.5 percent in metropolitan areas vs. 9.7 percent in rural areas. Some rural regions, especially those far away from urban centers, are experiencing actual declines in per capita income.

How can a state help some of its more sparsely populated areas grow and prosper?

One approach in Michigan has been to use money from one of that state’s oldest economic sectors to improve the sustainability and viability of other “land-based industries.”

“Rural communities needed funding opportunities to kick-start economic development projects,” says Heather Throne, grant and commodity program manager for the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. (Michigan has the lowest rural per-capita income in the Midwest; see table.)

The Legislature’s response was to create a Rural Development Fund with a dedicated revenue source, a portion of a 2.75 percent severance tax on mining activities. Under the legislative statute, which dates back to 2012, land-based industries include tourism, food, agriculture, forestry, mining, and oil and gas production.

“Grants [from the fund] can go a long way to spur investment and expansion opportunities for Michigan’s rural residents and communities,” Sen. Dan Lauwers says.

The fourth set of grant recipients under the initiative was announced in February. In all, the state is providing \$1.7 million this year to a diverse set of projects and grantees — for example, expansions of livestock processing, local tourism campaigns, improvements in sewer and water services, and help for local breweries.

Project funding can vary considerably as well: \$13,000 for honey bee hives or \$100,000 (the maximum amount for a single grant) to boost housing for seasonal farm laborers.

Under the competitive grant program, all proposals require at least a 30 percent match. Projects must benefit rural communities or other areas with smaller population sizes (for example, a county that might have one urban cluster of up to 60,000 people but still has relatively few residents).

A five-member board establishes the grant guidelines at meetings that are open to the public. Four of the members are selected by the governor and confirmed by the Senate; the fifth is Michigan’s Department of Agriculture and Rural Development director. Agency staff later conducts site visits with each of the grant recipients, who are expected to

provide progress updates to the board and reports to the department.

“The data and grantee reports show that the fund has been successful in helping to move Michigan’s rural communities forward,” Throne says.

The Michigan Rural Development Fund receives 35 percent of the money collected from the 2.75 percent severance tax on mining.

Marquette County, located in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, accounts for much of the state’s mining activity, and this region does receive preference in the annual allocation of grants. (In the most recent cycle, Marquette-based projects received about half of the funds.)

The idea is to position Marquette County for economic prosperity after the mining operations have closed,

PER CAPITA INCOME AMONG RURAL, URBAN RESIDENTS (2018)



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

while also helping Michigan’s other rural communities thrive.

Carolyn Orr serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference’s Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Financial support, liability shields are among ways states have tried to help businesses survive pandemic

by Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org)

Earlier this year, \$216 million in state aid started going to some of Minnesota's hardest-hit businesses, the result of a bipartisan COVID-19 relief bill approved in late 2020.

In Indiana, South Dakota and Wisconsin, pandemic-related liability protections were among the first bills passed in those states' legislatures in 2021.

Actions like these have been common across the Midwest (see sidebar article), with states trying to help businesses through an unprecedented year of economic disruptions and challenges.

"Our small businesses have made enormous sacrifices to their own bottom lines for the good of our state," Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said after the December 2020 passage of his state's latest economic relief bill (HF45/SF31). As part of this \$216 million package:

- A total of \$88 million in direct payments is going to businesses with revenue declines of 30 percent or more (bars, restaurants, breweries, bowling alleys and fitness centers all qualify).
- More than \$13 million in aid has been directed to Minnesota's convention centers and movie theaters.
- Counties are getting \$115 million

HELP FOR SMALL BUSINESSES: OVERVIEW OF STATE STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Direct funding support** — broad-based assistance through federal coronavirus relief funding; support for specific business sectors impacted by the pandemic; and funding to meet the COVID-19 needs of business operations
- ✓ **Support for small-business employees** — assistance for returning workers; for quarantined employees; and for those working in hazardous industries; and coordination of federally funded layoff-aversion programs
- ✓ **Community resilience** — support for locally driven economic development strategies; broadband grants; and grants to promote consumer confidence and marketplace resilience
- ✓ **Recovery and reopening** — funding for data-driven recovery plans; liability protections; and support for small-business technical assistance

Source: National Governors Association, "State Initiative for Small Business Recovery during the COVID-19 Pandemic Economic Crisis"



for grants to local businesses and nonprofits.

In Ohio, Gov. Mike DeWine has proposed \$1 billion in one-time expenditures for an "Investing in Ohio" initiative. It includes grants for bars and restaurants, the lodging industry and indoor entertainment venues; additional funds for an existing Small Business Relief Grant program; and money to help new businesses.

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, meanwhile, prioritized another kind

of relief this year: alleviating a "fear of frivolous lawsuits."

Legislators responded with the passage of SB 1, which gives businesses and individuals immunity from civil liability for damages if someone is exposed to COVID-19 on their property.

In Iowa, state officials are trying to help bring businesses back to life after they closed due to the pandemic by fast-tracking the process for reinstatement (a few days vs. several weeks).

"With reinstatement wait times significantly reduced, businesses can reopen their doors faster, which is good news for employers, employees and lowans across the state," says Beth Townsend, director of Iowa Workforce Development.

Laura Tomaka serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference's Economic Development Committee.

MIDWEST-CANADA RELATIONS

Biden, Trudeau lay out vision: More help for small businesses, cooperation on energy transition

by Ilene Grossman (igrossman@csg.org)

Fights over softwood lumber. Disputes over access to Canadian supply-managed sectors. Disagreements on country-of-origin labeling.

They long have been serious, but manageable, quarrels between two trading partners and friends: Canada and the United States. In more recent times, some of the two countries' disputes have seemed less solvable.

"After 232 tariffs [on steel and aluminum] ... the bad ol' days have become the good ol' days," says Carlo Dade, director of the Trade and Investment Centre at the Canada West Foundation.

New trade issues still threaten to divide these two allies. For instance, soon after taking office, President Joe Biden shut down construction of the Keystone XL pipeline and imposed new "made in America" rules.

Still, Dade and others are hopeful for a return to normalcy in the relationship, and in their first meeting together, the leaders of the two countries were making that exact pledge.

Biden and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed in February to a "reset" of relations between the countries while agreeing on some shared priorities.

"The Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership" includes

sections on combating COVID-19, advancing diversity and inclusion, bolstering security and defense, and building global alliances.

It also focuses on ways to help rebuild parts of both countries' economies that have been battered by the pandemic.

Biden and Trudeau said they want to find new ways of helping small- and medium-sized businesses recover and prosper, placing a particular emphasis on women, minority and Indigenous-owned companies.

To reach this goal, they will rely in part on portions of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which took full effect last year. The USMCA includes several provisions to help small- and medium-sized businesses increase their share of cross-border exports (see sidebar).

In a single day, an average of \$2 billion worth of goods and services travels between the United States and Canada, as part of one of the largest binational trading relationships in the world.

One unique aspect of this relationship has been the development of cross-border supply chains. In key Midwestern economic sectors such as food production and manufacturing, companies in the two countries make products together.

Building on this strength, Biden and Trudeau envision a rise in supply

chains that develop and produce next-generation batteries. They want North America to be the place where batteries are made for zero-emission vehicles and renewable energy storage.

The two countries also have agreed to update and renew an existing agreement between the U.S. Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada. They plan to develop cooperative efforts that help the two countries transition to clean energy and low-carbon transportation.

Binational collaboration in these areas will require participation by the states and provinces — the levels of government where many decisions on energy generation and transmission are made.

"States have taken the lead on cross-border energy and environment cooperation — the Western Regional Climate Initiative and the setting of common, regional greenhouse gas reduction targets by the Atlantic premiers and governors," Dade says.

"There is much that states and provinces have done and can do to cooperate in their areas of jurisdiction."

Ilene Grossman serves as CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Midwest-Canada Relations Committee.

PROVISIONS IN U.S.-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

- 1 Reduces paperwork for shipments valued at under \$2,500
- 2 Raises threshold on express shipments that can be sent to Canada tax- and duty-free
- 3 Promotes participation in government procurement and simplifies process
- 4 Removes "local presence" requirements for small businesses, allowing them to provide cross-border services without opening a foreign office



\$62 BILLION IN FEDERAL AID COMING DIRECTLY TO MIDWEST’S STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Passage and enactment of the American Relief Act of 2021 in mid-March opened the spigot of federal COVID-19 pandemic relief funding to states and local governments, \$61.7 billion of which is heading to the Midwest (see accompanying table).

According to an analysis by Federal Funds Information for States, a total of \$350 billion is going to state and local governments — \$219.8 billion to a “State Fiscal Recovery Fund” and \$130.2 billion to a “Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.”

These federal dollars can be used to pay for pandemic-related expenses and costs incurred through Dec. 31, 2024. That includes aid to households, small businesses, nonprofits and impacted industries such as hospitality, tourism and travel. Other allowable uses include investing in certain infrastructure (broadband and water/sewer systems) and providing “premium pay” to essential workers. Funds may not be used to make pension payments or reduce taxes.

Each state’s share is based on a two-part allocation formula: 1) \$25.5 billion equally divided among the 50 states, and 2) another \$169 billion going to the states in varying amounts, based on their share of unemployed workers during the last three months of 2020. The governors of **Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio** and **South Dakota** opposed this second allocation method, saying the distributions should have been based on population.

Also in the new law for states: \$10 billion for coronavirus capital projects that enable “work, education, and health monitoring, including remote options, in response to the public health emergency.” Each state’s allocation is based in part on factors such as its share of population, of rural residents, and of the number of lower-income households.



AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT: ESTIMATES OF ALLOCATIONS TO MIDWESTERN STATES			
State	State fiscal relief fund	Capital projects	Total (including aid to cities, counties)
Illinois	\$7.5 billion	\$254 million	\$13.7 billion
Indiana	\$3.1 billion	\$202 million	\$5.9 billion
Iowa	\$1.4 billion	\$153 million	\$2.7 billion
Kansas	\$1.6 billion	\$143 million	\$2.7 billion
Michigan	\$5.7 billion	\$250 million	\$10.3 billion
Minnesota	\$2.6 billion	\$179 million	\$4.9 billion
Nebraska	\$976 million	\$128 million	\$1.8 billion
North Dakota	\$1.0 billion	\$112 million	\$1.4 billion
Ohio	\$5.6 billion	\$274 million	\$11.2 billion
South Dakota	\$978 million	\$116 million	\$1.4 billion
Wisconsin	\$3.2 billion	\$189 million	\$5.7 billion
Source: Federal Funds Information for States			

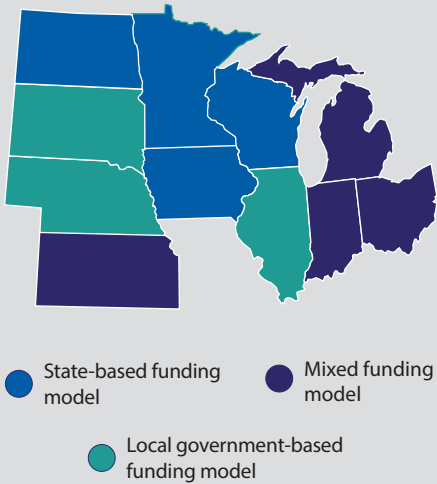
WISCONSIN BOOSTS PAY FOR PUBLIC DEFENDERS, HOPES TO STEM HIGH RATE OF TURNOVER

A new law in **Wisconsin** will allow for a boost in pay for the state’s public defenders, after a year of high turnover and concerns about its impact on indigent defendants, crime victims and local court systems. Between March 2020 and the beginning of this year, 78 people had left Wisconsin’s Office of the State Public Defender — the state-funded entity that ensures the right to counsel. Among the factors causing this spike in turnover: in-person visits to jail and court proceedings during a pandemic, higher workloads, and career opportunities in the private sector and other government offices.

Under SB 62, signed into law in March, merit pay for a public defender can exceed 10 percent of his or her base bay for the remainder of this fiscal year. Legislators say the new law also will reinstate the state’s longstanding practice of linking the pay progression of public defenders to that of assistant district attorneys.

According to the Sixth Amendment Center, Wisconsin, **North Dakota, Iowa** and **Minnesota** contribute all or nearly all of the funding for right-to-counsel services in their states (revenue sources such as court fees and fines are sometimes used as well). In contrast, other states in the Midwest leave the costs to local governments or use a mixed funding model (see map). In its review of legislative actions in 2020, the Sixth Amendment Center singled out two states in the Midwest: **Michigan** for appropriating \$117.5 million in grants for local governments to meet state standards on indigent defense, and **Ohio** for more than doubling its level of support for public defenders.

FUNDING OF RIGHT TO COUNSEL IN MIDWEST



Source: Sixth Amendment Center and CSG Midwest research

SOUTH DAKOTA EASES LICENSING PROCESS FOR OUT-OF-STATE HEALTH WORKERS

South Dakota is hoping to boost its health care workforce and be prepared for future public health emergencies with a new law that recognizes out-of-state professional licenses. HB 1077, which took just a month to go from introduction to Gov. Kristi Noem’s desk, directs state licensing boards to “issue a license, certificate, registration or permit” to someone as long as the qualifications for their out-of-state license are “substantially equivalent to or exceed” those in South Dakota. The new law also authorizes a provisional license if the person has to satisfy additional requirements to qualify.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many governors issued executive orders in 2020 allowing for this kind of flexibility in licensing requirements.

Along with Noem, Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts has made it a priority to make these changes permanent. Ricketts touted the idea in his State of the State address, and this year’s LB 390 would allow holders of medical licenses from other states to more easily receive a license to practice in Nebraska. The bill, dubbed the “Uniform Credentialing Act,” identifies 27 different professions — from speech language pathologists and dialysis technicians, to mental health practitioners and occupational therapists.

Several Midwestern states already are members of licensure compacts. For example, all Midwestern states except **Indiana** and **Ohio** are members of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. Nebraska, **North Dakota** and **Iowa** are in the Physical Therapy Compact; and Nebraska, **Indiana, Iowa, Kansas**, and North Dakota are part of the EMS Compact.



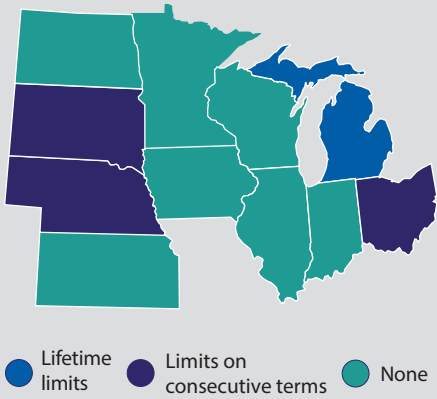
ILLINOIS HOUSE PUTS LIMITS ON HOW LONG LEGISLATORS CAN SERVE AS TOP LEADERS

Under a new rule adopted in early 2021, the **Illinois** House has instituted limits on how long a single legislator can serve as speaker and minority leader, the two top leadership posts in that state’s legislative chamber. No member can serve in these positions for more than 10 years. The Illinois Senate has had a similar rule on leadership term limits since 2017.

Some legislators in Illinois have proposed making term limits on legislative leadership a part of state statute (HB 642) or the Constitution (HJRC 25). Most of the current top leaders in Illinois are relatively new to their positions, but former House Speaker Michael Madigan served in this top position for 36 years. He left office earlier this year.

This kind of limit on leadership tenure is uncommon in state legislatures. However, in the Midwest, four states have term limits for all legislators — the result of constitutional amendments adopted by voters between 1992 and 2000. **Michigan** has the strictest limit among the states. It caps lifetime service in the Michigan House at three two-year terms and in the state Senate at two four year terms. **Ohio** and **South Dakota** impose limits on the number of consecutive terms that a legislator can serve in a particular chamber. Senators in **Nebraska’s** Unicameral Legislature are limited to two consecutive 4-year terms in office.

LEGISLATIVE TERM LIMITS IN MIDWEST



DEADLINE DILEMMA: CENSUS DELAYS POSE NEW REDISTRICTING CHALLENGES

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

In 2015 and 2018, two separate legislatively initiated, voter-approved constitutional amendments remade the process of redistricting in the state of Ohio.

The goal: ensure more bipartisanship and curb gerrymandering in the drawing of political maps.

This new constitutional language in Ohio also included some firm deadlines on when those maps must be drawn, under the assumption that the U.S. Census Bureau would compile and release its population data as it has in the past and as set out in federal statute.

But plans and schedules changed in 2021. “The release of census data has sometimes been treated like the rising of the sun,” says Michael Li, senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice’s Democracy Program. “What we’ve learned is that it usually works that way, but not always.”

In February, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that COVID-19-related delays in data collection and processing would postpone the release of redistricting information to the states — from March 31 to a new deadline of Sept. 30.

This new release date falls right on the deadline for the Ohio General Assembly to adopt a bipartisan-approved congressional map (“the last day of September of a year

ending in the numeral one”). For new state legislative districts, a seven-member Ohio Redistricting Commission is supposed to adopt a plan no later than the “first day of September of a year ending in the numeral one.”

Ohio sued the Biden administration in February over the census delays. It was the first U.S. state to do so, but is far from the only one with scheduling challenges ahead.

The Iowa Constitution, for instance, requires that a redistricting plan for state legislative districts be passed by Sept. 15. After that date, the state Supreme Court takes on the responsibility of drawing the new map — with a due date of Dec. 31.

Other states have statutory or constitutional language requiring that new maps be done on a specific day in the year “after the decennial census.” The census count was done in 2020. That means Michigan’s new Independent Redistricting Commission must have congressional and state legislative maps in place by Nov. 1. The South Dakota Legislature must have the new map for state legislative districts done by Dec. 1 of this year.

“One obvious lesson from this year is that when you’re drafting redistricting legislation, don’t put hard dates in there,” Li says. He notes that a section in Colorado’s recently amended Constitution allows the state’s independent redistricting commission to

adjust deadlines for “conditions outside of the commission’s control.”

In the Midwest, redistricting is still largely left in the hands of state legislatures (see map). And some of the region’s legislatures already have some leeway on when to complete the process — there are no deadlines at all in Nebraska, for instance, and language in the Minnesota and Wisconsin constitutions call for plans to be developed at the first legislative session “after each enumeration . . . made by the authority of the United States.”

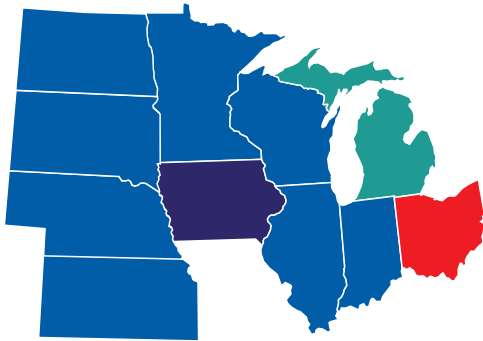
Li sees two challenges for states related to the delayed release of census data. One is figuring out the conflicts in deadlines; the second is ensuring that the redistricting process is done fairly, methodically and openly. Of those two challenges, the latter concerns him the most, especially because many state legislatures are likely to adopt new maps in shorter, special sessions.

“What we don’t want to see is a shortcut in the process, where hearings aren’t held, where the public doesn’t have the chance to review the maps,” he says.

One option for states as they wait for the actual census information is to use alternative data (such as population statistics from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey) for public hearings and even the release of preliminary maps.

But when it comes to drawing the final maps, there is no substitute for using actual

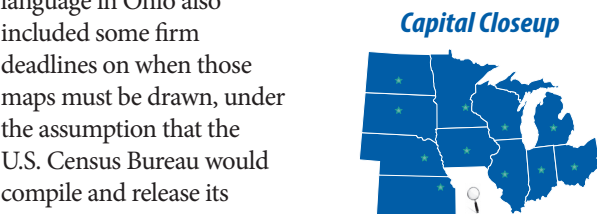
WHO DRAWS THE MAPS? OVERVIEW OF REDISTRICTING PROCESSES IN MIDWEST



- Legislature draws district lines (single U.S. House districts in North Dakota, South Dakota)
- Nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency draws district lines; Legislature votes on maps without amendments
- Independent citizens commission draws maps
- Seven-member commission (legislators and statewide elected officials) draws lines for state legislative districts; General Assembly has first chance to draw lines for U.S. House districts (commission is used if impasse occurs)

census figures. “You’re just asking for a lawsuit, a one-person, one-vote challenge, if alternative data were to be used,” Li says.

Capital Closeup is an ongoing series of articles focusing on institutional issues in state governments and legislatures. Previous articles are available at csgmidwest.org.



QUESTION OF THE MONTH

QUESTION | How have states in the Midwest tried to prevent fraud in their unemployment systems?

Not only did many states handle a record number of jobless claims in 2020 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, they also had to deal with a spike in reported cases of fraud.

In **Ohio**, for example, the Department of Job and Family Services froze 270,000 unemployment claims in July out of an abundance of caution. By August, about 56,000 of those claims were verified and paid. In order to deal with the influx of both legitimate and fraudulent claims, the state agency hired 80 more employees and reassigned 185 to work through the backlog.

One estimate from **Kansas** has pegged recent losses in that state to unemployment fraud at \$700 million. Its ongoing challenges led to the resignation of the Department of Labor secretary, but also some recent policy innovations. For example, Kansas launched a one-stop-shop website (ReportFraud.ks.gov) for individuals to report cases of identity theft; once reported, a police report is automatically generated, the victim gets tips on how to mitigate damages, and the Department of Labor is able to prevent sham unemployment claims from being paid. As of late January, this program (which began in October 2020) had thwarted 250,000 fraudulent claims.

A second anti-fraud initiative was launched earlier this year in Kansas — a new software system in which individual claimants must confirm their identity by answering questions specific to their credit history. Once a claimant’s identity is verified, he or she is prompted to set up a two-factor authentication. In its first week of operations, this new system had blocked more than one million fraudulent log-in attempts, state officials say.

Meanwhile, various bills have been introduced in Kansas this year to hold victims harmless and to modernize the infrastructure for processing claims.

A rise in unemployment fraud occurred across the country in 2020, and even before last year, some of the region’s legislatures had taken action.

- **Indiana’s** HB 1062 of 2019 allows up to \$10 million from the state’s employment and training fund to be used to prevent, detect and recover delinquent contributions, penalties and improper benefit payments. (The cap on spending previously had been \$5 million.)

- Under existing **Iowa** administrative code, claims for unemployment benefits are not valid until an individual’s identity is verified. Claims are locked until the required documents, one of which must contain a Social Security number, are provided.

- Four years ago, **Michigan** legislators changed how the state flags fraud in its state unemployment system (HB 5165 to HB 5172) — for example, setting new standards for identity verification and requiring prompt investigations of potential fraud. The state’s Unemployment Insurance Agency also can now immediately cease benefit payments when a person with a stolen identity provides an affidavit and his or her employer corroborates the information.

States also impose a mix of monetary penalties and allow for criminal prosecutions of unemployment fraud. The maximum prison time ranges from a few months in some Midwestern states to as much as 20 years (see table). According to the U.S. Department of Labor, other deterrents include forfeiting future

POTENTIAL PRISON TIME FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE FRAUD	
State	Maximum sentence/sentence range
Illinois	180 days
Indiana	6 to 36 months or 2 to 8 years (varying classifications)
Iowa	10 years
Kansas	60 days
Michigan	1 year
Minnesota	20 years
Nebraska	90 days for each count
North Dakota	10 years
Ohio	6 months
South Dakota	1 or 2 years
Wisconsin	10 years

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, “Comparison of State Unemployment Insurance Laws”

income tax refunds and a permanent loss of eligibility for unemployment benefits.

Question of the Month response by Mitch Arvidson (marvidson@csg.org), a program manager for CSG Midwest, which provides individualized research assistance to legislators, legislative staff and other government officials. This section highlights a research question received by CSG Midwest. Inquiries can be sent to csgm@csg.org.



IN MIDWEST’S CAPITOLS, NEW LAWS PASSED, BILLS INTRODUCED ON RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Representatives through an intersectional lens of racial equity, setting measurable goals to advance equity through these policies and practices.”



Minnesota Rep. Rena Moran

“Where we are today is not just about today,” says Minnesota Rep. Rena Moran, one of two co-chairs of the recently created Minnesota House Select Committee on Racial Justice. “It’s about a long history of disproportionality and inequities in funding and laws.”

For instance, she says, the practice of redlining caused low rates of home ownership among minority communities for generations, and that practice still has major repercussions today.

According to Moran, examples like this can be found across many areas; taken together, they give historical context to Minnesota’s current racial disparities.

“Equity is not like the icing on the cake,” she says, “equity is the butter that is in the cake. It makes the cake.”

MINNESOTA: A LOOK BACK TO HELP INFORM FUTURE POLICIES

The House Select Committee on

Racial Justice decided it did not want to create a report heavy on statistics (for example, data on racial gaps in home ownership and education levels).

Instead, it wanted to tell “a story of why we are here,” Moran says.

“What we knew we had to do was bring forth people with expertise, people who can give us a high-level narrative and historical perspective, so it wouldn’t be about people’s opinions, but historical fact,” she adds.

Released in December, the report also included more than 80 policy recommendations. (Two legislative caucuses in Minnesota, the United Black Legislative Caucus and People of Color and Indigenous Caucus, also have released or are planning to release policy priorities as well.)

The committee presented its findings to the Legislature early this year, leaving it up to individual committees to pursue related bills.

As of the end of February, almost a dozen measures had been introduced. They include proposals to:

- increase minority representation in Minnesota’s teacher workforce (HF 217);
- expand the reach of a homeownership program for low- and middle-income households (HF 998);
- limit the use of cash bail for certain offenses (HF 741); and
- change the state’s drug laws and

rules on criminal expungement (HF 600).



ILLINOIS: BIG CHANGES, IN ONLY A FEW MONTHS’ TIME

A flurry of legislative activity has occurred in Illinois over the past few months. Legislators passed bills on criminal justice (HB 3653), police practices and oversight (HB 3653), equity-centered education (HB 2170) and economic opportunity (SB 1480, SB 1608, SB 1980 and SB 1792).

Among the many changes resulting from these various bills:

- an end to cash bail;

- a requirement that police wear body cameras;
- new procedures for certifying and de-certifying police officers;
- development of a kindergarten readiness assessment and expansion of early-intervention services for younger children;
- changes in the state’s graduation requirements and history curriculum;
- expansion of trauma-informed school services;
- new caps on the loan rates charged by consumer lenders; and
- limits on the use of criminal background records as a basis for employment and housing decisions.

These sweeping changes in state law, across many different areas of public policy, are the result of what happened in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death.

In early July, Sen. Lightford and other members of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus met for a four-day Zoom retreat.

The caucus brought in experts on issues ranging from disparities in housing and the teaching profession, to food deserts, domestic violence and environmental justice.

“We just threw out challenges and then sought out researchers,” Lightford says.

Caucus members then came to a consensus on four pillars that Lightford says “impact us from the day we are born to the day we die.”

STATE ACTIONS SINCE THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD: EXAMPLES OF NEW POLICIES ENACTED IN THE MIDWEST

1. NEW LAWS ON POLICE TRAINING, TACTICS AND STATE OVERSIGHT

IOWA’S HF 2647, PASSED IN 2020

- bans chokeholds in most instances
- requires annual de-escalation training
- allows the attorney general to prosecute officer-involved death cases
- bars police departments from hiring individuals previously convicted of a felony

MINNESOTA’S POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, PASSED IN 2020

- bans police chokeholds in most instances
- creates an independent unit of state government to investigate cases involving the use of deadly force and charges of sexual assault against officers
- gives citizens more input on the work and policies of the state-level Police Officer Standards and Training Board
- establishes peer-based trauma counseling for officers
- includes training requirements for officers on how to respond in cases involving a mental health crisis
- changes the arbitration system for disciplining officers

ILLINOIS’ HB 3653, PASSED IN 2020

- bans police chokeholds and mandates that police wear body cameras
- invests in more training as well as health and wellness services for officers
- establishes state-level standards on the use of force and de-escalation techniques
- creates a new certification system for police officers and standards for de-certification
- includes training requirements for officers on how to respond to incidents involving a mental health crisis

2. BROADER CHANGES TO STATE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

- new laws in **Ohio** expanding the use of drug treatment in lieu of criminal conviction and allow more sealing of criminal records (HB 1), removing barriers to occupational licenses for individuals with a criminal record (HB 133), and prohibiting the sentencing of individuals under age 18 to life in prison without possibility of parole (SB 256)
- passage of a 20-bill package in **Michigan** that aims to reduce the state’s jail population — with policy changes that range from re-classifying traffic-related offenses to giving police greater discretion to issue citations rather than make arrests
- the end of the cash bail system for pretrial detention in **Illinois**, as well as various changes in sentencing laws (HB 3653)



3. NEW POLICIES AND TASK FORCES TO ADVANCE RACIAL EQUITY

- establishment by **Indiana** Gov. Eric Holcomb of a new cabinet-level position in his administration — chief equity, inclusion and opportunity officer
- creation by **Michigan** Gov. Gretchen Whitmer of the Black Leadership Advisory Council, which is recommending policies that “eradicate and prevent discrimination and racial inequity”
- development of a comprehensive set of policy strategies on criminal justice, education, economic opportunity and health care access by the **Illinois** Legislative Black Caucus; multiple, wide-ranging bills passed in early 2021 as a result (see main article for details)
- formation by **Ohio** Gov. Mike DeWine of an Equity Advisory Board “to dismantle racism and promote health equity”
- creation of a Speaker’s Task Force on Racial Disparities in the **Wisconsin** Assembly that includes a bipartisan group of legislators as well as community members



Those four pillars were:

- 1. Criminal justice, police accountability and violence reduction
- 2. Education and workforce development
- 3. Economic access, equity and opportunity
- 4. Health care and human services

Next, the caucus presented its vision to legislative leadership in Illinois and helped organize a series of subject-matter hearings. Bicameral co-chairs were appointed for each of the four pillars.

What followed were 32 hearings and more than 120 hours of testimony, with each of the four pillars receiving at least seven hearings.

“We developed a bold and transformative agenda that we knew could address the deep roots of racism,” Lightford says.

“And the best way to do that is not from emotion, not from being discouraged or let down over the years from being a Black elected official, but doing it from the place of research, data and best practices.”

The legislative hearings included participation by advocacy groups (those for and against various policy proposals), subject-area experts and the heads of state agencies.

After the hearings, the caucus spent another two months developing legislation based on what they had learned.

By December, legislators were ready to announce their findings and proposals.

Then, during the Illinois General Assembly’s lame duck session in January, the co-chairs for each of the hearings introduced legislation related to the four pillars, most of which successfully passed both chambers before the conclusion of session.

Lightford says much more work remains, including in areas such as health equity and school funding. But she believes the recent actions already point to success in moving from “protest to progress.”



KANSAS: NEW COMMISSION TARGETS LEGISLATIVE ACTION, AND MUCH MORE

In Kansas, where a mural of the fiery abolitionist John Brown is displayed prominently in the second-floor rotunda of the Capitol, much of the work on racial equity since the summer has been led by a newly formed, 14-member governor’s commission.

Established by executive order in June, this group is studying issues of racial equity and justice in Kansas.

Gov. Laura Kelly directed the commission to first focus on actions that state agencies, the Legislature and local governments can take to improve racial equity in law enforcement and policing. Members of the commission

are professionals from law enforcement, academia, public education, public health, local government and the justice system.

Over the course of six months, the Kansas Commission on Racial Equity and Justice held 11 virtual full meetings and 26 learning sessions.

“We all come from different perspectives, and it is really a beautiful tapestry of people that come together to address equity and learn together,” says Tiffany Anderson, who is co-chair of the commission and Topeka’s school superintendent.

By December, the commission had identified more than 60 policy steps that could be taken in the area of law enforcement.

These recommendations were organized not only by topic (improved police training and data collection, greater police accountability and investments in behavioral health), but by which branch and level of the Kansas government should carry them out.

In all, the commission developed 30 ideas specifically for legislative action.

“We were looking at big, systemic issues, and they’re not something that the Legislature alone can resolve,” says Shannon Portillo, who is the commission’s co-chair and an associate dean for academic affairs at the University of Kansas Edwards Campus.

“But we did push to have it done by December so there could be legislative action during the 2021 legislative session.”

As of late February, one commission-based bill had been introduced, SB 247.

Sponsored by the Senate Judiciary Committee, the bill would require officers to receive training on use of force and to pass a course on firearms proficiency. SB 247 also includes provisions on the hiring of officers and the administration of psychological testing.

In addition, Gov. Kelly’s proposed budget contains additional funding and supports for behavioral health services and for the state’s public defender system, both of which were commission recommendations. The group’s 14 members also have called for an expansion of the state’s Medicaid program, arguing that the lack of access to care for substance abuse or behavioral health problems leads to more encounters with police.

Kelly has said the various recommendations, if enacted, can help “create real change for Kansas communities.”

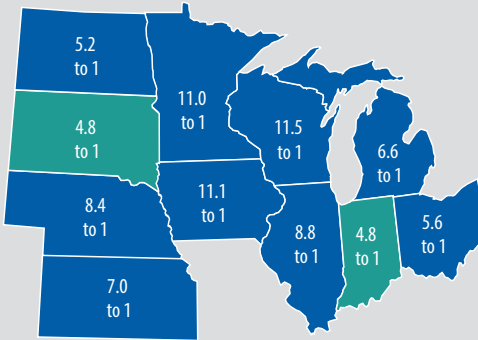
And the Commission on Racial Equity and Justice is just getting started. It is now focusing on the social determinants of health, with plans to take a deep dive into areas such as mental health, education, housing and economic opportunity.



“We were looking at big, systemic issues, and they’re not something that the Legislature alone can resolve.”

Shannon Portillo, co-chair, Kansas Commission on Racial Equity and Justice

DIFFERENCE IN INCARCERATION RATES AMONG BLACK, WHITE RESIDENTS IN MIDWEST (BLACK:WHITE DIFFERENTIAL)



Lower than 50-state average ratio of 5.1:1 Higher than 50-state average ratio of 5.1:1

Source: The Sentencing Project (2016 study using federal data)

ESTIMATED % OF POPULATION, AGE 25 AND OVER, WITH BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER (2019)

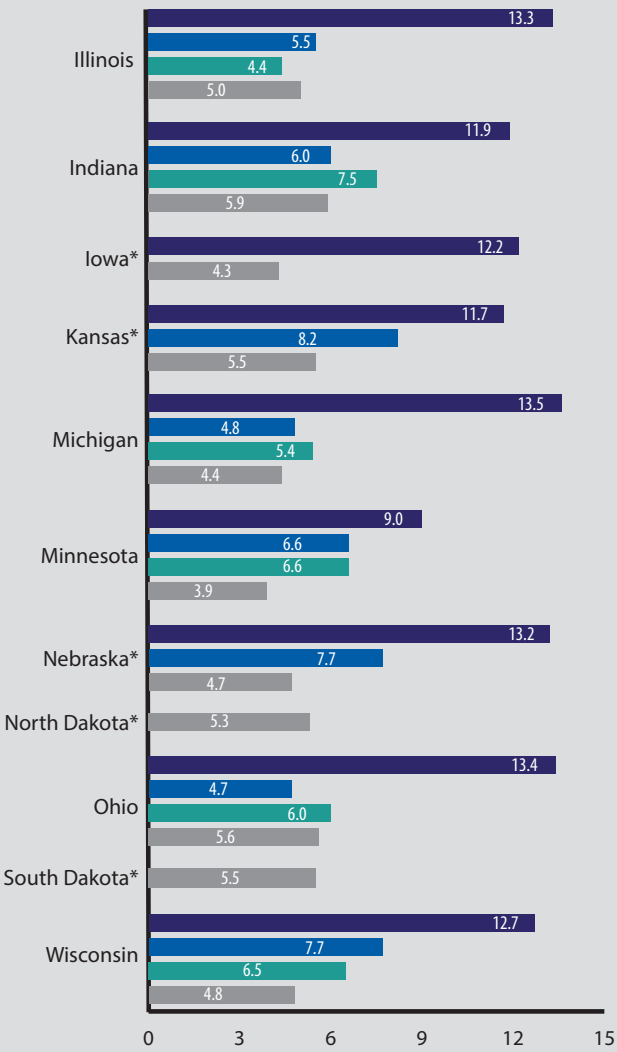
State	American Indian¹	Asian	Black	Hispanic/Latino	Non-Hispanic White
Illinois	34%	65%	23%	17%	40%
Indiana	*	59%	20%	16%	28%
Iowa	*	51%	15%	14%	30%
Kansas	20%	50%	21%	14%	37%
Michigan	18%	65%	18%	22%	31%
Minnesota	20%	46%	22%	23%	39%
Nebraska	*	*	21%	13%	36%
North Dakota	*	*	*	*	32%
Ohio	16%	63%	17%	20%	30%
South Dakota	12%	*	*	*	32%
Wisconsin	19%	47%	15%	16%	33%

¹ Data for American Indians include “American Indian and Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more other races.”

* State-specific rates for this race/ethnicity were not available.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2019

OF INFANT DEATHS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS, 2018



* Some data on race/ethnicity were unavailable or insufficient.

Black Hispanic Other White

Source: Kaiser Health Foundation



PROFILE: WISCONSIN SENATE MAJORITY LEADER DEVIN LEMAHIEU

A second-generation state legislator is taking inspiration from his past, and predecessor, in the first year as one of his home state’s top political leaders

by Jon Davis (jdavis@csg.org)

Devin LeMahieu has been watching and learning about politics and public service all of his life. As an 8-year-old, he spent election night in front of his family’s console TV, watching returns come in from the historic presidential election of 1980. His father, Daniel, had volunteered for the Reagan campaign that year, and later joined the Wisconsin Assembly himself for a 12-year run as a legislator.

That exposure to politics inspired the younger LeMahieu to get involved as well, though it’s sometimes taken him in unforeseen directions.

At age 34, he ran for and won a seat on the Sheboygan County Board of Supervisors, spending nine years in that part-time position. “I really enjoyed the work at the local level,” he recalls, “and realized how important it is to have people who are willing to put in the time and be a public servant.”

By 2014, he was ready to try and follow in his father’s footsteps, with plans to seek election to the Wisconsin Assembly. But thanks to a series of other legislative and congressional resignations, along with some encouragement from then-Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, LeMahieu instead jumped into a race for a seat in the state’s upper chamber.

“And here I am,” he says. Not only is he serving in the state Senate, he’s now helping lead it because Fitzgerald, the man who recruited him to run in the first place, won a congressional race this past year, creating a vacancy in the top leadership position of the Senate Republican Caucus.

Less than 48 hours after Fitzgerald’s departure, LeMahieu’s colleagues chose him to be the new majority leader. At age 48, LeMahieu is now one of the state’s top political leaders. He discussed his views on leadership and effective policymaking in a recent interview with CSG Midwest. Here are excerpts:

Q What were some of the factors that led you to pursue the position of majority leader?

A I’m a single guy. I do own a small business, but I have a very flexible schedule and Wisconsin’s a pretty large state, so being the leader of the Senate requires a lot of time and effort. My current situation gives me the ability to drive around the state and help out my colleagues and spend the time I need down in Madison to make sure that, in the Senate, we’re doing what’s best for Wisconsin.



BIO-SKETCH: WISCONSIN SEN. DEVIN LEMAHIEU

- ✓ chosen Senate majority leader in late 2020
- ✓ first elected to Wisconsin Senate in 2014
- ✓ owner/publisher of *Lakeshore Weekly* shopper
- ✓ has bachelor of arts degree in business administration and political science from Dordt College
- ✓ lives in east-central Wisconsin town of Oostburg

“If I can move the needle in the right direction ... that’s much more effective than being the voice of ‘no’ at all times.”

Q How would you describe your leadership style, and what are some of the characteristics of strong legislative leadership that you’ve observed over the years?

A I’ve been in the Senate now for six years, and Senator Fitzgerald was the majority leader [for that time]. I sat back and watched and observed the way he led our caucus for the last six years, and I thought he did a really good job of letting the caucus get to its own conclusions — directing the caucus but not getting out over his skis. Essentially not getting out in front of issues, or trying to ram his own will through.

He let individual members of the caucus weigh in and then tried to build consensus from there. I think that’s an effective way to head a house. That’s sort of the role I plan on taking.

I own a small business and I’ve managed people, so I have that experience. But generally, I think the way my predecessor accomplished his work here was very effective and led to a well-run Senate.

Q What has the transition been like this year?

In the Senate Republican Caucus, we have five new members, three of whom moved up from the Assembly and two brand-new legislators. So a quarter of our caucus essentially is brand new. There’s different personalities, and you have to try and get them to work together, but we’re only two months into this experiment and I’m obviously still learning as I go. We have a budget to pass and a lot

of other important things to do, which will take a lot of effort, but I respect all members of the state Senate. And especially for the other Republican senators — who have their own districts to represent and their own voices — it’s my job to get us to come together on different issues.

Q Has anything about being majority leader surprised you so far?

A Senator Fitzgerald made the job look pretty easy, and at times, you don’t understand all the work that goes on behind the scenes. That is fine, I’m ready and willing to work, but there’s just a level of activity and work that goes on behind the scenes that I didn’t know if I was expecting. I mean, I knew it was going to take up a lot more of my time, but I’m enjoying my role.

Q Are there lessons you learned on the Sheboygan County Board that stick with you today?

A It was great serving in a nonpartisan capacity because you learned how to compromise and find a solution that was good for the county. If I can move the needle in the right direction, do what’s best for Sheboygan County, and keep moving in the right direction, that’s much more effective than being the voice of “no” at all times. Obviously, there are some times when I’ll vote “no,” but generally, getting good things accomplished is more important and is very important for being able to

govern at all levels of government. That is the tack I’ve taken in my first six years in the Senate. Especially when you look at our state budget. The easiest vote is “no” because you can always point to all kinds of things that you might not think are great. But it’s important to look at the overall picture. Is that budget doing what is right for Wisconsin? Is it holding the line on taxes? Is it actually making investments in things like infrastructure and K-12 education and other important areas? Then you realize that it’s actually moving the state in the right direction and being fiscally responsible. That’s a lesson I learned in 2006 that I’ve taken with me.

Q What are your own legislative priorities for the new session?

A Typically in Wisconsin, the leaders in both houses sort of shy away from pushing their own legislation or asking other members to do it. Instead, they take a more 30,000-foot approach in making sure we get a good budget, but also helping out our colleagues with their legislation through the committee process and building a floor calendar that makes sense. In the first two months [of 2021], we had two great bipartisan bills that the governor signed into law. So I think it’s been a great start to the session. We’ve also had a host of bills that have been moving their way through the committees that unfortunately didn’t get done last session because of when the pandemic hit, and we’re looking forward to getting a bunch of those bipartisan bills done here early on in this session.

FIRST PERSON: SASKATCHEWAN PLANTS SEEDS FOR GROWTH IN AGRICULTURE, ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY

Goal of province’s new incentives, investments is to become global hub for agtech



by Saskatchewan Minister of Trade and Export Development Jeremy Harrison

Agriculture continues to be a major economic driver for our province, a growing part of which is the development of innovative technologies. Our government is investing to position Saskatchewan as a global leader in agricultural technology by providing support to startups in this sector that will bring jobs and new growth to our province, while also equipping our farmers and producers with game-changing technologies.

BUILD ON A GLOBAL STRENGTH

Growing up in rural Saskatchewan, I’ve seen firsthand what our province has to offer the world. Globally, we have the advantage of being a one-stop shop when it comes to the scale of our crop production and sustainability, as well as a move to more ingredients and processed products. This provides growth and business interactions unlike anywhere else on the planet. Saskatchewan’s tech sector contributes \$4.7 billion per year (about 50 percent of which can be attributed to agtech) to the economy, making the province an attractive location for research and development, manufacturing, and the testing of advanced technology. Agtech is the application of emerging



SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

This page is designed to be a forum for legislators and constitutional officers. The opinions expressed on this page do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Responses to any FirstPerson article are welcome, as are pieces written on other topics. For more information, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or tanderson@csg.org.

The agri-food industry has the potential to become Canada’s largest economic sector ... \$11 billion in new goods and services could be added to the national economy by 2030.

digital technologies to solve challenges in the agricultural sector. The agri-food industry has the potential to become Canada’s largest economic sector. With proper investments in agtech, the Royal Bank of Canada forecasts that \$11 billion in new goods and services could be added to the national economy by 2030. Last summer, our government in Saskatchewan launched the AgTech Growth Fund to encourage development of agricultural technology. The program is dedicated to accelerating the development of game-changing agricultural technologies; it will drive private investment in transformative farming and help attract international agtech companies to Saskatchewan. I’m proud to say our government also offers a number of other incentives to support the agtech industry, including the Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive and the Saskatchewan Technology Startup Incentive, both of which have been critical to our province’s successful approach to economic growth.

- The Saskatchewan Commercial Innovation Incentive supports the commercialization of new and transformative innovations by reducing the provincial Corporate Income Tax rate for eligible corporations to 6 percent for a period of 10 years, which can be extended an additional five years with the improvement of existing, or development of additional, eligible intellectual property.
- The Saskatchewan Technology Startup Incentive is a nonrefundable tax credit of 45 percent for individual, corporate, or venture capital corporations investing in eligible startup businesses.

EXPORTS ON THE RISE

While Saskatchewan has not been immune to the global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, our province has demonstrated incredible resiliency as we lead Canada’s economic recovery. Export numbers in agriculture and food products over the past few months continue to increase, thanks to growing global demand. In fact, in 2020, our export

growth led the nation, with a 2.5 percent increase. That compares to a 12.2 percent decline across Canada. This significant increase in exports is largely thanks to our agriculture industry, which remains one of the key pillars of our economy. Our resources are the root of much of our economic activity, and our agriculture production provides a basis for processing or input markets. Funding research and providing tax incentives have been the backbone of our policy efforts here. In many ways, our view is that a good business case and good business fit rely on a solid business environment — and a government that is willing to listen and respond.

CROSS-BORDER TIES AND INVESTMENTS IN MIDWEST

Closely integrated supply chains and a stable trade environment encourage innovation and investment in Canada, Saskatchewan and the United States, particularly in the agriculture sector. We are seeing a number of U.S. companies investing in Saskatchewan, including Raven Industries Inc., a leader in precision agriculture. Based out of North Dakota, Raven acquired a majority ownership in Saskatchewan-based DOT Technology Corporation, a manufacturer of agriculture technology with a focus on autonomous farming. This acquisition will lead to further commercialization of Saskatchewan-made products and innovations. The province is also emerging as a leader in the manufacture of plant protein ingredients. The result has been attracting new investments from the United States.

One example of this is Verdient Foods, now an Ingredion company. Among those who initiated Verdient were renowned film director James Cameron and his wife, Suzy Amis. The Camerons also entered into a four-year research contract with the Saskatchewan Food Industry Development Centre to develop value-added, plant-based food products. Since its acquisition of Verdient Foods, the Illinois-based Ingredion has expanded operations at the Saskatchewan site, and a new manufacturing facility is under construction to produce specialty, pulse-based protein ingredients.

CENTER OF AG RESEARCH

As global leaders in agriculture biosciences and agri-food research,

AGRICULTURE AS % OF TOTAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT IN FOUR CANADIAN PROVINCES*	
Province	% of total GDP
Alberta	1.8%
Manitoba	5.5%
Ontario	1.2%
Saskatchewan	8.7%
<small>* Saskatchewan is a member of The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference. Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are affiliate members of the MLC.</small>	
<small>Source: Statistics Canada (data for 2019)</small>	

Saskatchewan is a major hub of agriculture research. For example:

- Protein Industries Canada (PIC) is an industry-led, not-for-profit organization working to position Canada as a global source of high-quality plant protein and plant-based co-products. Along with its more than 240 members, PIC is investing more than \$300 million to transform this sector of Canada’s agricultural economy.
- Saskatchewan is also home to the Global Institute for Food Security, which seeks ways to expand the global supply of food in a sustainable way. It works with clients from around the world, as well as Canadian Light Source (CLS), the only synchrotron light source facility in Canada. Research at CLS has included using beam imaging on plant root systems in an effort to discover new ways to improve the disease resistance and nutritional uptake of crops.

Saskatchewan feeds the world, and continued investment in agriculture technology will be a significant driver of growth in the industry, creating jobs and opportunities. I believe that by providing solutions in the growing agtech industry, we add value to our communities, increase sustainability, and strengthen our province’s global leadership in food production.

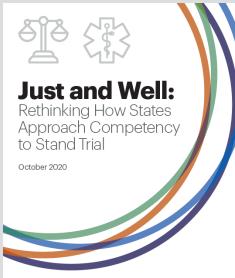
Editor’s note: All dollar figures referenced in this article are in Canadian dollars.

Saskatchewan Trade and Export Development Minister Jeremy Harrison was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in 2007. He previously served in the Parliament of Canada.

CSG JUSTICE CENTER SUGGESTS 10 STEPS FOR STATES TO IMPROVE PROCESSES ON COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL

As states deal with increasingly overburdened processes to determine criminal suspects’ mental competency to stand trial (known as CST), they incur higher costs for incarcerating and treating — sometimes for years — those whose competency determinations are pending.

“Just and Well: Rethinking How States Approach Competency to Stand Trial,” a report from The Council of State Governments’ Justice Center, suggests 10 strategies to improve this process based on consensus opinions from a group of experts, as well as lessons from states that have already embarked on reform efforts.



The state of Michigan, for example, is singled out in the study for developing standards and qualifications for competency evaluators — the individuals who assess whether someone is competent to stand trial. The use of these shared standards can prevent prosecutors and defense attorneys from hiring “dual evaluators,” and thus save time and money.

Here are the 10 strategies from the report, which is available at csgjusticecenter.org:

1. Convene a diverse group of stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of the current CST process.
2. Examine system data and information to pinpoint areas for improvement.
3. Train professionals working at the intersection of criminal justice and behavioral health.
4. Fund a robust system of community-based care and supports that is accessible for all before, during and after contact with the criminal justice system.
5. Expand opportunities for diversion to treatment at all points in the criminal justice system, including after competency has been raised.
6. Limit the use of the CST process to cases that are inappropriate for dismissal or diversion.
7. Promote responsibility and accountability across systems.
8. Improve efficiency at each step of the CST process.
9. Conduct evaluations and restoration in the community, when possible.
10. Provide high-quality and equitable evaluations and restoration services, and ensure continuity of clinical care before, during and after restoration and upon release.

NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR 2021 CSG ‘20 UNDER 40’ AWARDS PROGRAM TO RECOGNIZE UP-AND-COMING LEADERS

The Council of State Governments is once again seeking “up and coming” state officials under 40 years of age who are providing exceptional engagement and leadership in their states or territories for special recognition.

Nominations are due July 10. More information is available at web.csg.org/20-40/. CSG’s 20 Under 40 Awards launched in 2020, and four Midwestern state legislators were in the inaugural group of winners:

- Illinois Rep. Sonya Harper,
- Minnesota Senate President Jeremy Miller,
- former Nebraska Sen. Sara Howard, and
- Nebraska Sen. Tony Vargas.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR ANNUAL MEETING OF MIDWEST’S STATE, PROVINCIAL LEGISLATORS

The family-friendly event will take place July 11-14 in South Dakota

The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference will mark a milestone anniversary this summer in a region steeped in U.S. history.

The 75th Annual Meeting of the MLC will be held July 11-14 in Rapid City — South Dakota’s “gateway to Mount Rushmore” that is also within an hour’s drive or less from the Crazy Horse Memorial, Badlands National Park, Custer State Park, the Wild West town of Deadwood, and the motorcycle hot spot of Sturgis.

Registration can be completed at csgmidwest.org. Discounted registration is available through May 4.



Designed by and for Midwestern state and provincial legislators, the family-friendly MLC Annual Meeting includes a mix of public policy sessions, professional development workshops, featured speakers, special evening events, and separate programming for the adult and youth guests of attendees.

Led by Senate Majority Leader Gary Cammack, who is this year’s MLC chair, the South Dakota Legislature is serving as this year’s hosts.

MLC COMMITTEES HELP SHAPE AGENDA

A preliminary meeting agenda can be found at csgmidwest.org. Each of the MLC’s seven committees of state and provincial legislators will meet in Rapid City and host policy sessions for all attendees. Those committees cover the following areas:

- Agriculture & Natural Resources
- Criminal Justice & Public Safety
- Economic Development
- Education
- Fiscal Affairs
- Health & Human Services
- Midwest-Canada Relations

The Annual Meeting of the MLC also is a showcase for a city and state from the Midwest. This year’s event will be no different, with special events planned for attendees and guests at Reptile Gardens, the Crazy Horse Memorial and the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, and the Rushmore Civic Center in Rapid City.

Please note: By registering for and attending the MLC’s 75th Annual Meeting, attendees agree to comply with all pandemic-related health and safety protocols established by the MLC to help ensure the safety of all event participants.



South Dakota Sen. Gary Cammack

LEGISLATORS LAY OUT GREAT LAKES PRIORITIES FOR 2021

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus has joined other Great Lakes-focused groups in announcing a set of shared federal policy priorities for 2021.

They include continued funding of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative; investments in water infrastructure and climate resilience; strengthening ports and the maritime transportation system; addressing harmful algal blooms; and fighting aquatic invasive species, including Asian carp.

The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments provides staff support to the caucus: a binational, nonpartisan organization of state and provincial legislators that promotes the restoration, protection, economy and sustainable use of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

The GLLC is governed by an Executive Committee of legislators from the states and provinces of the Great Lakes basin. Illinois Rep. Robyn Gabel serves as caucus chair; Minnesota Rep. Jennifer Schultz is the vice chair.

Caucus membership is free and open to all state and provincial legislators in the basin. Members have the chance to get involved in a number of Great Lakes issues — from having their voice heard on important federal issues to working with other legislators on state-level policy priorities. Members also have the opportunity for scholarships to take part in the GLLC’s Annual Meeting. Visit greatlakeslegislators.org to become a member.



Illinois Rep. Robyn Gabel



Minnesota Rep. Jennifer Schultz

Caucus activities include the GLLC Annual Meeting, virtual sessions on Great Lakes policy, and a legislative tracker to keep members informed of activity in the states and provinces.

Later this year, too, the GLLC will hold the Patricia Birkholz Institute for Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Policy. The institute brings together a select group of GLLC members to examine a single issue and create a plan for regionwide action. This year’s institute will focus on helping coastal communities become more climate resilient. Previous institutes have focused on policies to reduce nutrient pollution and lead in drinking water.

The Council of State Governments was founded in 1933 as a national, nonpartisan organization to assist and advance state government. The headquarters office, in Lexington, Ky., is responsible for a variety of national programs and services, including research, reference publications, innovations transfer, suggested state legislation and interstate consulting services. The Midwestern Office supports several groups of state officials, including the Midwestern Legislative Conference, an association of all legislators representing 11 states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin) and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. The provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are MLC affiliate members.

BILLD ALUMNI NOTES:
GRADUATES SERVING AS
CABINET MINISTERS

In January, the **Hon. Kelvin Goertzen** (BILLD class of 2008) became Manitoba's deputy premier and minister of Legislative and Public Affairs.

"I am responsible for a number of ways in which the public interacts with the government," Goertzen says of his new position. He adds that the position complements his role as government house leader, in which he works with all elected officials to advance the business of the government and promote democratic debate and discussion in the Legislative Assembly.



The **Hon. Wayne Ewasko** (BILLD class of 2014) also joins Goertzen as minister of a new cabinet department in Manitoba. He has been appointed the minister for Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration.

This position was created as part of the premier's focus on protecting vulnerable Manitobans and supporting economic and social opportunities for postsecondary graduates and immigrants. "We are committed to supporting all Manitoba students, especially those who are financially disadvantaged and face barriers to postsecondary studies," he adds.



Each class of BILLD graduates includes legislators from the Canadian provinces. Several of these BILLD graduates are now serving as ministers in their respective Canadian provincial assemblies.

MANITOBA

- **Hon. Cameron Friesen** (class of 2012): minister of Justice and Attorney General
- **Hon. Blaine Pedersen** (class of 2010): minister of Agriculture and Resource Development
- **Hon. Ron Schuler** (class of 2004): minister of Infrastructure

ONTARIO

- **Hon. Lisa MacLeod** (class of 2008): minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- **Hon. Monte McNaughton** (class of 2012): minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- **Hon. Jeff Yurek** (class of 2013): minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks

SASKATCHEWAN

- **Hon. Dustin Duncan** (class of 2007): minister of Education
- **Hon. Bronwyn Eyre** (class of 2016): minister of Energy and Resources
- **Hon. Paul Merriman** (class of 2012): minister of Health
- **Premier Scott Moe** (class of 2013): minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
- **Hon. Jim Reiter** (class of 2008): minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement; minister responsible for the Public Service Commission; and minister responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority
- **Hon. Gordon Wyant** (class of 2011): minister of Justice and Attorney General

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

NEW DATES SET FOR 2021 BILLD PROGRAM;
APPLICATION DEADLINE MOVED TO MAY 14

Leadership institute is for legislators in their first four years of service

The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference has changed the dates of the 2021 Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) to Oct. 1-5.

"With the ongoing challenges and uncertainties surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, moving BILLD to later in the year helps ensure our ability to deliver an in-person program," says Indiana Rep. Holli Sullivan, chair of the BILLD Steering Committee.

"Not only will this help us to better protect the health and safety of our attendees, it also allows us

to appropriately deliver the high caliber of training that has become a hallmark of BILLD over the past two decades."

The 26th annual program will take place in Minneapolis, in partnership with the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

Midwestern legislators interested in applying for a fellowship should be in their first four years of service. The deadline for submitting application materials is May 14. Thirty-nine fellowships will be awarded by the BILLD Steering Committee, a group of state and provincial legislators from the MLC's 12 member jurisdictions. Fellowships cover the cost of attending the program; partial travel stipends are available to help offset travel expenses to and from Minneapolis.

The application can be accessed at csgmidwest.org or by contacting CSG Midwest's BILLD program manager, Laura Tomaka: ltomaka@csg.org or 630-925-1922.

26th Annual BILLD Program

- October 1-5, 2021
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- BILLD Fellowships cover the cost of tuition, meals and lodging
- Each Fellow is eligible for a partial travel stipend to help offset the cost of transportation to and from Minneapolis
- Application Deadline: May 14, 2021

2021 BILLD SPONSORSHIPS BEING ACCEPTED

BILLD is made possible by funding from corporate and foundation sponsors who believe in the importance of providing legislators with the tools necessary to improve their leadership and policymaking skills. BILLD offers a range of sponsorship levels and widely recognizes its partners during the five-day Institute as well as through a variety of BILLD publications produced throughout the year. Please visit csgmidwest.org for sponsorship information.

THANK YOU TO THE EARLY SPONSORS OF THE 2021 BILLD PROGRAM

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Through the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, or BILLD, CSG Midwest provides annual training on leadership and professional development for newer state and provincial legislators from this region. This page provides information related to the BILLD program, leadership development and legislative leadership. CSG's Midwestern Legislative Conference BILLD Steering Committee — a bipartisan group of state and provincial legislators from the Midwest — oversees the program, including the annual selection of BILLD Fellows.

STATELINE MIDWEST

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS | MIDWESTERN OFFICE

CSG EVENTS

CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference Virtual Events for Legislators

Visit csgmidwest.org to find dates of upcoming webinars and view recordings of past webinars on public policy, professional development and leadership training.



MLC

CSG University: Virtual Sessions

Visit csg.org to find dates of upcoming sessions covering various topics on public policy and legislating.



Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting

July 11-14, 2021 | Rapid City, South Dakota

Contact: Cindy Andrews ~ candrews@csg.org
630.925.1922 | csgmidwest.org



Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development

October 1-5, 2021 | Minneapolis, Minnesota

Contact: Laura Tomaka ~ ltomaka@csg.org
630.925.1922 | csgmidwest.org



BILLD

Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus Annual Meeting

September 24-25, 2021 | Québec City, QC

Contact: Mike McCabe ~ mmccabe@csg.org
630.925.1922 | greatlakeslegislators.org



GREAT LAKES
GLLC
ST. LAWRENCE
LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

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