Increasingly, states are looking for ways to bring these services to students, and encourage partnerships with local providers who can deliver specialized care.

by Tim Anderson ( tanderson@csg.org)

in one Cleveland suburban district, licensed psychologists are regularly visiting schools and delivering clinical levels of care to students. Hundreds of miles away, in the southernmost part of the state, a small district is converting part of its board offices into a school-based health center. There, young people will get access to an array of services, including mental health treatment.

These are two of the more than 3,000 local initiatives across Ohio getting state support because of legislative action taken two years ago — an unprecedented, $675 million funding commitment by the state to help schools provide nonacademic, wraparound services to students. “As much as we like to say the education system is about academics, the reality is that those issues of student wellness are tremendously important to enabling a successful academic experience,” Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria says. “If children come to school hungry, or can’t see the whiteboard, or have a high level of trauma or stress, they’re not going to be in a position to be educated.” Mental health, above all other types of eligible services, is what schools targeted for support through Ohio’s new Student Wellness and Success Fund. That choice is not surprising, DeMaria says, considering what he has heard from school administrators, teachers and parents on listening tours across the state. And that was before the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of people of all ages.

Across the country, “there was a ton of activity, pre-COVID, around state actions to support mental health and schools,” says Alex Mays, senior national program director for the Healthy Schools Campaign.

If anything, circumstances of the past year will only heighten this activity.

“For a variety of reasons, the education sector is increasingly seeing its role as supporting the mental health of students and staff,” says Dr. Sharon Hoover, co-director of the National Center for School Mental Health. “At the same time, we see the behavioral health sector recognizing schools as an important venue for service provision. We also have more and more examples of how to structure those services and get reimbursed for them in the school setting.”

POLICY OPTIONS FOR STATES

Hoover points to a number of state-level, school-centered policies and investments that can help young people. One strategy is to improve mental health literacy among students. “Just like we’d want young people to know about their physical health and nutrition as part of health education, we want them to understand mental health — how do you obtain these?”

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Midwest states battling California law they say dictat how region’s farmers must raise livestock

by Carolyn Orr (carolyn@strawridgefarm.us)

The U.S. Department of Justice in December joined six Midwestern states (plus nine others) and the North American Meat Institute in the latest legal effort to block a 2018 California ballot initiative opponents say will dictate how farmers across the region can raise their livestock.

California voters approved Proposition 12 by a 63 percent to 37 percent margin, thereby establishing production standards for pigs and veal calves within California — but also prohibiting the sale of meat produced outside the state if those animals were not raised in accordance with the requirements.

It also augments Proposition 2 of 2008 (approved by an almost-identical percentage), which required that cage-laying hens have enough space to extend their wings in all directions. Proposition 12 eliminates cages for hens, and requires farmers to provide veal calves with 43 square feet and sows with 24 feet of space by 2022.

Uncooked meat, poultry and eggs and hurt farmers in the Midwest. For example, the state accounts for about 20 percent of the U.S. pork market.

California’s regulations “hurt consumers by increasing prices for pork, veal and eggs and hurt farmers by increasing the cost of producing animal proteins,” says Iowa Sen. Annette Sweeney, who is also a farmer.

“This proposition does not improve animal welfare or food safety, and California voters shouldn’t be telling Iowa farmers how to raise their hogs.” (In 2018, Iowa legislators approved HF 2408, which requires grocery stores to sell conventional eggs from hens raised in cages if they also sell “specialty” eggs, such as cage-free, to ensure consumers and food programs had access to economical eggs.)

In an amicus brief, Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said Proposition 12 would establish a national animal-husbandry policy via rules allowing California officials to conduct on-site inspections of farming operations in other states and impose record-keeping requirements.

“California’s attempt to regulate animal agriculture outside its borders is an unconstitutional barrier on interstate commerce and will be devastating to Kansas agriculture,” Schmidt said.

The U.S. Justice Department’s brief contends that California’s Proposition 12 disrupts U.S. Department of Agriculture food programs.

“[It] would frustrate USDA policy not to buy products that are specialized or geographic in nature for the Emergency Food Assistance Program,” the department argued.

“Any price increases in food products attributable to the new law would make such assistance programs more expensive and reduce the buying power of benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.”

some states look to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to full year

by Jon Davis (jdavis@csg.org)

A new Kaiser Family Foundation report recommends that states seeking to reduce maternal mortality should expand their Medicaid programs’ postpartum coverage from the federally mandated 60 days to a full year from the date of birth.

The report also recommends:

• raising parental income eligibility levels;
• expanding coverage for specific populations, such as under-insured women or mothers suffering from substance use or mental health disorders;
• providing postpartum services such as lactation consultations and breastfeeding supplies;
• including family planning services to provide pregnancy planning and healthy birth spacing; and
• adopting the Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion (most states in the Midwest already have done so).

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Kansas commission seeks budget savings for state by standardizing supervision, expanding diversion

Kansas Rep. Stephen Owens

like most states, Kansas is facing a budget deficit in fiscal year 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Estimated in the fall to be $152 million after an initial $3.4 billion deficit forecast in April, it will precipitate cuts this legislative session.

Advocates of criminal justice reform say recommendations approved in November by the Kansas Criminal Justice Reform Commission could help close that gap, as well as save money into the future, by using stronger, non-incarceration supervision and community-based treatments.

“When you think about the cost of housing someone in prison [$30,000 to $75,000 per year], and then the ancillary economic costs of criminal activity, you begin to realize that focusing on treating the symptoms of what leads people to criminal activity would be a more cost-effective approach to dealing with crime,” says Rep. Stephen Owens, vice chair of the commission.

One recommendation seeks to standardize and consolidate parole and probation supervision standards to eliminate duplicative state efforts.

Currently, the Kansas Department of Corrections handles parole supervision while various state courts handle probation supervision. This can lead to dual supervision for one person — multiple meetings, fees, drug tests and little to no coordination of efforts among state agencies.

In fiscal year 2019, $84 million of Kansas’ spending on criminal justice came from individuals incarcerated due to violations of supervision or drug offenses.

To reduce these costs, and prioritize prison beds for violent offenders, the commission recommends expanding the use of diversion programs. $123 of 2003 authorized prosecutors and judges to assign non-violent drug possession offenders with no prior convictions to certified substance abuse treatment.

In practice, however, this supervision falls under the responsibility of county/district attorney offices, many of which in Kansas are run by a single, part-time, prosecutor.

On behalf of the commission, Owens introduced HB 2708 in February 2020. The bill would have authorized prosecutors to enter into memoranda of understanding with court services or community corrections offices to

supervise offenders. It also would have provided funding via federal grants.

HB 2708 unanimously passed the House but died in the Senate’s Judiciary Committee when COVID-19 shut down most legislative activity.

Owens says the measure will be considered again in 2021.

“The goal being, let’s help the people who need help with their addictions,” he says. “Let’s help them turn their lives around and in the end if they’re able to, let’s make sure they’re not branded with a felony for the rest of their life.”

The Council of State Governments Justice Center helped the Kansas commission by providing comparative research from other states, and with on-the-ground data collection and stakeholder interviews in nearly 100 Kansas counties.

“They team literally swarmed our state and did research that, as citizen legislators, we simply don’t have time to do,” Owens says.

“For them to be able to step in and do so much of that homework, that research, and to work with all of these different agencies, [it] was an invaluable resource (leading) to the success of our Criminal Justice Reform Commission.”

GREAT LAKES

Proposed Asian carp barrier gets federal backing; new rules on treatment of ballast water moving forward

by Tim Anderson

The year 2020 ended with two policy developments likely to shape future regional efforts to protect the Great Lakes from one of its greatest threats — the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.

As part of a spending bill approved in December, U.S. Congress authorized an $856 million project to add a new electric barrier and other fish-control technologies at Brandon Road Lock and Dam near Joliet, III. The goal keep Asian carp and other invasive species from reaching the Great Lakes via the Chicago Area Waterway System.

This Fall, too, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released draft standards for how the ballast water on oceangoing vessels must be treated.

PROGRESS ON BRANDON ROAD

The new barrier and controls at Brandon Road are a project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Such projects typically require a 20-year decision process that pays for 35 percent of the costs, but Great Lakes advocates and congressional supporters were able to boost the federal share of Brandon Road to 80 percent.

That still leaves a considerable amount of money needed for a project with a current price tag of close to $1 billion. Illinois has signed an agreement with the Army Corps to be the project’s non-federal sponsor for the pre-construction engineering and design phase.

And it will be receiving some financial assistance from a Great Lakes neighbor. Michigan has committed $8 million for this phase of the project. Illinois will contribute the remaining $2.5 million that is needed. The two states entered into an intergovernmental agreement in late December. More costs will come, and have to be covered, for the actual construction phase.

NEW RULES, BUT NOT YET

Concerns about Asian carp are behind the push for the Brandon Road project. These species of fish were initially brought to the United States to control algae blooms and vegetation in aquaculture facilities in the South. They escaped and have spread throughout the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, which are connected to the Great Lakes via the Chicago Area Waterway System, where Brandon Road Lock and Dam is located.

But most invasive species, including sea lamprey and zebra mussel, came to the Great Lakes via the discharge of ballast water from oceangoing vessels.

“[It] accounts for anywhere from 65 to 70 percent of the reported introductions since 1959,” Sarah LeSage, aquatic invasive species program coordinator for the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, said in December during a presentation to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus. Preventing these introductions is the goal of the EPA’s proposed new rules, which include discharge-specific standards for 20 different types of vessel equipment and treatment systems. They are the result of the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act of 2018.

Great Lakes advocates largely supported this law because it ensures that the EPA can regulate ballast water discharges as a pollutant under the Clean Water Act, and thus establish science-based treatment standards. But these gains in federal protection will come with a loss of policy authority for states, which will be largely barred from setting more-stringent standards of their own. Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin currently have state-level permitting programs and/or requirements for ballast water management. “That (pre-emption) happens when the federal waters are final, effective and enforceable,” LeSage said.

These new federal rules, which will be enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard, could take effect as early as 2023, she said. At that point, the only policy pathway for Great Lakes states will be for their governors to petition the EPA and ask for more-stringent standards.
NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL: COVID-19 PROTOCOLS ARE IN PLACE IN ALL OF MIDWEST’S LEGISLATURES, BUT RULES VARY WIDELY FROM CHAMBER TO CHAMBER

by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csg.org)

For a second calendar year, the nation’s “laboratories of democracy” are having to experiment with new ways of conducting legislative business amid the outbreak of a deadly infectious virus.

The early results for 2021: a varied set of COVID-19-related rules and protocols in place for the start of sessions in the Midwest’s 21 state legislative chambers; proposed new laws on how legislatures can meet during future outbreaks; and the implementation of technologies to ensure public access to the legislative process.

Here is an overview, based on a CSG Midwest review of legislative documents, discussions with legislative staff and news reports as of early January.

MINNESOTA HOUSE GOES REMOTE IN 2021

At first for the start of the year, most legislative leaders in the Midwest chose to hold their sessions and committee meetings in person, in their respective state capitols.

The Minnesota House is one notable exception. Session began there in early January with some members in the chamber, but most taking their oaths of office through Zoom, according to the online House publication Session Daily. For the entirety of the 2021 session, too, House leaders had procedures in place to allow for online legislating, including plans for all committee meetings to be held remotely. (The Minnesota Senate is employing a mix of in-person and online meetings.)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most states did not have specific laws spelling out when and how legislatures could meet remotely. States such as Minnesota have instead used changes in legislative rules. However, at the beginning of this year, bills were being introduced in some of the region’s capitols to provide specific statutory authority.

A proposal in North Dakota (SB 2124) would allow the Legislative Assembly “to use any technology or electronic means available to conduct meetings and transact legislative business” when meeting in special session to “address a state of emergency or disaster.”

Bills in Illinois (HB 5868 and SB 4030) outline a process for when and how the state General Assembly could conduct legislative business virtually — “in times of pestilence or an emergency resulting from a domestic or a foreign terrorist attack,” and under rules that the House and Senate would be required to have in place.

“The intent of the legislation is to provide for the very rare circumstances where it is extremely dangerous or impossible to meet,” says Illinois Rep. Ann Williams, sponsor of HB 5868.

Wisconsin is one of the few U.S. states with a long-standing, comprehensive law on virtual legislating during publicly declared disasters. That law was used in 2020 to help plan and execute sessions in which legislators participated and voted on bills remotely.

VIRTUAL OPTION FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

In some Midwestern states, legislative leaders are holding in-person sessions while giving individual members the chance to participate virtually. That extends to voting on bills in states such as North Dakota, where new rules give the “same rights, privileges and duties” to members who are not “physically present.”

South Dakota’s joint rules permit legislators to attend and vote remotely under certain circumstances and with the approval of the chamber leaders.

“Members of the Legislature have battled COVID themselves, had family members contract it, or been exposed to others who have had it,” South Dakota Senate President Pro Tempore Lee Schoenbeck said prior to the start of session.

“We know the situation in our state, and plan to do what we can to mitigate the spread. But we still understand that legislative business has to go on.”

Late in 2020, Attorney General Derek Schmidt advised the Kansas Legislature that members should be “physically present” for votes in committee and on the floor. He based this advisory opinion on quo warranto rules and constitutional language requiring legislators to meet (which commonly means “come together,” according to Schmidt) in the state capital.

“Bills passed by a procedure inconsistent with these requirements may be subject to challenge in court and will be invalidated if found constitutionally infirm,” Schmidt wrote.

MASK REQUIREMENTS IN SOME CHAMBERS

Kansa’s legislative session began in January in person. According to the Topeka Capital-Journal, steps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the state Capitol include having members of the House use the chamber’s gallery to allow for social distancing and utilizing remote testimony on bills before legislative committees.

Many other legislatures are employing these same strategies. Other protocols for 2021 include the installation of plexiglass barriers in committee rooms and on the chamber floor; new limits on the number of people in committee rooms; temperature checks for legislators, staff and the public; and COVID-19 testing.

In Indiana, the 100-member House moved its floor sessions to a larger government office building. It also started the year by holding only one floor session per week. (The House has typically met three times a week.)

Legislatures split on the question of whether to require the wearing of masks or simply encourage it, though the latter has been more common (see top map). In some states, too, mask wearing is optional for members of the legislature, but mandatory for staff, visitors and/or the media.

When Saskatchewan’s new Legislative Assembly met for the first time in late 2020, members wore masks while in session. Plexiglass shields also were installed on members’ desks.

UPGRADES IN TECHNOLOGY IN PLACE

According to The Bismarck Tribune, North Dakota lawmakers used a portion of federal CARES Act dollars over the interim to improve public access to the legislative process — for example, technological upgrades to live-stream committee meetings and floor sessions and to allow remote testimony on bills.

The Minnesota House expanded the number of committee meetings that can be live-streamed simultaneously (from two to five), with the goal of having “most, if not all, regular House activity … visible via webcast,” according to Session Daily.

In addition, to improve the functionality of remote legislating, the House is using a fingerprint authentication system. Each member was issued a fingerprint reader and had two fingers registered prior to session.

“Now, when a vote is taken, we use the fingerprint reader to verify who we are, and then vote online,” says Minnesota Rep. Paul Anderson, noting that this change allows the chamber to bypass the cumbersome process of virtual roll-call voting.

“When all the links get worked out, it should speed up the process of [online] voting,” he added.
In a December 2020 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously affirmed that states can regulate pharmacy benefit managers (often abbreviated as PBMs), the “middlemen” between health insurance plans and pharmacies, to curb rising prescription drug prices.

According to the National Academy for State Health Policy, PBMs administer health plans’ pharmacy benefits, which can involve setting up a pharmacy network, designing the list of covered prescription drugs, and establishing what plan members pay out of pocket.

Some PBM practices have come under scrutiny, including requiring rebates (which may not get passed on to the health plan or consumers) from manufacturers to put drugs on a “preferred” list; creating lists that benefit the PBM at consumers’ expense; requiring the purchase of drugs from PBM-controlled pharmacies; restricting price and cost information that pharmacies can share with consumers; and failing to safeguard the financial interest of their health plan’s clients.

To address those concerns, the National Academy for State Health Policy states suggests require PBMs to be licensed, have a fiduciary duty, disclose conflicts of interest, and report rebates and fees to the state, which would then make public any non-proprietary information.

The academy also recommends a prohibition on co-payments/co-insurance higher than the cost of a drug, a drug stewardship program that ensures pharmacists have the ability to inform consumers, and a ban on penalties against patients who don’t use pharmacy services in which the PBM has a financial interest.

As of October 2020, 46 states had enacted some type of law regulating PBMs, including measures enacted in six Midwestern states over the past two years.

Among the states requiring PBMs to share information on pricing and rebates with pharmacies and/or administrative organizations are Illinois (HB 465), Indiana (HB 1588), Iowa (SF 563) and Minnesota (SF 278). Under HB 1207 and SB 241, Indiana’s insurance commissioner may adopt rules to specify PBM license and financial standards, as well as ban PBMs from reimbursing affiliates more than independent pharmacies.

In 2018, as part of SF 2418, Iowa barred PBMs from prohibiting pharmacies or pharmacists from discussing cost information with covered individuals, or from setting more-affordable alternatives. The bill also prohibited health benefit plans from requiring pharmacy benefit co-payments that exceed submitted charges.

In Minnesota, PBMs cannot bar pharmacists from disclosing information about drug costs and alternative therapies, nor can they retroactively adjust claims for reimbursement submitted by a pharmacy.

Ohio’s 2019 budget (HB 166) incorporated bans on retroactive claim adjustments and requiring pharmacies to not disclose lower-priced and therapeutically equivalent drugs. The state also reorganized its Medicaid managed care program, opting to contract with a single PBM by July 2020. The state’s PBM must meet strict transparency requirements and disclose any received financial benefits or other payments, conflicts of interest, and financial interest.

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U.S. POPULATION GROWTH SLOWED IN PAST DECADE: TREND WAS EVEN MORE PRONOUNCED IN MIDWEST

In a decade of historically low population growth nationwide, most states in the Midwest had even smaller increases, with one experiencing a net decline in residents between 2010 and 2020, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates released in late 2020. Only North Dakota and South Dakota outpaced the U.S. growth rate, a third state in the upper Midwest, Minnesota, has had a population increase on par with the rest of the United States. Conversely, the latest estimates show Illinois as one of six U.S. states losing people between 2010 and 2020.

Three factors cause changes in a state's population: 1) the number of births vs. the number of deaths; 2) domestic migration (movement between states); and 3) international migration. On that first factor, there has been a "natural increase" in population of every state, though a notable recent trend across the nation has been a smaller and smaller birth-to-death ratio. Patterns in domestic migration are caused by factors such as quality of life and economic opportunity. For example, much of North Dakota's decennial increase occurred in the first part of the decade, during an oil boom in the western part of that state. Prior to this past decade, the lowest rate of decennial population growth in U.S. history was 7.3 percent and occurred in the 1930s, according to demographer William Frey, a senior fellow in the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program. The new U.S. Census Bureau estimates show this past decade's increase as being below 7 percent.

"It is roughly half the growth rate of the 1990s, a time of rising [international] immigration and millennial-generation births," he wrote in December. Frey adds that the COVID-19 pandemic stunted population growth, with several states — including Illinois, Michigan and Ohio in the Midwest — experiencing a net loss of population over the past two years. Nationwide, the increase between July 2019 and July 2020 is estimated to be 0.35 percent, the lowest annual growth rate since at least 1990, says Frey, noting that the pandemic led to more deaths and restrictions on immigration.

SUPPORTERS OF NEW COMPENSATION LAWS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES GET WINS IN MICHIGAN, NEBRASKA

Michigan and Nebraska are among the first states in the nation with laws that allow collegiate athletes to use their own names, images, likenesses and reputations for financial compensation. Michigan's HB 5217 and 5218 were signed in December and take effect in 2023. The bipartisan measures were sponsored by two former college athletes: Reps. Brandt Iden and Joe Tate. Iden notes that in his college days, he had opportunities to give tennis lessons to young players at recreational centers and camps, but was not allowed to advertise his status as a player on his Kalamazoo College team. Such a qualification, he says, would have presented additional value when offering his services.

In late 2019, the NCAA's governing board voted to allow student-athletes to earn compensation from the use of their names, images and likenesses. However, Tate, who played football at Michigan State University, believes a codification of student-athlete rights in state law still is needed. Under HB 5217 and 5218, Michigan's post-secondary institutions are barred from entering into contracts with student-athletes.

Nebraska's LB 962 was signed into law in July and becomes effective on July 1, 2023.

SPENDING CUTS IN EARLY PART OF FISCAL YEAR ILLUMINATE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON STATE FINANCES

The COVID-19 pandemic's teeth sank deeper into state budgets' general funds from fiscal year 2020 to 2021 as it slowed economic activity and as federal aid to states ran out prompting spending cuts and other mitigation efforts, according to the National Association of State Budget Officers in its December 2020 "Fiscal Survey of the States.”

Among the report's findings: general fund spending in U.S. states’ enacted FY 2021 budgets declined 1.1 percent from FY 2020 (the first year-over-year decline since the Great Recession), and general fund revenue is projected to decline by 4.4 percent this fiscal year compared to “already depressed” levels from FY 2020.

For data, the report were collected from August through November 2020, only the first few months of the new fiscal year in most states. Still, many mid-year cuts already were being reported — for example, a reduction of $421.3 million in Minnesota's enacted FY 2021 budget from original budget projections.

IOWA WORKING TO GET ALL STUDENTS ACCESS TO QUALITY COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

By fall of 2022, every high school in Iowa will be required to offer instruction in computer science, and the state is making plans now to have its teacher workforce ready and a strong curriculum in place. Legislators approved HF 2629 in 2020, a bill that created the new instructional requirements and established a Computer Science Work Group. This group began meeting early this year to develop recommendations on how to teach computer science and promote this subject area among K-12 students and families.

By fall of 2022, every high school in Iowa working to get all students access to quality computer science instruction

MINNESOTA GETS TOP RANKING IN NATION FOR WORK ON CYBERSECURITY, TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION

Minnesota is a national leader among state governments on cybersecurity preparedness and IT modernization, the result of a mix of legislative actions and investments as well as leadership from the executive branch, according to a December 2020 report from the Internet Association, a group composed of global internet companies. The state has a cybersecurity budget of $5 million, experiences 10 percent fewer ransomware attacks, and is guided by a centralized chief information security office. Minnesota also is one of three U.S. states with a "cloud first" statute, which the Internet Association describes as a commitment to leveraging commercial technologies to save taxpayer money and modernize the delivery of services.

Minnesota was one of three states given a rating of "very good" in the study. Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota and Ohio were placed in the middle "good" tier; with Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin in the lower "getting started" tier.
New Funding Mechanisms Help Schools Become Hubs of Mental Health Service

To provide for school-based mental health, including new federal grants, greater flexibility in public and private insurance plans, and programs being developed by the states themselves.

To improve early detection of student needs, school-entry health exams in Illinois must include screenings for social and emotional well-being (SB 565 of 2017), Illinois also was the first U.S. state to adopt standards for social emotional learning.

Under a 2019 law (SB 325), Indiana has begun offering grants for schools to develop plans that help students in need of mental health services. These plans (developed with parental involvement and consent) can include school-based or outside services.

Iowa’s top school official is helping lead that state’s first-of-its-kind, stand-alone Children’s Mental Health System. Created two years ago (HF 690) to close gaps in access and improve services, this system is overseen by a state board, with the Department of Education director serving as one of two standing co-chairs.

Legislative appropriations in Kansas in recent years have led to the creation of mental health intervention teams in select school districts. School liaisons and clinical therapists in the community work on these teams; they help identify students in need and connect them to appropriate services.

According to Alex Mays of the Healthy Schools Campaign, Michigan is a national leader on school-based mental health, noting it was one of the first U.S. states to have such services covered by Medicaid. This year, too, legislators dedicated nearly $37 million for mental health services in schools.

More than a decade ago, Minnesota launched the groundbreaking School-Linked Mental Health Services Program. Along with bringing clinical-level care to schools, the program helps identify children with serious mental health needs.

According to Mays, who tracks state activity across the country for the Healthy Schools Campaign, Michigan has emerged as a leader in recent years on school-based mental health — for example, appropriating $31 million for schools to bring in licensed behavioral health providers and changing the state’s Medicaid program so that it can cover services for general-education students (those who don’t have an individualized education plan).

“That change in Medicaid policy, she adds, is needed specifically for services being provided by school-employed staff.” Outside mental health providers already can be reimbursed.

According to Hoover, a variety of funding streams are now available to provide for school-based mental health, including new federal grants, greater flexibility in public and private insurance plans, and programs being developed by the states themselves.

In recent years, North Dakota has started and expanded a prevention and early intervention program in the schools. The pilot initiative helps schools integrate behavioral health strategies into existing educational and support systems for students.

Ohio is investing a historic amount of state dollars this biennium on student wellness. The $675 million Student Wellness and Success Fund goes to projects developed by local schools. That includes new school-based mental health services and partnerships with community providers.

Across Saskatchewan, at least one staff member in every school will receive training this year on “mental health first aid” — for example, recognizing symptoms of students in crisis, providing initial assistance and connecting them with professional care. Saskatchewan is spending $400,000 on this training.

In South Dakota, as part of the state’s Project Aware initiative, system of care coordinators are forging new relationships between local school districts and the state’s community mental health centers. These coordinators help assess student needs and develop action plans.

Students in Wisconsin are being empowered to recognize the warning signs of depression and suicide among their peers, and then offer evidence-based supports. State funding for peer-to-peer training is the result of last year’s passage of AB 528. Wisconsin high schools can now apply for state grants.
South Dakota Sen. Gary Cammack

**INSIGHTS**

**STATELINE MIDWEST**

**PROFILE: SOUTH DAKOTA SENATE MAJORITY LEADER GARY CAMMACK**

A leader in business, on conservation and now of state government, he sees important economic and policy opportunities for South Dakota in year ahead

**by Jon Davis (jdavis@csg.org)**

G ary Cammack’s road to legislative leadership began, and continues, in the western part of his beloved home state of South Dakota.

He and his wife, Amy, met while in high school in the town of Sturgis, got married in 1972 and, one year later, bought a business. “Just a little general store 12 miles off a paved highway,” Cammack recalls.

Six years later, they bought another location in the town of Union Center (“this time on a paved highway,” Cammack says) and continued to grow the business into what it is today — one of the area’s most successful and respected supply stores for ranchers and farmers.

Along the way, Cammack also worked in construction, as an ironworker helping build the Alaska Pipeline. That job helped the family erase its debts and buy the first acres of land that is now their 11,000-acre, conservation award-winning ranch.

The Cammacks began a family as well, now grown to four sons and 10 grandchildren. And then came the chance to enter politics.

“I’d always had an interest in that, in having a front-row seat to democracy,” Cammack says.

When a spot opened on the commission of his home county, Cammack, a longtime business leader, was an obvious choice. He eventually made the jump to the Legislature in 2012, winning a three-way primary for a House seat and then the general election.

He soon joined the state’s upper chamber and emerged as a top legislative leader there — first as president pro tempore, and now as Senate majority leader.

Cammack also is now chair of The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference, the binational, nonpartisan group of all state and provincial lawmakers from this region. In that position, he will guide the work of the MLC in 2021, including its Annual Meeting (that event is scheduled to be held July 11-14 in Rapid City, S.D.).

In a recent interview with CSG Midwest, Sen. Cammack discussed his views on leadership, the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for his home state of South Dakota, and the value of the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Here are excerpts.

**Q** What do you view as some of the most important responsibilities of the Senate majority leader?

**A** In South Dakota we do have a supermajority of Republicans in the Legislature, and we hold all of the constitutional offices in the executive branch.

So Republicans have a very strong representation in state government, and sometimes that has a tendency to create fractures based on differing viewpoints. It’s important that we maintain some really good communication — within the [Senate Republican] caucus and also with the executive branch, the House of Representatives and the public in general.

The other thing is that I think it’s really important, regardless of a personal position [on an issue], to make sure all viewpoints are heard in the caucus. Then, we agree upon a direction and move in that way so we can speak as mostly a unified voice.

**Q** In terms of leadership style, what have you seen work, or not work?

**A** In leadership, you’ve got to do exactly that, you’ve got to lead.

You can’t push. You can’t push people to do things and be very successful for any period of time. My leadership style is to encourage folks, and to make sure I adequately communicate the vision I have on any given issue. I try to do my job to best find common ground so that we can move forward with some broad-based support.

When I’ve seen real success [in the Legislature], it’s when individuals are able to bring people together, identify that common ground, and then commit to thoroughly discussing an issue in order to find other areas of agreement.

**Q** The past year was incredibly challenging for all states and their legislatures because of the COVID-19 pandemic. What is the outlook for South Dakota in 2021?

**A** We’ve got a really unique and wonderful opportunity, actually. In our state, we never shut down and ended up, revenue-wise, in a very strong position. We also used the funds that came from the federal side wisely. Because of all that, we’ve got approaching a couple hundred million dollars of money that’s available to us for one-time spending. So we’re going to have a really golden opportunity to be able to do some important things in the state of South Dakota that we might not have been able to do otherwise.

**Q** What are some ideas on how the state can use that money?

**A** There’s going to be a focus on expanding and completing our broadband initiative. … Our goal is to have all of our citizens well-connected, so that’s going to be one of the big things.

We’re also going to be taking a hard look at trying to expand the capabilities of small packing plants and harvest facilities for livestock. We want to expand their capabilities and create some new ones, if it’s possible.

Last year, the people in the U.S. for the first time — well, I’m fairly certain in anybody’s lifetime that’s around right now — saw meat cases that were empty. And all of a sudden, it became a fairly clear reality that we need to develop those opportunities and expand those existing plants. Our smaller mom-and-pop plants can provide that local food and also provide opportunities for local producers in agriculture.

That’s one of the things I’m certainly going to be taking a look at.

**Q** You’re also taking on another leadership role: chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference. What are your goals for this nonpartisan, regional association of legislators?

**A** Where I hope to leave the MLC is in a stronger position as far as participation and membership, and to be able to communicate to more people the value of the organization.

There’s always some improvement to be made, but the main thing is we have to make sure that the folks that we serve have a clear understanding of all of the good things that we can do, and all of the help that we can be to those members. Any time I’ve attended one of the MLC meetings, you cannot walk away without having ended up with a lot of insights.
FIRST PERSON: EMPOWERING LOW-INCOME CHILDREN WITH HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

‘Minnesota model’ combines use of scholarships, Parent Aware rating system

The highest returns on investment occur if it goes to high-quality programs that are successfully preparing low-income children for kindergarten.

On the flip side, research from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Institute of Child Health and Human Development shows that low-quality programs not only don’t produce a high return on investment, they can actually set vulnerable children backward.

Fortunately, high-quality child care can come in many shapes and sizes. When we refer to Parent Aware that best practices can be adopted in homes, schools, centers or churches. That’s great news, because parents want and need the ability to choose the setting that is right for their family.

As a former teacher, I have seen the impact of high-quality child care first hand. I think of a kindergartner who did not know how to open a book to read, opening it with the spine on the right. They don’t see that with children who have experienced a high-quality program. I am a firm believer that the first and most important teacher in a student’s life is the parent. But many parents from all walks of life are working full time and need assistance; quality programs provide the help that they and their young children need.

So, when I think about child care, what I think about is adequately preparing young children to enter school. What should that look like?

The ‘MINNESOTA MODEL’

Along with other states, Minnesota has been a leader in providing high-quality child care that prepares kids for school. As a first-year lawmaker in the Senate in 2011, I began working with the business community on this issue. Our state’s business community was, and is, very concerned about Minnesota’s achievement gaps, which are some of the worst in the nation. Those gaps pose a threat to having the brains stimulated in quality, play-based early-learning programs. The stakes are high for our taxpayers, communities, economy and most-vulnerable children.

• First, financial help is targeted to children in low-income families who can’t access quality early-learning programs. Research shows that this kind of targeted investment yields the highest return on investment for taxpayers.

• Second, scholarships are available early in life, from birth to age 5, before achievement gaps grow too large and become difficult to close.

• Third, by making these scholarships flexible, parents are empowered and put in the driver’s seat. Parents can choose from an array of high-quality programs to find one that best fits their individual preferences and needs.

Thanks to the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation pilot program and evaluations, scholarships are aligned with four research-based principles.

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• Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, our scholarship program demands quality. Scholarships can only be used at programs that use kindergarten-readiness best practices, as measured by our research-driven Parent Aware rating system. The results have been amazing. Privately funded, third-party evaluations found that children in Parent Aware-rated programs make significant gains on kindergarten readiness measures: vocabulary, early math skills, social competence and executive function, and phonics. Low-income children make the biggest gains of all.

Evaluations also showed that flexible scholarships helped low-income families access high-quality programs, and were very popular with providers and parents.

The only problem with these Early Learning Scholarships is that there aren’t enough of them, due to lack of state funding. Currently, 35,000 low-income children under age 5 still can’t access high-quality programs. We can do more.

Beyond our experience in Minnesota, it has been very gratifying to see similar approaches adopted around the nation. There are at least 18 state or municipal initiatives that are aligned with a majority of the tenants of what we call the “Minnesota Model of Early Learning.” In other words, these jurisdictions have programs that are targeted to the children most in need, tied to quality, start early in life, and offer families flexibility and choice.

A few notable examples: Quality First Scholarships in Arizona, Indy Preschool Scholarship, Erie’s Futures Fund in Pennsylvania, and Maryland’s Child Care Scholarship Program. All have significant similarities to our approach in Minnesota, with interesting twists that we’re studying. This must be an “all hands on deck” moment. We are failing too many disadvantaged children by shutting them out of opportunities that build equity. At the state, local and national levels, we have to do a better job to ensure that all children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. The Minnesota model provides a proven path forward.

by Minnesota Sen. Carla Nelson (sen.carla.nelson@senate.mn)

With High-Quality Early Learning opportunities:

The importance of quality, choice

Arméd with this knowledge, today’s parents expect the use of early-learning best practices, such as an evidence-based curriculum, well-equipped learning environments, and opportunities for play that support fast-developing young brains. Parents today’s parents expect the use of early-learning best practices, such as an evidence-based curriculum, well-equipped learning environments, and opportunities for play that support fast-developing young brains. Parents

W

When I was a young girl both of my parents worked — my dad as a principal and my mom as a teacher.

So, every day, my mom dropped my brother and me off at Grandma Bowman’s home. Grandma Bowman wasn’t our real grandma; that’s just what we called her. She was my family’s day care provider in the little town where I grew up, where everyone knew everyone.

Child care has changed a lot since then, in large part because we have learned about the importance of early brain development. Brain scientists tell us that up to 80 percent of brain development happens by age 3.

We also know that achievement gaps can be measured as early as age 1. The data send a clear, urgent message: we must stimulate young brains early in life.

OUR STATE’S BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Child care is no longer just about keeping children sheltered, fed, safe and healthy. For students to be successful in school and life, they also need to have their brains stimulated in quality, play-based early-learning programs. The stakes are high for our taxpayers, communities, economy and most-vulnerable children.

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SHARON ANDERSON

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SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

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By State of Minnesota Sen. Carla Nelson (sen.carla.nelson@senate.mn)
The Council of State Governments advances work of states by providing services to lawmakers, other policy leaders

The Council of State Governments congruately welcomes all of these new public servants, and looks forward to helping them in the months and years ahead. CSG is the nation’s only organization serving all branches of state government. Through its region-based structure, CSG fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials and to strengthen public policy. The nonpartisan, nonprofit organization offers unparalleled regional, national and international opportunities to network, develop leaders, collaborate and create problem-solving partnerships. CSG’s mission is to champion excellence in state governments to advance the common good.

For first-time and veteran lawmakers alike, here are seven ways to make the most of CSG in 2021 and beyond.

1. GET INVOLVED IN CSG’S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

CSG’s binational, nonpartisan Midwestern Legislative Conference includes all legislators from 11 member states, as well as the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Three Canadian provinces also are affiliate members of the MLC (see map).

The MLC is led by a four-officer team of state legislators as well as a bipartisan Executive Committee of legislators from across the Midwest. These leaders guide the work of CSG Midwest in providing services and support to the region’s lawmakers.

2. TAKE PART IN CSG’S IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL EVENTS IN 2021

From its inception in 1933, CSG has been dedicated to helping states fulfill their roles as the nation’s “laboratories of democracy.” With that in mind, CSG regularly brings together legislators and other leaders of state government to learn from one another, as well as top national policy experts.

For example, the MLC Annual Meeting is the only event of its kind designed by and for the Midwest’s state and provincial legislators. It is scheduled to be held this year on July 11-14 in Rapid City, S.D. The CSG National Conference is scheduled to be held Dec. 1-4 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. CSG also holds policy academies focused on specific issue areas in state government. Throughout the year, too, CSG offers virtual sessions on public policy and professional development; visit csgmidwest.org and csg.org to learn more.

3. PARTICIPATE IN MLC COMMITTEES, OTHER INTERSTATE WORKING GROUPS

Many of CSG Midwest’s events help support the work of seven binational, interstate policy committees. These groups allow legislators to work together on common policy priorities while sharing ideas and best practices: This is the MLC’s current committee lineup:

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

Appointments to these committees are made by legislative leaders in individual states as well as MLC leaders. This year, too, the MLC has launched two new working groups: one focusing on issues of social justice, a second on the continuum of legislative operations during situations such as a pandemic.

Please contact CSG Midwest director Mike McCabe (mmccabe@csorg.org) if you’re interested in serving on one of these interstate committees. CSG also supports various national committees and task forces.

4. LEAD ON PUBLIC POLICIES IMPORTANT TO STATES AND THE MIDWEST

How can U.S. states and Canadian provinces better protect the Great Lakes? What policies can help improve public safety, cut corrections costs and reduce rates of recidivism? When can interstate compacts be used to help states work together to solve common problems? These questions, along with evidence-based policy responses, are the focus of CSG-led groups such as the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus (GLLC), the Justice Center and the National Center for Interstate Compacts.

CSG Midwest staffs the GLLC as well as regional groups to strengthen passenger rail and to plan for the safe shipment of radioactive waste through the region.

5. BUILD YOUR LEADERSHIP LEGISLATIVE SKILLS WITH HELP OF CSG

Hundreds of legislators from the Midwest are alumni of CSG’s two leadership training programs:

• the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLDD), the only leadership-development program designed specifically for Midwestern state legislators; and
• Toll Fellows, CSG’s national leadership development program for state officials from all three branches of government.

Information on these programs, including how to apply, is available at csg.org and csigmidwest.org.

And through its Under the Dome initiative, the MLC brings customized professional development and policy training to the region’s capitol. For more information, please contact CSG Midwest’s Laura Tomaka (ltomaka@csg.org) or Cindy Andrews (candrews@csg.org).

6. GET CUSTOMIZED RESEARCH ASSISTANCE ON PUBLIC POLICY FROM CSG MIDWEST

Throughout the year, CSG Midwest provides individualized research assistance to legislators and legislative staff. This research is coordinated by CSG’s liaisons in each state. Please contact them for assistance.

• Illinois — Mitch Arvidson, marvidson@csg.org
• Indiana — Ilene Grossman, igrossman@csg.org
• Iowa — Ilene Grossman, igrossman@csg.org
• Kansas — Laura Kliwer, likliwer@csg.org
• Michigan — Laura Kliwer, likliwer@csg.org
• Minnesota — Mitch Arvidson, marvidson@csg.org
• Nebraska — Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
• North Dakota — Laura Tomaka, lttomaka@csg.org
• Ohio — Laura Tomaka, lttomaka@csg.org
• South Dakota — Jon Davis, jddavis@csg.org
• Wisconsin — Jon Davis, jddavis@csg.org

7. STAY UP TO DATE ON TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS IN STATE GOVERNMENTS

CSG’s regional and national publications keep lawmakers informed on key policy trends and innovations in state government, as well as important institutional issues in state government.

• This publication, Stateline Midwest, is produced 11 times a year and focuses on key policies and trends of interest to this region and its elected officials.
• Capital Ideas, CSG’s national magazine, is published five times a year and covers cutting-edge issues and forecasts policy trends in state government.
• “The Book of the States,” an annual encyclopedia of essential information on state government, is a premier resource for policymakers and academic institutions throughout the nation.

CSG’s policy research also can be found at csigmidwest.org, csg.org and csgjusticecenter.org.

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 reference publications, innovations transfer, state sponsored 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 TOP CAUCUS LEADERS

Kansas Sen. Dinah Sykes (BILLD class of 2017) was elected in January to serve as minority leader of the Senate, making her the first new senator to hold this post in nearly a quarter century. Her predecessor had served in this position since 1996.

“I am humbled by the trust my colleagues have placed in me,” Sykes told CSG Midwest. “And I am grateful to be working alongside them as we face the challenges ahead.”

She said the caucus’s priorities will be on Medicaid expansion, access to health care services such as preventative screenings and mental health resources, and funding for public schools.

“I will continue to build on the relationships I have with Republicans, build relationships with the freshman class, and find areas where we can come together to pass good policy for the people of Kansas.”

Several other graduates of CSG Midwest’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development are serving this year as top caucus/legislative leaders.

- Illinois Sen. Don Harmon (class of 2005): Senate president

In addition, North Dakota Rep. Kim Koppelman (class of 1997) was selected to serve as speaker of the House for this legislative session. In this position, he is the presiding officer of the North Dakota House of Representatives.

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