by Tim Anderson (tanderson@csbg.org)

In his nine years as a legislator, Rep. Troy Waymaster says, he’s never experienced a budget situation even close to the one right now in Kansas: a projected surplus nearing $2.9 billion by year’s end and close to $4 billion by 2023. But he’s also clear-eyed about what lies ahead in the not-so-distant future. “There has just been this huge infusion of money from the federal government into the economy, and that’s what has precipitated our ending balances to be so high,” says Waymaster, chair of the House Appropriations Committee. “The federal government cannot continue to infuse that money. It’s going to stop. “So we’ve got to be prepared for when that fiscal cliff happens and our ending balances begin to dwindle.”

Pay off debts. Address Kansas’ unfunded liabilities in its retirement system for public employees. Build up a rainy day fund. Ensure any new spending or tax-cutting proposals can sustain budgetary ups and downs over the long term.

Those were some of the ideas and principles guiding Waymaster entering the 2022 legislative session. It’s a cautious approach that Josh Goodman of The Pew Charitable Trusts says he was seeing early in the year in other states as well. “One thing that has been gratifying to me, at least, is as lawmakers talk about new investments — whether it’s in the form of spending or tax cuts — they’re also recognizing that a lot of this is temporary money, and that we need to prepare for this cliff when the federal aid expires and when state revenue returns to a normal level,” says Goodman, a senior officer for Pew’s State Fiscal Health program. “I’ve probably been through more deficits than surpluses as a legislator, but this year reminds me of a saying I heard a long time ago: In the legislature, you’re going to argue more when there’s a surplus than when there is a deficit,” says Minnesota Sen. Julie Rosen. That’s because everyone has ideas on what to do with the excess money, she adds.

Entering the legislative year, Rosen was envisioning a balanced approach: return some money to taxpayers; spend more in high-need areas such as public safety, mental health and financial support for frontline COVID-19 workers; get Minnesota’s unemployment trust fund out of debt and back on solid footing, and shore up the state’s long-term fiscal health.

“I would like us to look at paying down the debt. Address Minnesota’s unfunded liabilities in its retirement system for public employees. Build up a rainy day fund. Ensure any new spending or tax-cutting proposals can sustain budgetary ups and downs over the long term,” says Goodman.

“A LOT OF UNCERTAINTY”

The last year has not been “normal” in terms of state finances. According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, states closed their books for FY 2021 with year-over-year growth of 14.5 percent. That was the highest annual increase in at least four decades. In comparison, NASBO data show, average annual revenue growth for U.S. states has been 5.4 percent.

“It’s an impressive amount of money that states are sitting on right now, not only to pay pandemic bills, but to make investments that they otherwise could never have afforded,” says Barb Rosewicz, project director for Pew’s State Fiscal Health program. In Minnesota, the state’s most recent budget projections point to a surplus of $9.25 billion by the end of the current biennium. “I’ve probably been through more deficits than surpluses as a legislator, but this year reminds me of a saying I heard a long time ago: In the legislature, you’re going to argue more when there’s a surplus than when there is a deficit,” says Minnesota Sen. Julie Rosen.

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by Derek Cantú (dcantu@csg.org)

T he first time under the 20-month-old United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), a three-person panel ruled on a dispute made by dairy products and cheese companies.

The three-person panel found that Canada was in violation of the agreement, leaving the country with one of two options: find a new way to resolve the dispute, or risk U.S. trade retaliation.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said the decision “will help eliminate unjustified trade restrictions on American dairy products.”

The panel concluded that Canada failed to ensure that dairy products sold in the United States met the agreement’s rules. As a result, the United States is able to impose retaliatory tariffs on Canadian dairy products.

This is the latest in a series of disputes under the USMCA, which was negotiated with automakers to bring back manufacturing to the United States. Under NAFTA, 62.5 percent of a car had to be North American-made in order to qualify for tariff-free status. It’s now 75 percent under the USMCA.

Typically, foreign-made components or parts have qualified if they were used or modified in North American assembly. Now, though, the United States says that 75 percent of the components that go into “core parts” (such as an engine or transmission) need to be North American-made. Canada and Mexico say this is inconsistent with the agreement, which was negotiated with automakers and parts suppliers.

“The new interpretation changes how we’ve been doing things for 30 years,” says Uzcó, who also works with auto manufacturers. “We need to get this resolved now … because we are planning models for five, seven years out right now, and we need to know what the rules of the game are.”


First two disputes under new trade agreement center on core Midwest industries: dairy and autos

SROs and related training requirements. Rep. Howell says he supports training SROs on adolescent behavior, but cautions that some smaller communities in Michigan may not have the capacity to devote a single officer to work in schools. “Some of these (officers) may end up being very part-time people, and if you’re in a small town with, say, a three- or four-person police force, it’s harder to specialize,” Howell says.


Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Police in the schools: States play central role in the funding and training of resource officers

by Mitch Arvidson (marvidson@csug.org)

A s November, a teenage gunman opened fire at Oxford High School in Michigan, killing four students. According to local news sources, an on-campus school resource officer (SRO) played a key role in ending the tragedy.

Michigan Rep. Gary Howell, too, credits the SRO for preventing further losses of life at the school, where his own son works as a teacher.

Two days after the shooting, Howell took legislative action: a proposal to increase state support for schools seeking to employ SROs. As originally written, HB 5522 would have provided $10 million in grants, via a mix of state and federal dollars. Howell’s amendment — included in a House-passed version of HB 5522 — hiked that total to $50 million.

“There are some districts that, for whatever reason, prefer not to have police officers in the schools,” he says. But for districts wanting SROs in their schools, Howell does not want a lack of financial resources standing in the way.

Across the country, the presence of SROs in schools has become more common in recent decades; the availability of state and federal dollars is one reason why.

However, this approach to school safety also has been under increased scrutiny, particularly following the police killing of George Floyd.

In the Midwest, some of the largest school districts have dramatically reduced, if not outright eliminated, the use of SROs.

In Des Moines, Iowa, this decision was made in part based on feedback from town hall events and survey responses. District leaders also had found that Black students were twice as likely to receive referrals to the principal’s office compared to White students, and were arrested at a rate of six times their White classmates.

“What we have seen is that we overviewed the law enforcement when they were on campus,” says Jake Troja, an administrator in the Des Moines school district.

“In all cases, law enforcement are invited into the situation by the schools. The disproportionality that occurred, is that the responsibility of the school? I think that’s why we evaluated that program and wanted to make some changes.”

Another factor in shifting away from SROs, Troja adds, was an evaluation of the return from investing in these officers. “Looking at data, we saw that almost always our staff members were first folks involved (in responding to student-misbehavior incidents),” he says.

Recent national studies have examined the roles and impacts of SROs as well. Their study, “The Thin Blue Line in Schools: New Evidence on School-Based Policing Across the U.S.,” also concluded that the presence of SROs can increase behavioral problems in adolescents.

“We have to brace for the reality that we didn’t have the ability of exporters to sell directly to [Canadian] distributors or retailers.”

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Ohio House Speaker Robert Cupp and Minnesota Minister Kevin Kimjaiten serve as co-chairs of the Midwestern Legislative Conference Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee. Committee members include: Rep. Tom Marynack, Ohio Sen. Tim McIntosh, Michigan Sen. Jim Stamas are co-vice chairs. Mitch Arvidson is CSG Midwest’s staff liaison to the committee.

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Scarlett Davis...

In 2011, an Ohio man placed a camera in

A good place to start, says the national's largest "restaurant chain" — the 12 school lunch programs.

One year after the passage of LB 396 (it received unanimous legislative support), local producers were offering state-led training sessions on the process of selling to schools. Likewise, leaders from Nebraska schools had participated in virtual Farm to School institutes, where plans were developed on how to bring locally grown foods to their cafeterias.

The economic benefits of farm-to-school percolate throughout our local communities, says Brandt, whose background includes work as a food system engineer and farmer.

"By providing a stable, reliable market for local producers, he says, "the state of Nebraska enjoys the benefits of having locally grown food that are currently leaving the state."

Previously, he adds, one missing piece in state policy was a full-time farm-to-school coordinator — someone to connect farmers and schools to raise awareness about the program. Hiring such a coordinator was recommended by an intercollegiate task force in 2020 and subsequently included in LB 396, which established the statewide Farm to School Program.

It’s a win for our farmers, it’s a win for our communities, and it’s a win for our students at our schools,” Sarah Smith, who was hired by the Nebraska Department of Education as the farm-to-school coordinator, says about local procurement.

The goal of LB 396 was to expand local procurement of video cameras in rooms of a resident’s room with his or her permission; authorization of the use of video surveillance to monitor residents."

"Every once in a while, we work on a piece of legislation that transcends particle and party politics," says the bill’s co-sponsor, Ohio Sen. Nickie Antonio, who counts Ohio's education system among her constituents.

"Everyone recognized this was a bill they could be proud to go home and tell their constituents, 'I helped get this one through.'"
VIEW FROM THE GOVERNORS’ OFFICES: FOUR POLICY IDEAS FROM RECENT STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESSES, BUDGET PROPOSALS IN MIDWEST

1 NORTH DAKOTA GOV. BURGUM: ‘DOUBLE DOWN ON TAX CREDIT FOR BUSINESS AUTOMATION’

A special guest made an appearance near the tail end of Gov. Doug Burgum’s State of the State address in February at the Fargo Theatre.

Otto the Robot, built by the robotics team at North Dakota State University, wheeled in some water for Burgum while also drawing attention to one of his core messages: Let’s embrace the power of automation.

“Whether it’s manufacturing, whether it’s warehousing, State aid biosciences or manufacturing, whatever it is, we have an opportunity to be training the people that can run the automation, as opposed to doing the mundane jobs,” he said.

That means higher-paying jobs for individuals, Burgum added, and alleviating a persistent workforce shortage.

“We should actually be the leader in automation in the nation,” Burgum said. “It’s one way for us to be having to fight for less for the people that may want to live somewhere other than North Dakota.”

He called on legislators in 2023 to “double down” on an existing automation tax credit for businesses. The credit covers 20 percent of the cost of new machinery and equipment that automates operations in some way. To qualify, a purchase must be shown to improve job quality (5 percent increase in wages or improvement in workplace safety) or output (5 percent increase).

The existing credit is capped at $1 million in yearly state appropriations. Burgum wants it expanded. “Make it the most ambitious and most expansive workforce tool yet,” he said to legislators.

2 WISCONSIN GOV. EVERS: DO MORE TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS

More money will be going to K-12 districts across Wisconsin to expand school-based mental health, a service for students and families that Gov. Tony Evers said improves lives as well as success in the classroom.

“A kid who’s in crisis isn’t going to be able to pay attention at school, finish their homework, or engage with their friends or teachers,” he said during his February State of the State address.

Under the $15 million Get Kids Ahead Initiative, which Evers unveiled during that speech, every district is eligible to receive new state funding, anywhere from $10,000 for the smallest districts in the state to close to $1 million for Milwaukee Public Schools.

Schools have discretion on how to use these dollars — for example, hire staff to provide direct care or help families access it in the community, contract with local providers, or develop new training for school employees in areas such as mental health first aid and trauma-based care.

Another $5 million will go to the University of Wisconsin System to build more mental health supports for college students. Last spring, Evers said, 75 percent of students in the system screened positive for moderate or severe psychological distress.

3 ILLINOIS GOV. PRITZKER: INVEST MORE THAN $800 MILLION IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Over the past three years, Illinois has more than doubled its spending on violence prevention and youth employment programs — up to $517 million in fiscal year 2022.

That figure would rise to $832 million under Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s proposed budget for the coming fiscal year.

One point of emphasis: Provide more dollars and technical assistance for community-based groups in the state’s highest-crime neighborhoods. They, in turn, would use this additional state support to implement evidence-based programs — for example, Medicaid-funded trauma recovery services for adults, or outreach services for young people most impacted by violence.

“Crime is a complex and multi-faced problem to tackle, and it’s cynical and counter-productive to simply shout ‘Lock them up’ while providing fewer resources to the people and programs that prevent crime in the first place,” Pritzker said during his State of the State address.

Under his plan, the state also would hire more police, forensic scientists and evidence technicians, as well as put $20 million toward a program that helps local prosecutors protect victims and witnesses in cases involving gang violence.

“A truly effective approach to tackling crime involves both short-term and long-term investments,” Pritzker said, “and a commitment to see those investments through.”

4 MINNESOTA GOV. WALZ: LAUNCH ‘GREEN BANK’ TO ADVANCE CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz is seeking $34 million in seed funding to launch a quasi-public Green Bank.

Run as an independent, nonprofit corporation, the bank would provide low-cost financing for projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency. According to the governor’s office, once this initial investment is made by the Legislature, the bank would be responsible for ongoing administrative and capital costs.

The idea for a Green Bank was part of a larger supplemental budget unveiled by Walz at the start of Minnesota’s legislative session. (He had not yet given a formal State of the State address as of February.)

In introducing his proposal, Walz pointed to the success of other states’ green banks in jump-starting clean energy projects (offering loans when conventional financing is not available) and leveraging public and private investments. For example, Connecticut’s Green Bank leverages $7.40 for every $1 it provides.

Article written by Tim Anderson, CSG Midwest publications manager, who can be reached at tanderson@csg.org. The January/February edition of Stateline Midwest highlighted proposals from the State of the State addresses given in January by the governors of Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska and South Dakota.

334.1 303.5 291.0 271.5 263.0 254.5 242.0 230.5 218.0 205.5
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254.5 230.5 206.5 182.5 158.5 134.5 110.5 86.5 62.5 38.5
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221.5 200.0 178.5 157.0 135.5 114.0 92.5 70.5 46.5 2.5
200.0 178.5 157.0 135.5 114.0 92.5 70.5 46.5 2.5 0.0

Source: CSG Midwest calculations based on data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

% of young people with major depression not receiving any mental health treatment

Source: Mental Health America

# of violent crime offenses per 100,000 residents (2020)

Source FBI

PER CAPITA GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS IN MIDWEST, 2018

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

State Metric tons of energy-related CO2 per person % change: 2000-2018

Illinois 16.7 -10.9%
Indiana 28.2 -27.8%
Iowa 26.3 -3.1%
Kansas 21.4 -24.1%
Michigan 16.4 -15.9%
Minnesota 17.0 -14.3%
Nebraska 27.2 +11.8%
North Dakota 77.7 -2.6%
Ohio 23.4 -23.3%
South Dakota 18.8 -5.6%
Wisconsin 20.1 -12.7%
All U.S. states 20.7 -21.7%

Higher than U.S. crime rate (196.5)
Lower than U.S. crime rate (198.5)
WITH NEW LAW AND FEDERAL FUNDS, ILLINOIS SET TO LEAD ON LEAD-PIPE REMOVAL

by Jon Davis (jdavis@csfg.org)

N o city in America has more lead service lines than Rep. Lamont Robinson’s hometown of Chicago. And his home state has an estimated 12 percent of the nation’s total. Now, though, Illinois may be poised to lead the nation in another way — getting rid of the lines that put people at risk of having their drinking water contaminated with lead. “We have been kicking the can for several years, particularly since the 70s, on lead pipes and paint,” Robinson says. “Since then, we’ve seen other communities with issues as it relates to clean water.” “I felt it was time to put this issue to bed.”

The result: his sponsorship of HB 3739, a measure signed into law last year that makes Illinois one of the first U.S. states with a plan, timeline and statutory requirements for local water utilities to replace all of their lead service lines. The exact deadlines for full replacement vary based on the number of lead pipes that need to be replaced in a given service area; every utility, however, will need to remove a certain percentage of lines every year. Priority will be given to projects in preschools, day care centers and other facilities where high lead levels are of particular concern. Negotiated with involvement by water utilities, municipalities and advocates, the Illinois law also prioritizes rural and minority communities — areas that Robinson says tend to have the biggest problems with lead service lines and/or lack the resources to implement response strategies such as the use of filters or bottled water.

For Illinois and other Midwestern states, one continuing obstacle to replacing lead service lines is the cost. The Brookings Institution has estimated the price tag for a nationwide replacement at anywhere between $28 billion and $47 billion. Over the next five years, though, much more assistance will be coming to states: a total of $15 billion under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (see map for the Midwest). That $15 billion is on top of congressional appropriations already available through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. These recent federal actions should help kick-start Illinois’ plans to replace lead service lines, Robinson says, but will not get the state to the finish line. “The will is there for us to find money in the state of Illinois to get rid of lead pipes,” Robinson says. Finding a way is part of HB 3739. It creates a Lead Service Line Replacement Fund, and directs a new state advisory board to identify “dedicated, long-term revenue options” for lawmakers to consider. Robinson views the removal of lead service lines as part of a broader strategy to improve long-term outcomes in children and to reduce violence — an idea backed by research showing that early childhood exposure to lead creates behavioral problems, from aggression to crime, in teenage and young adult years.

Illinois is now one of two states in the Midwest with a requirement that all lead service lines be replaced. In 2016, spurred by the Flint water crisis, Michigan adopted a new Lead & Copper Rule that mandated the removal of these lines by 2041. In late 2021, the Michigan Senate passed legislation (SB 565) allocating $1 billion for the state’s lead service line removal program. This expenditure is part of a larger, $3.8 billion plan that uses newly available federal dollars to invest in the state’s water infrastructure.

In the Midwest, related legislative action in early 2022 included: • Bills in Minnesota (HF 2650/SF 2531) to appropriate $30 million a year (through 2032) for cities to remove the privately owned portion of lead service lines. Projects in disadvantaged communities would be prioritized. • The South Dakota Legislature’s allocation of $1.5 million for a statewide inventory of lead service lines (SB 64). • Approval by the Indiana House of a new requirement (HB 1313) for health care providers to screen children between 9 months and 5 years old for lead poisoning.

Kansas Sen. Carolyn McGinn has chosen water policy as the focus of her Midwestern Legislative Conference Chair’s Initiative for 2022. A series of articles will appear in Stateline Midwest this year in support of this initiative.
TWO CANADIAN PROVINCES PARTNER ON FINDING A VACCINE FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

With chronic wasting disease continuing to spread among their deer, elk and related wildlife populations, Alberta and Saskatchewan are working together on a five-year, $1.3 million project to develop a new oral vaccine. The plan, announced in early 2022, will fund university-based research that tests five potential antigens. To be effective, the vaccine would need to be broadly and efficiently distributed in the environment via forage.

Saskatchewan is using revenue from the province’s Fish and Wildlife Fund to pay for its part of the research project. Money in that fund comes from the sale of hunting, fishing and trapping licenses.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey’s National Wildlife Center, chronic wasting disease has been detected in 29 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces. In nearly every Midwestern state and province, CWD has been found in both farmed and free-ranging populations of cervids.

In Minnesota this year, bills have been introduced to require live-animal testing of farmed deer (HF 2814/SF 3037) and to invest in new CWD testing equipment (HF 2980/SF 2937). Last year, the Minnesota Legislature expanded the Department of Natural Resources’ authority to regulate farmed deer and banned the importation of all cervidae carcasses. In recent years, too, the state has upped its spending on CWD-related monitoring, mitigation, testing and research.

A package of bills in Wisconsin (AB 771/SB 748, AB 772/SB 749 and AB 773/SB 750) would appropriate new state dollars for CWD research and management, testing kiosks and carcass disposal sites.

WISCONSIN EYES BIG GROWTH IN AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS, HAS NEW 5-YEAR PLAN TO REACH GOAL

Wisconsin wants to export more of its agricultural products to the world, and it has a $5 million plan to increase international sales by 25 percent over the next five years. The Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports is the result of AB 314, a measure passed unanimously by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Tony Evers in late 2021.

The new law directs two state agencies — the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. — to meet the 25 percent goal by collaborating on new export-focused strategies. The Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee released first-year funds for the initiative in February.

AB 314 specifies amounts to be spent on each product category over the five years: $2.5 million on milk and dairy, $1.25 million on meat and meat products, and $1.25 million on corn and crop products. These new state dollars will be used to promote products made in the state, cultivate and train Wisconsin agricultural exporters, and elevate the Wisconsin brand across the world.

In 2021, Wisconsin hit a record high for the value of its agricultural exports — more than $9.96 billion. Dairy products are the state’s top export commodity. The past year also was a record for all U.S. farm and food products: $177 billion sold around the world. The top four markets for these products are China, Mexico, Canada and Japan; together, they account for 55 percent of U.S. agricultural exports.

Saskatchewan also reported record-high agricultural exports in 2021, a total of $17.5 billion.

OHIO ADDS SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESSES OWNED BY WOMEN, MINORITIES AND VETERANS

Ohio has a mix of new financial and regulatory tools to help businesses in the state owned by women, minorities and veterans.

The financial assistance is coming in the form of two targeted loan initiatives, both of which were included in the state budget. Under the first program, zero-interest-rate loans (minimum of $10,000 and maximum of $45,000) are available for these businesses to establish permanent working capital, purchase new equipment or build up inventory. A second loan program is for women-owned enterprises only.

Ohio also has a program to certify businesses as minority- and women-owned or as “veteran-friendly.” It sets a goal that at least 15 percent of state agencies’ contracts be awarded to certified minority-owned businesses. Local governments also have their own set-aside goals or programs for minority-, women- and veteran-owned businesses. SB 105, signed into law in February, aims to make participation in these programs easier. It does so by providing for “certification reciprocity” once certified under the state program, business owners are automatically eligible for local initiatives across Ohio.

MICHIGAN OFFERS TAX-ADVANTAGED PLAN TO HELP INDIVIDUALS SAVE FOR PURCHASE OF FIRST HOME

For aspiring homeowners in Michigan, the state is offering a new option: Open a first-time home buyer savings account and make contributions to it that can be deducted from state income taxes (up to $5,000 a year for single filers and $10,000 for joint returns). The state’s First-Time Home Buyer Savings Program is the result of HB 4290 and SB 143, bipartisan bills signed into law in early 2002. The program would sunset after 2026 without additional legislative action.

Balances in these new accounts are capped at $50,000, but interest earnings can continue to accrue beyond this maximum level. Withdrawals for any unqualified expense will incur a 10 percent penalty. Michigan joins Iowa and Minnesota in offering such a savings program for first-time home buyers.

EARLY LEARNING, LASTING EFFECTS: INDIANA PROGRAM HAS HELPED IMPROVE STUDENT READINESS

Indiana’s investment in an early-learning program for low-income children is showing signs of paying off in the classroom — improved kindergarten readiness and stronger math and literacy skills through at least grade three and four.

On My Way Pre-K was created by the Indiana General Assembly in 2014 as a pilot program in select counties. It has since been expanded statewide, with enrollment at close to 5,000 students for the current school year.

Qualifying families receive state grants to send their 4-year-old to an eligible early-education program. Indiana allows various types of providers to participate: public and private schools, licensed family homes and child care centers, and registered ministries. To qualify, a provider must meet the state’s quality measurements.

When they first established On My Way Pre-K, legislators included statutory language requiring the state’s Family and Social Services Administration to “carry out a longitudinal study of students who participate in the pilot program to determine the achievement levels of [participating] students in kindergarten and later grades.”

Results were released earlier this year. According to Purdue University researchers, students in the On My Way Pre-K pilot program had stronger school readiness, language and literacy skills than peers with similar income levels who attended lower-quality child care or prekindergarten programs. Higher levels of performance continued through third and fourth grades, as measured by standardized math and English/language arts scores, researchers found.

TOP AGRICULTURAL EXPORT COMMODITIES IN MIDWEST, FY 2021 (BASED ON $ VALUE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top export</th>
<th>State(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pork/pork products</td>
<td>Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota, South Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef/beef products</td>
<td>Kansas, Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy products</td>
<td>Wisconsin, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

% OF CHILDREN AGES 0 TO 8, LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOMES BELOW 200% OF FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>2021 Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Alliance for Early Success
chair of the Senate Finance Committee. “There are a lot of things we could start to pay down, which would really benefit the state.”

“And we want to maintain that healthy budget surplus because with inflation and other things coming down the pipeline, I think there is a lot of uncertainty right now about [the future].”

VALUE OF A LONG-TERM BUDGET OUTLOOK

Lucy Dadayan, a senior research associate with the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, says there are many reasons for states to prepare now for the budgeting for a “fiscal bubble.”

For one, her research shows a “huge gap” in recent state revenue growth compared to increases in GDP, with the former significantly outpacing the latter. Such a disparity is atypical, Dadayan says, and will not continue.

Two, the pandemic temporarily changed consumer habits, with a shift to more spending on goods (subject to the sales tax) than services (often not taxed in many states). A return to the longer-term trend — more spending on services, less on goods — is coming and will have an even more negative impact on sales tax collections, she says.

Third, the additional federal dollars supporting the overall economy, and states in particular, will be gone. Money from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund must be appropriated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

In a November 2021 study, the Center on Budget Policy and Priorities noted that of the nearly $200 billion set aside in ARPA for states, more than half of it already had been allocated by the nation’s governors and state legislatures.

The most common uses of ARPA dollars thus far have been: 1) the replacement of lost state revenue due to the pandemic (23 percent of total state allocations); 2) replenishing unemployment trust funds and improving UI systems (15 percent); 3) human services (14 percent); 4) economic development (10 percent); and 5) broadband access and expansion (8 percent).

“I am worried that, three, four years down the road — or even less time than that — we are going to be seeing state revenue growth declining, and maybe even negative growth,” Dadayan says.

According to Goodman, to plan for volatility and uncertainty, states need to use data and budget projections that look more than only one or two years out.

“I think three years would sort of be a minimum, and we see some states looking five years, sometimes even 10 years out,” he says. “The right length really depends in part on when things will change. So let’s say a state had a major tax that was set to expire in six years. You wouldn’t want to only look five years out and ignore what is going to happen in that sixth year and beyond.

“And so right now, in particular, states should be thinking about their budget picture after the federal relief is spent or expires.”

Likewise, looking back at the volatility of state revenues can help fiscal leaders make sound long-term budgeting decisions.

Over the past 20 years, Pew research shows, the 50 U.S. states had a combined volatility score of 4.99, meaning total tax revenue fluctuated 4.99 percentage points above or below overall growth trends. In the Midwest, the volatility scores ranged from a high of 17.2 in North Dakota (due to their reliance on oil and gas tax, a turbulent revenue source) to a low of 2.8 in South Dakota (the state has no income tax and relies heavily on the sales tax, a relatively stable revenue source). “By studying volatility, policymakers can better determine their own budgetary risk and put in place evidence-based savings strategies that harness tax growth in good years to cushion the lean years,” Pew notes.

FLEXIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY IN 2022

This is undoubtedly one of those “good years” for states, and there is excitement about some unprecedented opportunities.

In Minnesota, every even-numbered year is known as a “bonding” year — a bill is passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor to borrow money in order to issue bonds for capital investment projects.

“With the kind of budget surplus we have, we have more flexibility in what we could bond for to help our communities, especially some of those that have been traditionally marginalized or under-invested in,” says Rep. Fue Lee, chair of the House Capital Investment Committee.

For example, he says, many communities are in need of more housing, educational and occupational services for young people, and job training in growing sectors such as clean energy.

According to Lee, because of the state’s strong fiscal situation, general-fund dollars could be used for one-time investments in these kinds of community assets, on top of whatever is included in a final bonding bill.

In addition, an estimated $7.3 billion is coming to Minnesota as a result of passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. That law prioritizes spending on states’ transportation, water, energy and broadband infrastructures, thus freeing up more state bonding dollars for capital projects related to higher education or workforce development, Lee says.

That juggling of state and newly available federal dollars also has been part of discussions in Kansas, Waymaster says.

“Part of what we tried to communicate early on with our legislative budget chairs was that as you go through all of the budgets for the different agencies and departments for the state, and as you get requests for revenue enhancements, think about whether those enhancements would qualify under ARPA rather than being paid through the general fund,” he says.

There is, of course, another option being considered by state policymakers during this exceptionally strong fiscal period — cutting taxes. Numerous proposals had been introduced early in 2022, including several in the Midwest, to lower corporate and income tax rates.

“We want to reduce taxes. There’s no question about that, but we want to do it in a responsible and strategic manner,” Waymaster says about the outlook in Kansas.

“I came here to the Legislature in 2013 and lived through the budget issues that we had because of a tax plan that had passed the year before. That plan was just too aggressive.

“Today, it’s very easy to look at the balances that we have in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 and say, ‘Let’s reduce taxes.’ But at the same time, this is not going to last forever. And if we are too aggressive, then we’ll find ourselves in a deficit.”

TAX COLLECTIONS IN THE MIDWEST, BY SOURCE (2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Sales and excise tax</th>
<th>Personal income</th>
<th>Corporate income</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Other*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
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<td>0.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
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<td>6.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>15.3%*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
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<td>27.1%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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<td>1.9%</td>
<td>—</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
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<td>42.3%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The “Other” category includes death and gift taxes, amusement taxes on the extraction, production and sale of natural resources such as oil and gas, and documentary and stock transfer taxes.

Source: Federation of Tax Administrators (using U.S. Census Bureau data)
His political journey began in college with a speech at the Iowa Capitol that captured global attention; he’s returned as a legislator and, now, top leader

By Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

In 2011, only two years removed from his high school graduation, with a genetic tie to Iowa, Zach Wahls got the chance to speak before his home state’s General Assembly. The topic? Same-sex marriage. His goal: show to the legislators that his parents — his two moms — had raised a perfectly normal (if not a bit boring) Wahls (joked young man). “I learned at a pretty young age that politics was very interested in families like ours,” he says. “My speech” helped people to realize I didn’t have horns or a tail; I was just a relatively normal guy.”

Footage of the speech went viral on YouTube, earning Wahls the chance to share his personal story with TV personalities such as Ellen DeGeneres and Jon Stewart. He also wrote a book, was invited to deliver a speech about marriage equality at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, and became an LGBTQ+ activist — for example, advocating for a change in the Boy Scouts of America’s policy on gay Scouts.

Wahls’ political journey eventually led him back to where it all started — the Iowa General Assembly. Four years ago, he successfully ran for an open state Senate seat; within a few years, Wahls already had been elected to the top leadership position in his caucus. In a recent interview with CSG Midwest, Wahls discussed his new role as Senate minority leader as well as his legislative priorities for Iowa. Here are excerpts.

Q: There have been advancements in LGBTQ+ rights since you gave that speech in 2011. But what more does Iowa need to do in order to become an even more welcoming state?

A: When I think about how we can help make this better, I think a lot of it comes down to just tuning down the inflammatory rhetoric. We had something like 13 different anti-LGBTQ+ bills that were introduced last year. And I think we just need to kind of stop the inflammatory rhetoric. We had a lot of it comes down to just toning it down the inflammatory rhetoric. We had a lot of it comes down to just toning it down the inflammatory rhetoric. We had a lot of it comes down to just toning it down the inflammatory rhetoric. We had a lot of it comes down to just toning it down the inflammatory rhetoric. We had a lot of it comes down to just toning it down the inflammatory rhetoric. We had a lot of it comes down to just toning it down the inflammatory rhetoric.

Q: You became minority leader at a young age and at an early point in your legislative career. What have been some of your priorities for managing the caucus and building consensus within it?

A: We’ve renewed our focus on our communications. We’re in the minority, and so we don’t have the votes on the floor. What we’ve got is the ability to help present a clear vision, a positive vision for the future of our state, and communicate that to voters and to the press...

Q: What is a workforce policy that you think the state should be focusing on?

A: There are a lot of these things that we think we need to do to get more workers off the sidelines, and a lot of that is about supporting families. Look, it’s a perfectly economical choice to stay home with the kids if you’re going to be spending more on child care than you are on your mortgage, which is something that I hear from a lot of constituents. Until we solve the child care issues, we’re just going to be in a really tough situation with the workforce.

Q: What are other policies that you’ve gotten involved in as a legislator?

A: I have gotten very involved in a big fight over trying to get new protections for the people living in manufactured housing. There have been tens of thousands of Iowans who live in mobile or manufactured homes. And Iowa has, I would say, some of the worst laws in the country when it comes to protecting the rights of [people] who own those homes...

Q: What does it mean to be a “workforce crisis” in Iowa?

A: Before COVID-19, my local Chamber of Commerce would tell me, “You know, Zach, we’ve got three issues: workforce, workforce and workforce.” Now, with where we are today, they’ve said, “Zach, well now we’ve got two more issues: workforce and workforce...”

Wages have been low in Iowa for a long time, and we’ve had a relatively low cost of living. But now, as the cost of living is starting to go up, we need to have more upward pressure on wages. And we’re starting to see that happen, which is good, but there’s a lot more that we need to do.

Q: Dupont asked Iowans what could the state do to help make this better, I think it’s easy in politics to get very adversarial and to dig into your position really fast. But I found that when you listen to people, there’s often so much more that you agree on than that you disagree on.

A: It’s easy in politics to get very adversarial and to dig into your position really fast. But I found that when you listen to people, there’s often so much more that you agree on than that you disagree on.

Profile: Iowa Senate Minority Leader Zach Wahls

“I helped lead getting an amendment out of the Senate that would have created a just-cause requirement [for the termination of leases], limited rent increases and a few other things... I’ve worked over the last several years to build a bipartisan coalition to help actually make those reforms a reality. We had 30 co-sponsors for the legislation in 2020 before COVID hit and kind of derailed everything... But we’re going to continue to fight for it because it’s really important. I mean, affordable housing is a top issue in virtually every Iowa community, and manufactured and mobile housing continues to be a really important source of affordable housing in many Iowa communities.”
New state laws allow for personalized, competency-based model of learning. 

**Overview of North Dakota’s Recent Changes to Promote Innovation in K-12 Education**

- **Passage of SB 2196 in 2017** — Allow school districts to pursue innovations by seeking waivers in state education law.
- **Passage of SB 2215 in 2019** — Create the 18-member K-12 Education Coordinating Council (legislators, teachers, and local and state school leaders) to organize and disseminate information about innovative best practices.
- **Passage of SB 2196 in 2021** — Allow school districts to pursue personalized graduation pathways and alternatives to traditional seat- and instructional-time requirements.

**By North Dakota Sen. Don Schaible (dschaible@nd.gov)**

North Dakota is a state that has not let COVID-19 slow down the momentum of striving for changes in education for the benefit of students.

In particular, there have been ongoing efforts from several sectors in our education system to move strongly in the direction of a personalized, competency-based model of learning: Students advance based on a demonstrated mastery of content, not on how many hours or months they’ve been in a class. Likewise, we’re looking to move away from our traditional “one-size fits all” path to graduation.

We want to encourage innovation in our local schools, as well as more flexibility and choices for our students. To implement these changes, we as legislators needed to end the “one-size fits all” approach embedded in some of our state laws and regulations — for example, inflexible rules in our North Dakota Century Code regarding the content, number, and sequence of courses that students had to take or the amount of seat time they needed to graduate.

Over the past few years, with broad involvement and support from our education community, we have made the necessary statutory changes, most recently with the passage of SB 2196, a bill that I sponsored in 2021.

Our work has been time-intensive, and grounded in real data, science and thoughtful dialogue about the competencies that our K-12 students need to have mastered upon graduation.

The result is a set of new state policies that help our schools develop their own local frameworks to drive student success. To complement the conventional, credit-hour system in K-12 education, our vision is that students have more-personalized graduation pathways.

As indicated last year by Dr. Cory Steiner, superintendent at Northern Cass Schools in North Dakota, “We are faced with a moral imperative to transform our system.”

As a state, we are now positioned to do just that.

**How We Created New Pathways for Students**

SB 2196 will bring to fruition innovative ideas in education. These ideas will be developed by local school leaders, get the blessing of local school boards and communities, and align with our new statewide Learning Continuum. Under this new law, all districts can pursue a waiving of certain instructional- and seat-time requirements in favor of a “master policy framework”: a locally driven plan that emphasizes a student’s mastery of course content and academic skills.

And with these new mastery/competency pathways in place, our local schools can place a greater value on career and technical education. For some students, this may mean the path to graduation requires less time in the classroom, and more in work-based learning settings. Competency can be shown outside the walls of schools.

As Dr. Steiner told us last year, our state’s traditional graduation requirements were built for a society that values postsecondary education “above all else.”

But we need to recognize the viability of other pathways, and make these options available to the diverse set of learners in our K-12 system.

“The requirements of graduating high school must change to recognize the values of our current society,” Dr. Steiner said in his legislative testimony.

“Our current educational system is based on reaction. If a learner struggles, we react as best we can, but this should not be how we operate. Our current system sees learners as interchangeable instead of as individuals. An educational system must be built to be proactive.”

Some North Dakota schools already have been experimenting with new approaches. Five years ago, with the signing of SB 2186, the state created a pilot program in which local districts could seek waivers from existing state rules to pursue innovations in education, including personalized, competency-based learning.

During our 2019 legislative session, we established the K-12 Education Coordinating Council under a bill that I sponsored (SB 2215). This diverse group of stakeholders — teachers, legislators, superintendents and others — tackles big issues in education and moves quickly to make recommendations that could work in practice.

The council will play an important role moving forward, including a review of plans for our new statewide Learning Continuum (ultimately certified by the Board of Education). The Learning Continuum sets out qualities and competencies that students should master and/or show proficiency in — for example, the demonstration of critical reading skills, problem solving in math, “evaluation through investigation” in science, and engaged citizenship in social studies.

The Learning Continuum also identifies seven key attributes in our state’s “portrait of graduate”: adaptability, collaboration, communication, learner’s mindset, critical thinking, empathy and perseverance.

Local school districts then have the flexibility to implement their own “mastery pathways framework” within this broad Learning Continuum. That includes personalized, competency-based learning models and individualized, student-centered routes to high school graduation.

“In schools, we have been asked to prepare learners to be productive members of society,” Dr. Steiner told us last year.

“We have been asked to prepare learners for college, career and military. We are asked to develop ‘soft’ skills such as collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. We must develop academic, social and emotional skills while making sure to develop long-lasting relationships in a safe environment.”

“In other words, we must prepare learners to be choice ready for a future which is constantly changing.”

SB 2196 passed with near-unanimous legislative support, indicating lawmakers’ commitment to local control, innovation and doing what is in the best interest of all learners throughout the state of North Dakota.

We have school boards, administrators and educators who are ready to jump in, innovate and provide authentic learning through a personalized approach.

We are excited to see the fruits of these efforts.

Sen. Donald Schaible serves as chair of the North Dakota Senate Education Committee. He also is a member of The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference Education Committee.

**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 830.923.1922 or tanderson@csg.org.
LEGISLATORS: OTHER STATE OFFICIALS NOW CAN APPLY TO TAKE PART IN TOLL FELLOWS — ONE OF NATION’S TOP LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

The Council of State Governments is now accepting applications for this year’s Henry Toll Fellowship program, a unique leadership development opportunity for state legislators and other officials.

The application deadline is May 6; materials are available at csg.org. Elected, appointed and merit officials are invited to apply.

The program will be held Aug. 26-30 in Lexington, Ky. Participants also are required to attend the 2022 Toll Fellowship Graduation Ceremony, which will take place during the 2022 CSG National Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii (Dec. 7-10).

The Toll Fellowship Program targets outstanding and rising individuals serving in all three branches of state government. Toll Fellows is designed as a “graduate level” program complementing leadership development programs offered by CSG’s regional offices — including CSG Midwest’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development. It is suggested, but not required, that legislators first complete their respective regional program.

Over the course of five days, program participants will take part in a “leadership boot camp,” with sessions designed to stimulate personal assessment and growth while providing process networking and relationship-building opportunities.


IOWA: VICTIM RESTITUTION

Five years ago, the Iowa attorney general’s office began working with the CSG Justice Center to identify challenges and barriers for victims seeking restitution. To start, they mapped Iowa’s restitution system and conducted a data analysis of it. This initial work led to the release of a report and a series of recommendations in 2019:

- Improve victims’ knowledge of their rights to restitution by analyzing the factors that impact how victims are informed of their rights.
- Disseminate best practices on restitution to practitioners (victim-witness coordinators, county attorneys, victim advocates, county clerks, etc.).
- Streamline the collection and disbursement of restitution across multiple agencies.

Over the past year, Iowa has taken action in all three of these areas:

- States often do not have the ability or the resources to address every challenge related to victim restitution. However, as Iowa illustrates, states do have the ability to understand and focus on select areas for improvement to make meaningful changes in the lives of victims,” the CSG Justice Center noted earlier this year.

MINNESOTA: JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

Minnesota is positioned this year to improve the effectiveness and equity of its community supervision system. A list of policy options and recommendations has been developed with technical assistance from the CSG Justice Center, which conducted a comprehensive analysis of the current system. Options include taking steps to:

- improve access to behavioral health;
- hold people on probation consistently accountable; and
- ensure counties are equitably funded and positioned to comprehensively implement evidence-based supervision.

The Legislature has been given recommendations to consider during its 2022 session. The Minnesota Governor’s Council on Justice Reinvestment has led the state’s recent work on justice reinvestment. This bipartisan, multibranch group includes three legislators: Sen. John Marty and Reps. Rena Moran and Paul Novotny.

WITH HELP FROM CSG, TWO MIDWEST STATES MOVE FORWARD WITH IMPROVEMENTS TO JUSTICE SYSTEM

Goals include enhanced victim restitution in Iowa, better supervision in Minnesota

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 affiliate members.

LEARN, COLLABORATE, LEAD: VIRTUAL SESSIONS FOR MIDWEST’S LEGISLATORS OFFERED ON WIDE RANGE OF POLICIES

CSG Midwest continues to offer policy-based web sessions for the region’s legislators, with some of the latest offerings being hosted by the Midwestern Legislative Conference Social Justice Forum.

The forum was organized in 2021 by the MLC. Its goal is to provide opportunities for all interested Midwest legislators to address a wide range of racial and social justice issues.

In April, the Social Justice Forum is hosting virtual sessions on inequities in education (April 8) and public health (April 29). Sessions were held in March on criminal justice-related policies.

Registration for these virtual sessions is free and open to all legislators, legislative staff and interested others. Information is available at csigmidwest.org, where recordings of past sessions also can be found. During the first two months of 2022, CSG Midwest held web events on wetlands protection, state and provincial responses to missing and murdered Indigenous people, and the future of Canada-U.S. trade.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR ONLY MEETING DESIGNED BY AND FOR MIDWEST’S LEGISLATORS

The Midwestern Legislative Conference is coming to Kansas’ largest city this summer, and online registration for this one-of-a-kind event has officially opened.

The 2022 MLC Annual Meeting will be held July 10-13 in Wichita, Kan. A discount on registration — which can be completed at csigmidwest.org — is available through May 9. Led by Sen. Carolyn McGinn, chair of the MLC, the Kansas Legislature is serving as host of this year’s meeting, which typically attracts hundreds of state and provincial legislators from the Midwest.

The MLC is a nonpartisan association of all legislators representing 11 Midwestern states and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. The provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are affiliate members.

Its Annual Meeting is designed to meet the needs and interests of Midwestern legislators.

Here are some of the sessions being planned:

- The meeting’s keynote session is “Lens on the Midwest: The Socioeconomic, Cultural and Political Forces Shaping the Region and Its Communities.” Acclaimed U.S. historian H.W. Brands will be a featured luncheon speaker. He is the author of “The Zealot and the Emancipator,” an account of the epic struggle over slavery as embodied by John Brown and Abraham Lincoln.

SPECIAL EVENTS FOR ATTENDEES, GUESTS

The MLC Annual Meeting also is a chance for host legislators to showcase their state and the host city. This summer, special evening events will be held at some of Wichita’s top venues — an Opening Night Reception at Botanica, the Wichita Gardens and Family Night at the Sedgwick County Zoo.

For the guests of attendees, daytime activities and trips at some of Wichita’s top destinations will be offered, with separate programming available for adults and youths.

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.
April 20 is deadline to apply for fellowship; 5-day program begins Aug. 27

**27th Annual BILLD Program**

- August 27-31, 2022
- Madison, Wisconsin
- 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 Madison
- Application Deadline: April 20, 2022

**LASTING VALUE: REFLECTIONS FROM PROGRAM GRADUATES**

“Personal growth as a leader and one’s confidence, compassion and understanding are unleashed after attending BILLD. This is a great opportunity for newer legislators to strengthen their leadership and communication skills. … The most memorable session was about negotiations with former Nebraska Sen. David Landis. He emphasized the importance of listening and asking questions to understand issues and situations.”

North Dakota Rep. Brandy Pyle, class of 2017

“I think the whole BILLD experience is all about leadership and looking at yourself... We were given opportunities to connect with everyone in the class. ... We can sit together, come together, and learn about how to do things. It makes you look at the big picture. You get to incorporate some of their ideas into your world as a legislator, in your own state’s environment... It’s an experience of a lifetime, which will carry over into your legislative career, your family life and friendships.”

Wisconsin Rep. Jesse James, class of 2021

“My biggest takeaway from BILLD was to focus on where you can make a difference, and the more you focus on the development of fellow legislators, the more successful everyone will be. I found the civility training to be the most valuable. Prioritizing mutual respect, open communication and relationship building amongst my peers makes politics less divisive, and more importantly, we can focus on getting the work done for my state.”

South Dakota Rep. Rebecca Reimer, class of 2019

“The BILLD program provides a great opportunity to meet the people and hear about the issues in other legislatures. Speaking with fellow representatives with both similar and different concerns leads to enlightening conversations and lasting connections. ... In the end, you realize that we are facing many of the same circumstances as our neighbors. Talking about what worked and what failed in approaching problems has been instructive in drawing up legislation that will fit my district.”

Nebraska Sen. Myron Dorn, class of 2019

“One of the most valuable lessons was learning to understand one’s personality and how that plays into leadership styles. I learned more about how I tend to lead than I expected — both good and bad — and that gave me a clear pathway to grow as a leader and public servant. ... BILLD has helped me identify ways to build and lead new coalitions while finding bipartisan support on issues that have historically been seen as polarizing ones. ... You learn that many of us are dealing with the same problems in our home states. This opened the door to discover a myriad of potential solutions to those issues. ... Hands down the best educational program I have attended in my 25 years of public service.”

Ohio Rep. Sharon Ray, class of 2021


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.