LONG A HALLMARK OF THE U.S.-CANADA RELATIONSHIP, BINATIONAL ENERGY TRADE HAS ROOM TO GROW FURTHER

In Midwest, much of this activity has centered on crude oil, but the building of new cross-border transmission lines shows how states and provinces also can share renewable power.

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Among all 50 states, for example, Illinois has the largest energy trade relationship with Canada, driven largely by imports of crude oil.

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of energy security for both nations; for instance, an increase in Canadian imports is one reason why the United States has been able to decrease oil imports from OPEC countries by 70 percent since 2019. This energy relationship entails much more than crude oil, though. Canada and the United States help power each other’s homes and businesses, and at both the federal and state-provincial levels of government, leaders are looking at ways to deepen this part of the relationship.

“Since the U.S. and Canadian grids are integrated in pretty significant ways, I can envision a future where we’ll have much more cross-border electricity trade,” Cahill says.

“So bringing people together at the regional level and national level to talk about this stuff and plan it out will be quite important.”

HOW MANITOBA, MINNESOTA CONNECTED ON CLEAN ENERGY

U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm and Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Seamus O’Regan launched a memorandum of understanding in June 2021 that lists 15 cooperative activities to help secure the electric grid and progress toward a goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. This new cooperative agreement also came with a first-ever analysis of how building international transmission capacity and better integrating the two countries’ renewable energy resources can make North America’s electricity grid cleaner and more resilient.

The U.S. and Canada already share a decent amount of electricity, and of the 57 major transmission lines between the U.S. and Canada, 20 are located in the Midwest. However, many of these are older transmission lines that connect grids based on fossil fuel sources. New cross-border transmission lines with improved infrastructure, higher voltages and renewable sources will be necessary in the coming decades as more cars and homes run on electricity.

“We need to build redundancy into our energy systems,” Cahill says. “We need to plan for the worst-case scenarios rather than the best-case scenarios when planning for the energy transition. We can’t assume that the smoothest, most rapid transition away from fossil fuels will happen. That means that we need to build everything. It’s ‘both and,’ not ‘either or.’” Building newer, clean-energy transmission lines is easier said than done, though. One example from outside the Midwest shows the time that these projects can take and the obstacles they face.

The Champlain Hudson Power Express is a proposed high-voltage line that will connect hydropower and wind energy from Québec to the New York City area.

Beginning in 2010, the project has faced considerable public scrutiny, and having just secured financing and with government permitting still under way, the project seems unlikely to be completed as scheduled by 2025. But there also are instances of successful, newly completed cross-border transmission line projects.

In the Midwest, Minnesota Power’s 224-mile Great Northern Transmission Line (GNTL) opened in 2020. It crosses northern Minnesota to a point near the town of Roseau. From there, it connects with Manitoba Hydro’s 132-mile Manitoba-Minnesota Transmission Project (MMTP), which begins in Winnipeg. The GNTL delivers clean hydropower from Manitoba to residential and industrial consumers in northern and central Minnesota. The line was built as part of Minnesota Power’s larger Great Northern Renewable Energy Initiative, which set a goal of having 50 percent of its electric supply come from renewable sources by 2025.

This initiative also involved the creation of the 500-megawatt Bison Wind Energy Center in North Dakota and the purchase of an existing 465-mile transmission line from North Dakota to Minnesota. Minnesota Power reached its 50 percent renewable mark for the initiative five years early, in 2020. The company now aims to deliver 100 percent of energy produced from renewable sources by 2030.

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### ELECTRICITY PROFILE FOR MIDWEST: SOURCES OF GENERATION FOR EACH STATE (2021) AND PROVINCE (2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Province</th>
<th>Illinois 2021</th>
<th>Minnesota 2021</th>
<th>Wisconsin 2019</th>
<th>Iowa 2021</th>
<th>Kansas 2021</th>
<th>Michigan 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53% from nuclear</td>
<td>27% from coal</td>
<td>42% from coal</td>
<td>54% from natural gas</td>
<td>55% from wind</td>
<td>45% from wind</td>
<td>32% from coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24% from coal</td>
<td>24% from nuclear</td>
<td>34% from natural gas</td>
<td>34% from coal</td>
<td>34% from coal</td>
<td>30% from nuclear</td>
<td>30% from nuclear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12% from natural gas</td>
<td>22% from wind</td>
<td>15% from nuclear</td>
<td>9% from natural gas</td>
<td>9% from natural gas</td>
<td>7% from natural gas</td>
<td>7% from natural gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% from wind</td>
<td>21% from natural gas</td>
<td>4% from hydro</td>
<td>1% from hydro</td>
<td>5% from natural gas</td>
<td>3% from hydro</td>
<td>9% from coal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source for data on F 1 states: Calculations from Nuclear Energy Institute using data for 2021 from U.S. Energy Information Administration

Source for data on four Canadian provinces: Government of Canada
One might think that a northern Minnesota utility does not have the customer base to really contribute to the clean electrification of the economy, but more than half of Minnesota Power’s supply goes to massive industrial customers such as taconite mines and paper mills.

With the GNTL-MMTP connection, cleaner energy from Manitoba is being delivered to these customers.

“WHY CROSS-BORDER LINES MAKE SENSE IN THE MIDWEST”

More transmission increases grid reliability, says Daryl Maxwell, Manitoba Hydro’s transmission services and compliance department manager.

“By building more transmission, you provide multiple paths for the energy to travel from the generator to the customer. If one path is constrained, there is an alternative path to deliver the energy to the customer without interruption,” he says.

“So, when you expand your transmission system from a radial system (single path) to a network system (multiple paths) you increase transmission reliability.”

From a generation perspective, Manitoba on average produces more hydropower than it consumes, and when looking to offload this extra electricity, it makes sense for Manitoba Hydro to look to the United States because if there is a large supply of water to produce hydropower in Manitoba, there probably is a large supply in Saskatchewan and northwest Ontario as well.

Likewise, on the demand side, when Manitoba is using less electricity in the summer (there is more Manitoba demand in the winter due to space heating than summer air conditioning), there is often simply reduced demand to the west and east.

However, electricity demand to the south, the United States, has traditionally been highest in the summer. When air conditioners are kicking at full speed in Minneapolis in August, Manitoba Hydro can sell and send its excess hydropower to keep things running.

And the trade doesn’t just go from north to south.

“It absolutely flows both ways, and that’s one of the cruxes of this resiliency, a reliability-based infrastructure that is the GNTL,” says Julie Pierce, vice president of strategy and planning for Manitoba Power.

“It allows us to optimize the systems and the renewable energy prevalent in the United States and Manitoba.”

By combining North Dakota wind power and Manitoba hydropower, the project has helped create a grid that can rely on one source of carbon-free energy when conditions do not allow for the other to operate efficiently.

“It was very important during the 2021 Manitoba drought that the line could flow energy to the north,” Pierce says. “And during Winter Storm Uri, it was really important that the line was in service as that power flowed south and helped the upper Midwest.”

In this way, the GNTL-MMTP connection essentially acts as a battery. When wind power is abundant in the United States, Manitoba Hydro can pool its water (partly using wind energy to hold the water behind the turbines).

When wind power is lacking or when demand peaks, Manitoba Hydro can release more water and increase its hydropower output heading south.

While the Manitoba-Minnesota project is now operating efficiently and effectively, getting to this point was not easy. From the start of planning in 2012 to completion, the project took about eight years. A certificate of need was required from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission; it was granted in 2015. The commission also had to approve a route permit. That occurred in 2016, the same year that the U.S. Department of Energy issued a presidential permit, which was required to connect to Manitoba Hydro’s system at the U.S.-Canadian border.

Finally, right-of-way permissions were needed from several local governments along the 224-mile transmission lines, including the sovereign Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians.

Along the way, too, utilities had to secure what Maxwell calls the “social license”—acceptance of the transmission line from various stakeholders concerned about it. Without proper engagement, he says, projects can often fail on regulatory licensing because of opposition from stakeholders.

This is where legislators and other policymakers on both sides of the border can make a big difference.

“Bring the people together to create greater acceptance [of these cross-border energy projects],” Maxwell says. “I think the role for government is to provide that leadership.”

Additionally, as electricity demand and the need to integrate clean energy sources grows, completing new international and inter-regional transmission lines in a timely manner becomes essential.

“It took us over 10 years to bring this line to fruition,” Pierce says.

“If we want to meet the goals that we have between our two nations … we’re going to need to get better at process and streamlining that ability to build infrastructure.”

Julie Pierce, vice president of strategy and planning, Manitoba Power

**NUMBERS ON U.S.-CANADA ENERGY TRADE**

$102 BILLION

VALUE OF U.S. ENERGY IMPORTS FROM CANADA IN 2021

89% 

% OF TOTAL VALUE OF U.S. ENERGY IMPORTS FROM CANADA THAT WERE EITHER CRUDE OIL OR PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

61% 

% OF TOTAL U.S. IMPORTS OF NATURAL GAS THAT COME FROM CANADA

99% 

% OF TOTAL U.S. IMPORTS OF URANIUM THAT COME FROM CANADA

$22 BILLION

VALUE OF U.S. ENERGY EXPORTS TO CANADA IN 2021 (MOSTLY PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND CRUDE OIL)

Sources: Governments of Canada and the United States

**STATELINE MIDWEST | DECEMBER 2022**

**CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIONS: EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINES BETWEEN CANADA AND MIDWESTERN STATES**

**Lines from Canada to U.S.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manitoba to North Dakota</th>
<th>Two lines, combined line voltage of 460 kV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba to Minnesota</td>
<td>Two lines, combined line voltage of 730 kV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario to Michigan</td>
<td>Four lines, combined line voltage of 1,040 kV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario to Minnesota</td>
<td>Two lines, combined line voltage of 230 kV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan to North Dakota</td>
<td>One line, line voltage of 230 kV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lines from United States to Canada**

| Michigan to Ontario     | Four lines, combined line voltage of 1,055 kV |
| North Dakota to Saskatchewan | One line, line voltage of 230 kV |
| North Dakota to Manitoba | Two lines, combined line voltage of 460 kV |
| Minnesota to Manitoba   | Two lines, combined line voltage of 730 kV |
| Minnesota to Ontario    | One line, line voltage of 115 kV |

Source: Government of Canada

**MIDWESTERN STATES’ ENERGY TRADE WITH CANADA: EXPORTS AND IMPORTS (SEE PAGE 1 FOR TOTAL $ VALUES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of total energy trade that is made up of state imports from Canada</th>
<th>% of total energy trade that is made up of state exports to Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crude oil is top import from Canada</td>
<td>Natural gas is top export to Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refined petroleum products are top import from Canada</td>
<td>Refined petroleum products are top export to Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural gas is top import from Canada</td>
<td>Fuel ethanol is top export to Canada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Center for Strategic & International Studies (using data from Government of Canada)
A NEW 5-YEAR TAX CREDIT PROGRAM IN OHIO

Ohio has joined the list of Midwestern states that use tax incentives to help beginning farmers. For these incentives, the state is offering a tax credit to offset the costs of participating in a financial management program. But Ohio Rep. Susan Manchester notes the recently enacted HB 95 isn’t just for individuals starting their agricultural business; it also offers help for beginning farmers already in business.

The legislation was designed (in part) for those farmers who are ready for their retirement, facing a big capital gains tax if they sell the farm or equipment, says Manchester, a sponsor of the bipartisan legislation. The program will run for five years, with the total amount of tax credits capped at $10 million. Manchester says these limits will allow for an analysis of HB 95’s effectiveness before any extension of the program.

“There are so many barriers to beginning and successfully managing a farm today; this is just one step to helping preserve the legacy of Ohio’s family farms,” Manchester says. The credit is equal to 3.99 percent of the sales price or gross rental income. (The credit is 3.99 percent because that is Ohio’s highest tax rate.) Here are other examples of state-level help for beginning farmers:

- Nebraska’s Beginning Farmer Tax Credit program is the longest-standing program of its kind in the Midwest; it began in 1999 and provides a tax credit equal to 10 percent of the cash sell or rent of the crop or livestock.
- Minnesota provides a tax credit of 5 percent of the sale price, 10 percent of the cash rent income or 15 percent of a cash-share agreement. The Minnesota program started in 2018.

DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE IN MINNESOTA

With this year’s passage of HF 3420, the Minnesota Legislature is appropriating a total of $500,000 in FY 2023 in down-payment assistance — through a grant program (up to $15,000 per recipient) for first-time Minnesota farm owners earning less than $250,000 per year in agricultural sales. Only individuals (not LLCs or partnerships) that provide the majority of labor and management on the farm are eligible.

“It’s a capital-intensive business, and for people who don’t come from a family farm in particular, it can be difficult to get started,” notes Minnesota Rep. Paul Anderson, a longtime agriculture producer himself.

In exchange for the grant, an individual is expected to purchase land to farm; the purchased land for a minimum of five years. Nearly all Minnesota farmers are White, with an average age of 56. The down-payment program aims to bring more diversity to the farm sector and help younger people become farmers; that is why only smaller-scale farmers are eligible for the $15,000 grant. That amount will be significant for someone growing specialty crops such as vegetables or berries (as opposed to row-crop or livestock producers).

NEW SALES TAX EXEMPTION FOR KANSAS FARMERS

In December 2021, western Kansas experienced strong winds that toppled power lines, sparking wildfires that damaged more than 163,000 acres. Under the state’s law at the time, legislators would have to take proactive action to help farmers recover from natural disasters like this one by offering tax assistance related to the repair or replacement of fencing.

The initial idea of Kansas Sen. Elaine Bowers and others: Amend statutory language so that this sales tax exemption applied to all future natural disasters. (Future legislative action would not be needed.)

Bowers says the reach of the measure expanded during Senate deliberations. Under the final agreed-upon version (signed into law as part of the broader HB 2239), all sales of tangible property and services used to build or repair any fence enclosing agricultural land is now exempt from the state sales tax.

RENT-INCOME EXCLUSION IN NEW IOWA TAX LAW

Iowa’s HF 2317, signed into law in March 2022, made headlines for gradually moving the state to a flat income tax rate. The measure also exempted net capital gains on the sale of employee-awarded capital stock. For farmers, too, the new law included targeted tax relief. “It’s part of efforts to make government more effective and efficient, while providing benefits to rural residents,” Iowa Sen. Ken Rzenboom says.

“For the third time in recent years, we have lowered taxes, and this new legislation provides farmers with an opportunity for tax exemption in retirement.” With HF 2317 in place, retired farmers can exempt the income they receive from renting out or leasing farmland. A person must be 55 or older and no longer actively farming. He or she also must have owned the property and been active in the farming business for at least 10 years. (Farmers operating as a partnership, LLC or corporation may not claim the exemption.)

As state Rep. Lee Hein notes, the inclusion of this statutory language addresses the needs of “farmers whose land serves as their retirement.” Separate provisions in HF 2317 help other Iowa retirees, through the elimination of taxes on income from pensions and retirement accounts, for example, and the capital gains exemption. The new law also modified an existing capital gains income exemption that applies to farmers when they sell property or cattle, horses or breeding livestock. (Individuals may not claim both the capital gains exemption and the farm lease exemption.)


RISING COST OF BUYING FARMLAND, TRENDS IN VALUE OF LAND, PER ACRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Average per acre value in 2022</th>
<th>Change from 2021</th>
<th>Change from 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>$8,900</td>
<td>+12.7%</td>
<td>+22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>+12.7%</td>
<td>+21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>$9,400</td>
<td>+21.4%</td>
<td>+29.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>$2,630</td>
<td>+25.3%</td>
<td>+42.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>$5,850</td>
<td>+10.4%</td>
<td>+17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>$6,150</td>
<td>+17.4%</td>
<td>+26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>$3,750</td>
<td>+21.0%</td>
<td>+36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>+12.6%</td>
<td>+19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$7,200</td>
<td>+9.1%</td>
<td>+16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>$2,600</td>
<td>+18.7%</td>
<td>+25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>$5,700</td>
<td>+9.8%</td>
<td>+16.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

TRENDS IN AVERAGE OPERATING COSTS FOR U.S. CORN PRODUCTION, PER ACRE (2012-2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost (in USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>$700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture
STATELINE MIDWEST | DECEMBER 2022

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

State of health coverage in the Midwest: Four takeaways from studies showing a drop in uninsured, but continued disparities and rising costs

1 COVERAGE HAS IMPROVED SINCE 2011, BUTUNEVENLY

The percentage of uninsured people fell in all Midwestern states in the 10 years since the Affordable Care Act became law in 2011, and fell further from 2019 to 2021, except in Kansas and North Dakota, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

In North Dakota, the percentage actually rose from 6.9 percent in 2019 to 7.9 percent in 2021 while in Kansas, it stayed flat, at 9.2 percent.

The Census Bureau attributes variations in states’ rates over the 10-year period to factors like differences in age of the population, economic conditions, and policy changes like the ACA’s Medicaid expansion option for states.

All Midwestern states but Kansas, South Dakota and Wisconsin had adopted this expansion before 2022. From 2011 to 2021, Kansas’ uninsured rate fell from 12.6 percent to 9.2 percent, South Dakota’s from 11.9 percent to 9.5 percent, and Wisconsin’s from 9 percent to 5.4 percent.

But expansion rates’ dropped by more: Indiana’s fell from 14.5 percent to 7.5 percent, Minnesota’s from 8.8 percent to 4.5 percent, Michigan’s from 11.8 percent to 5 percent, and Illinois’s from 13.1 percent to 7 percent.

Additionally, the Rural Policy Research Institute at the University of Iowa says two federal policy decisions stabilized uninsured rates during the pandemic:

• The Families First Coronavirus Response Act prevents states that accepted enhanced Medicaid funding for the public health emergency from reviewing Medicaid recipients’ status until after the emergency is officially rescinded.

• The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services opened health insurance marketplaces for most of 2021 instead of the usual annual Nov. 1 to Jan. 15 enrollment period.

PRIVATE, EMPLOYER-BASED INSURANCE COVERS MOST PEOPLE

Whether employer-provided or purchased from an insurance company or on a public exchange, private insurance covered the majority of Midwesterners in 2021. Employer-provided health insurance provides the bulk of this coverage, ranging from a low of 57.9 percent (Kansas) to a high of 61.5 percent (Minnesota).

Among public programs, Medicaid covers more people than Medicare. In Illinois, Iowa, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Ohio — all states that adopted Medicaid expansion. Medicaid covers between a fifth and a quarter of people in Michigan (23.5 percent), Ohio (21.5 percent), Iowa (20.4 percent) and Minnesota (20.1 percent).

Medicaid coverage rates for other Midwestern states range from 12 percent in North Dakota to 19.7 percent in Illinois.

In South Dakota, where Medicare covers 18.4 percent of residents compared to 13.7 percent under Medicaid, voters in November approved an initiated constitutional amendment adopting Medicaid expansion. The state’s Department of Social Services estimates about 52,000 newly eligible residents will enroll once expansion has been implemented.

South Dakota is also one of the Midwestern states in which direct purchase of insurance from an insurance company or an exchange is most prevalent — that option covers 18.1 percent of residents, second only to North Dakota (18.5 percent).

Direct purchase rates in Nebraska (16.8 percent) and Minnesota (16.7 percent) are also higher than the other Midwestern states, where direct purchase ranges from 15.9 percent in Kansas to 12.1 percent in Ohio.

3 BUT OVERALL COVERAGE RATES VARY BY AGE, RACE

Nationwide, uninsured rates vary widely by age — partly as a function of Medicare and programs targeting younger children — and race, according to an American Community Survey brief released in November. Medicare covers those ages 65 and older, while children under age 19 may be included in their parents’ insurance coverage, Medicaid and/or the Children’s Health Insurance Program. For example, no Midwestern state’s uninsured rate for adults ages 65 and older is even 1 percent.

At the other end of the age spectrum, for those under 19 years of age, uninsured rates in the Midwest range from 3 percent in Michigan and 3.2 percent in Illinois to 7.3 percent in North Dakota.

While those ages 19 to 26 are eligible to be covered by their parents’ policies, Midwestern states’ uninsured rates among adults ages 19 to 64 range from 7.1 percent in Michigan to 13.3 percent in South Dakota and 13.5 percent in Kansas.

The ACS brief also found a wide coverage gulf persists between Whites and Asians on one end of the range and Hispanics and Native Americans at the other. Nationally, just 5.7 percent of Whites and 5.8 percent of Asians were uninsured in 2021 compared to 9.6 percent of Blacks, 17.7 percent of Hispanics and 18.8 percent of Native Americans.

Within the Midwest, the percentages for White uninsured range from 3.4 percent in Minnesota to 6.9 percent in Kansas, for back uninsured, from 7.4 percent in Wisconsin to 20.4 percent in North Dakota; for Asian uninsured, from 4.2 percent in Michigan to 9.6 percent in Ohio.

The percentages for Hispanic uninsured range from 10.1 percent in Michigan to 20.5 percent in Nebraska and 20.3 percent in Kansas; and for Native Americans, from 12.5 percent in Michigan to 35 percent in South Dakota.

“Racial differences in health insurance coverage persisted across age and selected characteristics and reflect disparities in social determinants of health, such as income and poverty status as well as employment,” the brief says.

4 RISING COSTS OF INSURANCE STILL A MAJOR OBSTACLE

Coverage alone doesn’t help if the insured person can’t afford treatment. Reports issued earlier this year by The Commonwealth Fund suggest health insurance costs are taking larger bites out of middle-income families’ budgets and leaving them “underinsured.”

A September study found more than two in five working adults ages 19 to 64 were underinsured, defined as someone to whom at least one situation applies:

• Out-of-pocket costs over the prior 12 months, excluding premiums, were equal to 10 percent or more of household income.

• Out-of-pocket costs over the prior 12 months, excluding premiums, were equal to 5 percent or more of household income for individuals living under 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($27,180 for an individual or $55,500 for a family of four in 2022).

• The deductible constituted 5 percent or more of household income.

A January study of state trends in employer premiums and deductibles from 2010 to 2020 found that in 2010, worker contributions to insurance premiums and deductibles made up 10 percent of median income in no Midwestern state. By 2020, they did in all but Michigan and Minnesota.

“The high cost-sharing people face in many employer, individual-market, and marketplace plans is primarily driven by the prices that providers, especially hospitals, charge to commercial insurers and employers,” the latter report says. “These prices are the highest in the world. And consumers bear the burdens.”

Coverage in the Midwest:

• Employer-provided: 90.4 percent
• Medicaid: 10.1 percent
• Medicare: 9.5 percent
• Other: 0.1 percent

Coverage for Whites:

• Employer-provided: 90.8 percent
• Medicaid: 10.8 percent
• Medicare: 8.4 percent
• Other: 0.0 percent

Coverage for Hispanics:

• Employer-provided: 92.0 percent
• Medicaid: 8.6 percent
• Medicare: 4.9 percent
• Other: 0.5 percent

Coverage for Native Americans:

• Employer-provided: 89.9 percent
• Medicaid: 7.0 percent
• Medicare: 8.5 percent
• Other: 0.3 percent

Source: American Community Survey

AVERAGE COMBINED COST OF EMPLOYEE PREMIUM CONTRIBUTION AND DEDUCTIBLE IN EMPLOYER PLANS AS A % OF MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 2020 (% FROM 2010 IN PARENTHESIS)

Source: The Commonwealth Fund

BREAKDOWN, BY TYPE OF COVERAGE, OF HOW PEOPLE GOT THEIR HEALTH INSURANCE IN 2021

Source: American Community Survey

*State totals are made up of respondents who were categorized under more than one type of the category.
CRIMINAL JUSTICE & PUBLIC SAFETY

Though nearly all Midwestern states allow for compassionate release of elderly, terminally ill incarcerated residents, obstacles often stand in the way from eligibility criteria and release procedures to data collection and right to counsel (see graphic for the organization’s full rubric).

NEED FOR GREATER CLARITY

Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin received variations of an “F” grade, yet got high marks for certain aspects of their compassionate release policies. The eligibility criteria used in Wisconsin’s “sentence modification due to extraordinary health condition or age” policy, for example, was credited as a “model of clarity and breadth” for providing “very clear descriptions of what constitutes extraordinary health conditions and includes easy-to-understand examples of qualifying conditions.”

FAMM also deemed Wisconsin’s release planning policies as the “crown jewel” of the program, because “it starts early, is comprehensive, and includes assistance with applying for benefits and finding housing and funding.” In addition, Illinois, South Dakota, and Wisconsin were commended for not revoking an offender’s compassionate release if the person’s medical condition improves. Nonetheless, most states in the region earned low grades for policies that were deemed confusing or contradictory, place undue burden on impaired offenders to start the application process, use vague or restrictive definitions of what it means to be “near death,” and other reasons.

Iowa, which does not currently provide for compassionate release, was the only state to receive an automatic zero grade from FAMM.

Attempts to change the state’s policies have been made, however. In 2021, for example, HF 377 included a provision that would have allowed for people convicted of a Class A felony offense — which usually includes a life sentence — to be able to petition for a commutation if diagnosed with a terminal illness or they became medically incapacitated. Although that bill never made it out of committee, a neighboring state did pass a similar proposal that same year.

THE ILLINOIS MODEL

Illinois was the only Midwestern state (and one of just five nationwide) to receive an “A.” However, this lauded status was not always the case.

“The process for applying for medical release was complicated, burdensome, took a very long time and required expensive action by the governor,” says Illinois Rep. Will Guzzardi.

That led him in 2021 to introduce the Joe Coleman Medical Release Act, a bill (HB 3665) named after a Vietnam War veteran who had been in prison since the early 1980s for multiple robberies and whose family had tried for years to secure his release due to failing health. “When Joe Jr., Joe’s son, was in the car driving to Springfield to get the final paperwork, it had to be notarized and then hand-delivered to some bureaucrat in Springfield in order to secure his father’s release, and as he was in the car on the road to Springfield, his father passed away in prison,” Guzzardi recalls.

HB 3665 was signed into law that August. As a result, offenders and other parties (for example, family members, attorneys and doctors) now can petition the Prisoner Review Board for an incarcerated individual to transition to mandatory supervised release if he or she is suffering from a terminal illness or is deemed medically incapacitated.

“Terminal illness” is defined as an incurable condition that will most likely result in death within 18 months. “Medically incapacitated” is defined as a medical condition or cognitive disorder, developed after sentencing, that prevents an individual from participating in more than one activity of daily living — for example, feeding, personal hygiene, dressing or toiletting.

The new policy applies retroactively to all incarcerated individuals regardless of when they were sentenced. Applicants can file for compassionate release multiple times, and the Prisoner Review Board must consider victim reports when evaluating release claims.

Despite receiving an overall high score, Illinois’ release planning policy earned high marks from FAMM for placing too much of the onus on the petitioners to find housing and medical support upon release. In comparison, states such as Kansas, Minnesota and Wisconsin earned praise in the FAMM study for their release planning procedures.

Guzzardi agrees this is an area that needs to be addressed.

“The [Illinois Department of Corrections] has not yet created a strong enough system to connect these folks who are going home with the medical care they’re desperately going to need,” he says.

“So far, most of the successful petitions under the act have been with the help of nonprofit legal aid clinics — specifically the Illinois Prison Project. … But ultimately, this shouldn’t be an add-on thing that falls to the well-intentioned nonprofit sector. This should be the responsibility of the state.”


Illinois Rep. Will Guzzardi

### # OF DEATHS FROM ILLNESSES IN MIDWESTERN STATE PRISON SYSTEMS, 2001-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Deaths</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5% OF INCARCERATED PEOPLE BY AGE IN STATE AND FEDERAL JUDICIAL CUSTODY (AS OF DEC. 31, 2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 or older</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes heart disease, cancer, liver disease, AIDS-related, respiratory disease, influenza, coroner’s disease and other natural causes of death.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics

### CRITERIA USED BY GROUP FAMM IN NATIONAL STUDY EVALUATING STATES’ COMPASSIONATE RELEASE POLICIES

1. **Clearly stated eligibility criteria are in place, aren’t undoably restricted, and apply to all incarcerated people**
2. **Engaging the process can be done by staff, incarcerated people or their families**
3. **Agency policy design keeps rules consistent and up to date with statutes; rules provide clear guidance**
4. **Procedures involve the minimum number of people to review applications and maintain time frames**
5. **Release planning support is comprehensive and begins as soon as eligible people are identified**
6. **Right to counsel, and appeals are provided throughout the process, and individuals have a right to be applied if circumstances change**
7. **Data collection and reporting to legislatures and the general public should be required**
### NUMBER OF WOMEN IN U.S. STATE LEGISLATURES ON THE RISE, INCLUDING IN MOST MIDWESTERN STATES

A record number of women will be serving in U.S. state legislatures in 2023, holding close to one-third of the seats in capitols across the country, according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.

In the Midwest, Illinois will have the highest percentage of state legislative seats held by women: more than 40 percent (exact totals were unavailable as of early December due to too-close-to-call races). Three other states in the region eclipse the national rate of 32.2 percent: Michigan, Minnesota and Nebraska (see map).

In terms of representation in state legislatures, the greatest gains for women during the 2022 election cycle occurred in Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska and North Dakota. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of female legislators will fall in two Midwestern states: Ohio (-2) and South Dakota (-1).

Across the country this year, a record number of women were major-party nominees for state legislature (3,615), the center notes.

Two states, Colorado and Nevada, now have majority-women legislatures, and 12 of the nation’s 50 U.S. governors (24 percent) are women, including Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem.

All four of them were re-elected to office in 2022.

In the U.S. Congress, women now hold a record-high 27.9 percent of the seats.

### OVERVIEW OF 2 TAX POLICIES IN MIDWEST

**Gov. Kristi Noem wants to eliminate sales tax on groceries**

In 2022, legislatures in two of the three Midwestern states that levy a sales tax on groceries either suspended it for a year (Illinois) or gradually phased it out (Kansas). South Dakota is the region’s only other state with such a tax, and Gov. Kristi Noem is urging legislators to end it as part of any final state budget agreement.

“Unfortunately, food costs have risen by far too much,” Noem said in December as part of an address introducing her proposed budget, “and families are struggling to make ends meet as a result.” According to Noem, the state is in a strong fiscal position right now to absorb the loss in revenue — estimated to be about $100 million a year.

Other parts of her proposed budget include having the state fully cover paid family leave for state employees and establishing a $20 million program that incentivizes businesses to buy into a new paid family leave opportunity. Additionally, Noem highlighted the need for very scarce licenses for state workers (“We are now in a very difficult time recruiting state employees,” she says) and to increase reimbursement rates for health and human services providers (“Some [rates] have fallen too far behind!”)

**Gov. Doug Burgum seeks end of graduated income tax**

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum unveiled a budget proposal of his own in December, and like Noem’s, it includes plans for a big change in state tax policy — in his case, a call for the end of North Dakota’s five-tiered, graduated income tax system.

“By doing away with a graduated tax system, we can take our state’s tax policy to the next level,” Burgum said in a Budget Day speech. “We’re making ourselves a more competitive state where businesses can locate and grow. Business taxes are already among the lowest in the country, but this will make us even more attractive.”

In its place would be the lowest flat income tax in the nation (1.5 percent). Additionally, Burgum said it includes plans for a big change in state tax policy — in his case, a call for the end of North Dakota’s five-tiered, graduated income tax system.

Other parts of Burgum’s budget seek to address what he says is “our No. 1 barrier to economic growth — our workforce challenge.”

### SASKATCHEWAN AIMS TO CUT REVIEW TIME FOR NEW RESIDENTS WITH PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

A new professional licensing and credentialing regimen should reduce the time new Saskatchewan residents — whether from another province or another country — must wait for approval to work in the province.

Under the Labour Mobility and Fair Registration Regulations Act (Bill 81), which received royal assent in May and took effect in late 2022, provincial agencies must recognize the professional credentials of workers who have already been certified in other Canadian provinces within 20 days, as well as assess those of internationally trained applicants within 30 days to determine if they are qualified to work in Saskatchewan.

“I hear from employers every day that the biggest challenge they are facing is an acute labor market shortage,” Minister of Immigration and Career Training Jeremy Harrison says. “These changes will directly reduce the impact this has on Saskatchewan by expanding the talent pools.” Regulated occupations covered by the act include (but aren’t limited to) professional engineers, physicians and surgeons, registered nurses, teachers and lawyers.

A concurrent effort is also being made to help international newcomers with costs related to obtaining licensure (for example, paying for necessary assessments or training). The province’s International Credential Recognition Grant will provide up to $6,000 per application for internationally trained health care workers who already reside in Saskatchewan but have been unable to obtain licensure.

### ILLINOIS OPENING COLLEGE SAVINGS ACCOUNT FOR EVERY NEWBORN — UP TO $50 IN SEED MONEY PER CHILD

With the start of the new year, Illinois is launching its Children’s Savings Program, with each child born or adopted in the state eligible for up to a $50 deposit in the college-savings fund administered by the Illinois treasurer. Legislators created the program in 2019 (HB 2237) and set aside funding for it ($2.5 million) for the first time this year. Additionally, under a bill signed into law in 2022 (SB 3991), the treasurer is statutorily obligated to collect all demographic and socioeconomic information on program participants. The office then has the authority to "make supplementary deposits to children in financially insecure households if sufficient funds are available.”

Nebraska has its own version of a college savings program for newborns, the Meadowlark Program, which launched in 2020 after legislative passage of LB 610 in 2019. That law also included two other provisions to encourage contributions to young people’s college savings accounts: 1) incentive payments to employers who match their employees’ contribution into a child’s 529 account; and 2) a matching scholarship program for low-income families. The availability of funds relies on state appropriations and private contributions.

A handful of other U.S. states have these kinds of “seed deposit” programs for newborns and their families. California has perhaps the largest such program. It offers up to $100 for every newborn, plus another $500 for any first-grader from a low-income family.
New presiding officer of the Senate reflects on attributes of effective leadership, and looks ahead to a year focused on school choice and property taxes

PROFILE: IOWA SENATE PRESIDENT
AMY SINCLAIR

When she moved several years ago from Missouri to Iowa, Amy Sinclair discovered right away something unique about her adopted home state. “Politics is a very, very participatory sport in Iowa, if you will,” Sinclair says. “If you haven’t met a president or a presidential candidate, it’s because you’ve been actively avoiding them.”

The reason: As the longtime home of the country’s first-in-the-nation presidential primary caucuses, Iowa has been a place where presidential candidates have been known to end or ascend. Sinclair attended her first-ever caucus in 2004, and soon after, a long political career of her own began to take off.

A local Republican party leader approached her about running for office, though the prospects of beating a three-time incumbent on the county Board of Supervisors didn’t sound very promising.

“He said, ‘You know you’ll lose, but nobody should be on the ballot unopposed,’” she recalls. But to most everyone’s surprise, including herself, Sinclair won the election. She has held public office of some kind ever since. “I absolutely fell in love with the process of self-governance,” she says. “We get to come together through government to provide our roads, our hospitals, our fire departments, our police protection. All of those are things that we don’t pay for on our own, we pay for together.”

Sinclair served two terms as a county supervisor while also working as an educator in her home community, where she taught parenting courses and GED and adult basic education classes.

Ahead of the 2012 elections, Sinclair was again asked by the same local party leader to run for office, this time a seat in the state Senate. Sinclair is now approaching her 10th anniversary in the Legislature, a tenure marked in part by leadership on education policy (as chair of the Senate Education Committee) and within the Republican Senate caucus.

Regionwide, too, Sinclair is co-chair of the steering committee of Midwestern legislators that oversees the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, a signature program of The Council of State Governments’ Midwestern Legislative Conference. (She is a 2016 BILLD graduate.)

And for the year ahead, Sinclair looks forward to taking on a new challenge — presiding officer of the state’s upper legislative chamber. She recently was elected Senate president by legislative colleagues in her caucus. In an interview with CSG Midwest, Sinclair discussed this new role, her views on leadership, and her legislative priorities for 2023. Here are excerpts.

Q What are your top policy priorities for the year ahead?

A We’re going to work on property tax reform. When I leave my house and talk to my constituents, the first thing they bring up is property taxes. When you’re throwing increased property values — which cause increased taxes — in with out-of-control inflation, it’s suddenly really become a forefront issue for people to have some more transparency and predictability in their property tax bills.

Number two, from a policy standpoint, I will be focusing on an issue that shouldn’t surprise anybody because it’s something that I’ve worked on the entire time I’ve been in the Legislature. It’s the notion that parents should have a greater degree of control over where and how their kids are educated.

We want to strengthen our public school system, but also give parents a choice in educational alternatives.

Q What do you view as the essential elements of an effective leader?

A Without question, listening, which goes back to that whole idea of consensus building — making sure the things that we’re doing make sense for everyone.

But, also, being able to make a tough decision when you can’t find a consensus. Somebody ultimately has to take the heat on whatever decisions are made. And I think being willing to stand in that position that takes the heat, so that your team doesn’t have to, is the mark of a good leader.

Q How has your previous experience as majority whip prepared you for your new role as Senate president?

A In my role as whip, I didn’t view that as browbeating my colleagues into doing what the leadership thought that they ought to do. I viewed that as a position where I needed to make sure that whatever we were doing, all of my colleagues could be on board. It was more consensus building than arm twisting. That consensus building, that approach that I took to being whip, is an approach that I can take into serving as president.

Q What do you think the Midwestern Legislative Conference (BILLD) Steering Committee does for its members?

A The Midwestern Legislative Conference BILLD Steering Committee has been to have that mark of a good leader. It’s a 2016 graduate of CSG Midwest’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) and serves as co-chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference BILLD Steering Committee.
A 2021 law allows North Dakota to reimagine the use of its Legacy Fund and stimulate new — and lasting — investment and entrepreneurial activity.

**Overview of the North Dakota Legacy Fund**

- Created in 2010 via a legislatively referred, voter-approved constitutional amendment with a goal of using revenue from finite resources (oil and gas) to benefit future generations of North Dakotans.
- Receives 30 percent of state revenue (production and extraction taxes) from oil and gas production after June 30, 2011; principal and earnings from the fund could not be spent until after June 30, 2017.
- No more than 15 percent of the fund’s principal can be spent in a single biennium; spending on the principal requires a two-thirds vote by the North Dakota House and Senate.
- More than $7.2 billion has been deposited into the fund; distributions to the general fund total more than $1.3 billion.

Legislative changes from 2021 seek to improve how the fund is used to position the state for future prosperity. Among the goals: why local communities improve their infrastructure (via the use of revolving, low-interest loans) and target more in-state investments so that homegrown businesses and entrepreneurs have greater access to capital (see main article for details).

North Dakota is known for many things, but having a high number of large-scale venture capital firms or multitudes of publicly traded companies is not part of our reputation. Growing that capacity is key.

Our goal is to grow the economic pie in North Dakota by helping entrepreneurs, and assisting companies already operating here.

This will not only help our businesses in North Dakota, but also generate earnings for the Legacy Fund as a whole. We can then continue to use those earnings to meet the infrastructure and educational needs of communities across our state — helping us leave that woodpile higher for future generations.

**LEAVING A LEGACY**

For some background, in 2010, the same year I was first elected to the state House, voters passed a legislatively referred constitutional amendment to create a sovereign wealth fund. It called for 30 percent of the state’s share of oil taxes from our newly tapped Bakken Formation to be set aside for this Legacy Fund.

Our goal from the beginning has been to use it to benefit the future of North Dakota.

As such, we have deposited more than $7.26 billion into the Legacy Fund, and during this most recent biennium, we transferred $871 million in earnings. — for investments in infrastructure, education and other vital services. The Legacy Fund already is paying dividends, but we are always looking for ways we can do more.

**ACCESS TO CAPITAL PROBLEM**

As many folks in “flyover” country know, access to capital for businesses in our rural markets is a never-ending challenge.

In North Dakota, we have tried numerous investment tax credit initiatives, grant programs and revolving loan funds.

Some have been more successful than others.

Funding constraints and red tape often have limited the efficacy of these state-run programs, however — too small for larger projects to find them worthwhile, or too cumbersome for smaller companies to be able to track and monitor effectively.

In 2021, our state policymakers took a different approach.

Led by Rep. Mike Nathe, the North Dakota Legislative Assembly established a new in-state investment program (HB 1425). By leveraging the Legacy Fund’s principal, we could access significantly more capital for our local markets and develop an investment ecosystem in North Dakota.

This legislation (HB 1425) directed our state investment staff to use up to 20 percent of the principal of the Legacy Fund for in-state investments, with that amount split 50/50 between equity and fixed income.

A large portion of our fixed income is being used for revolving loan funds for political subdivisions, or through a CD Match loan program offered through our Bank of North Dakota that is available to credit-worthy businesses.

The equity side has been a tougher hill to climb.

**IN-STATE INVESTMENTS HELP OUR HOMEOWNERSHIPS**

In North Dakota, we have tried numerous investment tax credit initiatives, grant programs and revolving loan funds. But one key has been to target in-state businesses.

We have some kinks to work out to improve implementation, accelerate the rate of capital deployment, and meet our 20 percent target for in-state investments.

But we are off to a good start.

One tenet will remain a focus: we must be growing solid risk-adjusted returns to the fund so we can continue to grow and be able to make future investments.

However, we are off to a good start.

More than $780 million in our equity-income mandate.

It is a “fund of funds” approach that aims to leverage private investment dollars to support our in-state businesses and entrepreneurs. 50 South Capital is a global firm, and it has now set up an office in Fargo and hired staff, found investment partners on the ground here, and deployed a majority of that $100 million. The money is going to rapidly growing agriculture and technology firms in our state.

Through the program and fund run by 50 South Capital, we have seen venture capital companies such as gener8tor open an office in our area and start making investments here.

In the first year of this program, 50 South Capital has partnered with five different venture capital firms that previously weren’t operating with large-scale capacity here.

We are beginning to make strides in solving our state’s access-to-capital shortfall.

We have some kinks to work out to improve implementation, accelerate the rate of capital deployment, and meet our 20 percent target for in-state investments.

But we are off to a good start.

One tenet will remain a focus: we must be generating solid risk-adjusted returns to the fund so we can continue to grow and be able to make future investments.

Our state’s businesses need more access to capital; we have a strategy to help
CROSS-BORDER LEGISLATIVE EXCHANGES FOSTER CLOSER RELATIONS AMONG MIDWEST’S STATES AND PROVINCES

One ongoing goal of CSG’s Midwestern Legislative Conference is to strengthen cross-border relations among leaders of this region’s states and provinces.

Legislative exchanges help fulfill this mission, and in November, a three-member delegation of Michigan lawmakers travelled to Ontario to meet with their legislative peers, discuss shared priorities and interests, and learn about Ontario’s legislative process and its parliamentary system.

Ontario is one of three affiliate members of the MLC, along with Alberta and Manitoba. Saskatchewan is a full member along with 11 Midwestern states.

The Midwestern Office of The Council of State Governments provides staff support to the binational, nonpartisan MLC. Both states and provinces host these ongoing, MLC-facilitated legislative exchanges.

NEW 4-MEMBER OFFICER TEAM LEADING CSG’S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE IN 2023

M ichigan Sen. Roger Victory will serve as Midwestern Legislative & Conference chair in the year ahead, joined by three other legislators on the MLC leadership team.

This team of state and provincial legislators formally took on their new leadership roles in December, at a meeting of the MLC Executive Committee. Ohio Sen. Bill Reineke is the new MLC first vice chair, Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly Speaker Randy Wekesk the second vice chair, and Kansas Sen. Carolyn McGinn the immediate past chair.

They will be joined by MLC Executive Committee guide the work of the MLC — a binational association of all legislators in 11 Midwestern states as well as the Canadian province of Saskatchewan (Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are affiliate members.) CSG Midwest provides staff support to the MLC.

ABOUT THE FOUR MLC OFFICERS

- Roger Victory was first elected to the Michigan Senate in 2018 after serving six years in the House. In 2022, he was chair of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee and assistant majority whip. He owns Victory Farms LLC, a year-round specialty crop producer, as well as Victory Sales LLC, a national produce distributor.

- After serving three terms in the Ohio House, Bill Reineke won election to the state Senate in 2020. He served as vice chair of the Transportation Committee in 2022 and also is a leading legislative voice on education and workforce issues. Outside the legislature, Sen. Reineke is a business partner in Reineke Family Dealerships, a three-generation family business.

- Randy Wekesk was first elected to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in 1999. He became speaker in late 2020, when fellow MLA chose him for the position. In this role, he serves as the Assembly’s chief presiding officer. Speaker Wekesk has decades of experience as a farmer, rancher and feedlot operator.

- Carolyn McGinn just completed her successful year’s tenure as MLC chair. A member of the Kansas Legislature since 2005, she is a respected leader on policies ranging from transportation and water, to budgeting and local government. In 2022, McGinn served as chair of the Senate Committee on Local Government. She is an agriculture producer and lives on a family farm with her husband, Mark.

MIDWEST PLANNING VISITS TO EVERY STATE CAPITOL IN EARLY 2021

How can we help you and enrich your time in the legislature?

Those are among the questions that CSG Midwest seeks to answer as part of its annual visits to state capitols to meet individually with legislators. These trips are particularly important in 2023 due to the many legislators taking office for the first time after the November elections.

Please reach out to CSG Midwest staff to schedule an appointment. We can assist with policy research and discuss ways for you to make the most of The Council of State Governments and its membership in regional groups such as the binational, nonpartisan Midwestern Legislative Conference and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus. Exact dates of the visits to each state are available at csgmidwest.org or by contacting CSG Midwest’s liaisons for each state.

- Illinois and Minnesota: Mitch Avridson, mavridson@csg.org
- Indiana and Iowa: Derek Cantu, dcantu@csg.org
- Kansas and Michigan: Laura Klekwer, klekwer@csg.org
- Nebraska: Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- North Dakota and Ohio: Laura Tomaka, ltomaka@csg.org
- South Dakota and Wisconsin: Jon Davis, jdavis@csg.org

In advance of these state visits, CSG Midwest had the chance in late 2022 to participate in three new member orientations for newly elected legislators in Indiana, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Every state legislator from this region is a member of CSG’s Midwestern Legislative Conference.
The end of the calendar year marked the end of legislative service for many graduates of the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development. CSG Midwest extends its thanks to those departing alumni for their service and for being an active part of our organization. We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

ILLINOIS

INDIANA
Sen. Phil Boots (class of 2007) • Rep. Doug Gutwein (class of 2009)

IOWA

KANSAS

MICHIGAN

MINNESOTA

NEBRASKA

NORTH DAKOTA

OHIO

SOUTH DAKOTA

WISCONSIN

Q & A WITH BILLD ALUMNI: THREE RETIRING BILLD GRADUATES REFLECT ON THEIR LEGISLATIVE SERVICE

ILLINOIS REP TIM BUTLER | CLASS OF 2016 | SERVED 2012-2022
I'm most proud of: “Illinois had gone a decade without a capital construction program, but in 2019, with a newly elected governor, the General Assembly passed the historic Rebuild Illinois program in overwhelming bipartisan fashion. I was proud to be the top Republican on the Appropriations-Capital Committee and a part of the team that negotiated the program over several months. This was a forward-thinking capital program and has allowed us to leverage tremendous resources to shore up the infrastructure of Illinois.”

I'd like to be remembered: “I'm hopeful people will look back on my career as someone who defended and respected the institution at a time of tremendous conflict and, honestly, peril. I have tried to carry myself as a bipartisan collaborator who lives up to his word, respects fellow legislators, and puts my head down to do work.”

Work I'm leaving undone: “The top issue I wish we could address in Illinois is reversing the economic decline of our rural counties and mid-sized communities outside of the Chicago area. ... We have to make it a priority that those regions prosper as well.”

WISCONSIN SEN. JANIS RINGHAND | CLASS OF 2013 | SERVED 2011-2022
I'm most proud of: “I am very proud of the strides we have made in encouraging young people — mainly high school students and displaced workers — to enter into skilled trades programs offered at tech colleges. With the retirement of Baby Boomers, there are many openings for very skilled jobs that provide a career at a family-supporting wage.”

I'd like to be remembered: “As someone who took time to visit with my constituents and colleagues, whether it was a single issue or an ongoing discussion across the aisle. I believe I always respected others' opinions.”

NORTH DAKOTA REP. KIM KOPPELMAN | CLASS OF 1997 | SERVED 1995-2022
I'd like to be remembered: “As a statesman — a good, honest legislator who got things done, but more importantly, as one who respected all those he worked with and so treated them with respect. I hope constituents will remember me as a responsive and effective legislator who was accessible, listened, got things done and represented them well.”

Insights I have learned: “In a citizen legislature, like we have in North Dakota, people come to it with an amazing blend of life experiences. Being willing to learn from one another, to learn the legislative process, and to learn how to shape good public policy. I leave the Legislature older, wiser and, I hope, better than when I came to it.”

APPLICATION SEASON BEGINS FOR 2023 BILLD PROGRAM
As legislative sessions begin across the region, CSG Midwest — with the help of BILLD alumni — is reaching out to newer lawmakers about the chance to apply for a BILLD fellowship. Here are details about the 2023 Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development Program.
- Designed for legislators in their first four years of service.
- Deadline to apply is April 17.
- Program will be held Aug. 18-22 in Madison, Wis.
- Learn more, and find the application, at csgmidwest.org.