

STATELINE MIDWEST



MIDWEST

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS | MIDWESTERN OFFICE
VOLUME 34 | WINTER 2025

5 FOR 2025: A LOOK AT KEY FISCAL AND POLICY TRENDS FOR STATES IN YEAR AHEAD

1 SIGNS POINT TO TIGHTENING BUDGET CONDITIONS

A \$432 million shortfall for Nebraska legislators to fill in the state's current biennium budget.

Projections of a \$3.2 billion deficit in Illinois for the fiscal year that begins in July.

Sales tax collections falling below projections in South Dakota, and a proposed governor's budget for fiscal year 2026 that would reduce overall state spending from the current year.

A forecasted budget shortfall in Minnesota of \$5.1 billion for the 2028-'09 biennium.

These and other news reports from late 2024 point to signs of a new fiscal era for states after what the National Association of State Budget Officers describes as "multiple extraordinary years of widespread, substantial surpluses and record-setting revenue growth."

In its December "The Fiscal Survey of States," NASBO notes that, based on enacted budgets for FY 2025, general fund spending by states is expected to decline by 0.3 percent. This would be the first year-over-year drop since 2010.

However, the decline would follow a fiscal year in which general fund spending had jumped by 11.8 percent, with one-time state spending of surplus funds accounting for much of the increase.

States, too, appear well positioned to handle tightening budget conditions.

For FY 2025, the median rainy day fund balance for states is projected to be 14.4 percent of general fund expenditures, according to NASBO. That would be a record high, and more than double the median balance from less than a decade ago. Rainy day fund balances were expected to be even higher than this 50-state median in Kansas, Nebraska and North Dakota.

Over the longer term, though, there will be questions about how well state budgets hold up. Federal funding for states is returning to normal levels (after pandemic-related spikes), and many legislatures have increased spending and/or passed tax cuts in recent years.

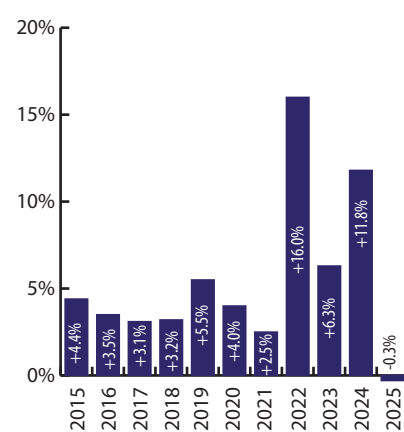
In the Midwest, over the past two fiscal years, income tax rates have been reduced and/or tax brackets consolidated in Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin. In many states, these tax cuts are permanent.

Iowa, for instance, has a new flat income tax rate of 3.8 percent that took effect in January; as recently as 2018, the rate for the top income bracket had been close to 9 percent.

In large part because of this tax cut, official revenue estimates for Iowa show the state collecting \$1 billion less in taxes in FY 2026 than it did in FY 2024. Gov. Kim Reynolds and legislative leaders have said the changes make their state

more economically competitive while ensuring that lowans keep more of their earnings.

ANNUAL CHANGES IN STATE GENERAL FUND SPENDING, FY 2015 TO FY 2025*



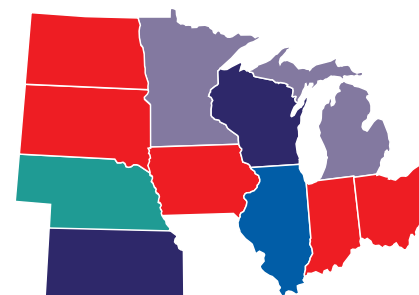
* The change for FY 2024 is based on actual spending in FY 2023 and preliminary actuals for FY 2024. The change for FY 2025 is based on FY 2024 preliminary actuals and enacted budgets for FY 2025.

Source: National Association of State Budget Officers, "The Fiscal Survey of States"

2 PROPERTY TAX RELIEF IS HIGH ON LEGISLATIVE AGENDAS

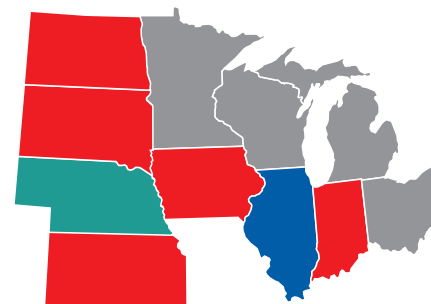
Over the past year, demands for property tax relief led to two special legislative sessions in the Midwest, as well as a citizen-initiated ballot proposal

PARTISAN CONTROL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS IN MIDWEST IN 2025



- Democrats have majorities in both legislative chambers and the governor's office
- Republicans have majorities in both legislative chambers and the governor's office
- Republicans have majorities in both legislative chambers; governor is Democrat
- Split control of legislature; governor is Democrat
- Nonpartisan unicameral legislature; governor is Republican

LEGISLATIVE SUPERMAJORITIES IN MIDWEST IN 2025



- Democrats have supermajority in both legislative chambers
- Republicans have supermajority in both legislative chambers
- Nonpartisan legislature

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- A record number of women will hold state legislative seats in the year ahead; Midwest's biggest increase is in South Dakota



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5 FOR 2025: BUDGETS, PROPERTY TAXES, STUDENT LITERACY, ONLINE SAFETY FOR KIDS, AND AI

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to abolish the tax completely in North Dakota. More legislative discussions and actions are expected across the region in 2025.

Overview of new property tax laws in Nebraska and Kansas

The result of the 2024 special session in Nebraska was to establish a new property tax growth cap on local governments. Under LB 34, the property tax levy in a city, county and village must now largely remain the same from one year to the next.

Nebraska legislators did allow for local levy increases tied to new construction or other improvements in a taxing district, as well as inflationary changes (as tracked by a price index that monitors state and local government expenses). And there are two other exceptions to Nebraska's new cap on property tax revenue growth: allowing for the funding of public safety services or emergencies, and for a direct vote by local residents to increase the taxing authority.

A second provision in LB 34 seeks to ensure that all property-tax payers in Nebraska get relief via an existing income tax credit program. The credit is based on the amount paid in property taxes for local schools and community colleges. It will now automatically appear and be accounted for on individuals' property tax statements.

As part of the 2024 special session in Kansas, lawmakers increased the homestead exemption on the statewide property tax (SB 1). It was raised to \$75,000. Just a few years ago, the amount had been \$20,000. Some lawmakers want the exemption raised again, to \$100,000.

North Dakotans rejected the fall 2024 ballot proposal calling for an end to all state and local property taxes.

However, the issue of property tax relief remains a high priority in North Dakota, as well as most other states in the Midwest.

Options for providing property tax relief

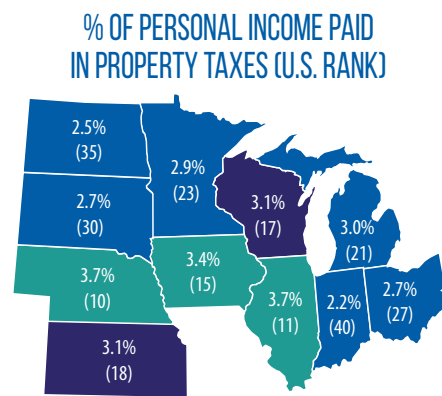
Nebraska and Kansas employed two of the policy levers available to states: increasing homestead exemptions or imposing new property tax growth caps on local governments.

Here are other frequently used options:

- Increase revenue from other sources to reduce property tax burdens. Years ago, for instance, Indiana and Michigan raised their sales tax rates for this purpose, and such a proposal is under consideration in South Dakota.

Nebraska legislators have explored various options for not only raising the sales tax rate, but also expanding the base (through the elimination of various exemptions) in exchange for cuts in the property tax. In November 2024, Illinois legislators asked voters, in a nonbinding referendum, if state income taxes should be raised on millionaires, with the extra dollars used to fund property tax relief. A majority of Illinois voters approved of the idea.

- Establish an assessment limit so that a property's assessed value, for taxation purposes, only increases by a certain amount from one year to the next. In Michigan, for example, the limit is 5 percent or the rate of inflation,



- Higher than U.S. average (3.1%)
- Same as U.S. average (3.1%)
- Lower than U.S. average (3.1%)

Source: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, "State-by-State Property Tax at a Glance, 2024" (using U.S. Census Bureau data for year 2021)

whichever is less, until ownership of the property changes hands.

- Target relief for certain homeowners. Many states have "circuit breaker" programs to ensure property tax bills don't overload low-income households or elderly or disabled homeowners. Another option is for states to allow qualifying seniors to defer payment of some or all of their property taxes. Under these programs, the payments aren't due until a change in property ownership. South Dakota and Illinois are among the states that have these deferral programs.

- Establish new "truth in taxation" laws that require local governments to alert all residents and hold public hearings prior to a decision to increase property tax collections. Iowa (HF 718 of 2023), Nebraska (LB 644 of 2021) and Kansas (SB 13 of 2021) already have these laws in place.

3 PLANS TO JUMP-START IMPROVEMENTS IN STUDENT LITERACY

Varying versions of a "science of reading" law have been enacted in nine Midwestern states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin, according to American Public Media.

Broadly, these measures aim to improve literacy and student reading scores by bringing evidence-based instructional strategies to the classroom.

Implementation of these new laws, along with ongoing evaluations of their impacts, will be a priority for state policymakers in 2025 and beyond.

In Indiana (SB 1 of 2024), all second-graders must be assessed on their reading skills, and the state will begin funding locally designed summer school programs for any students deemed "at risk" of not being reading proficient. Interventions also are provided during the school year.

Students in Indiana who don't read proficiently by the end of the third grade (including summer school after the regular third-grade year) will be retained, though the law does provide exceptions for certain students.

Additional monitoring and reading supports for older students also are being made available (SB 6 of 2024).

In Iowa (HF 2618 of 2004), schools must provide a personalized reading plan for any elementary-age student not reading at grade level. The parents of these students also must be sent a written notice making them aware of the option for their child to repeat a grade. The decision on grade retention is left to the parents.

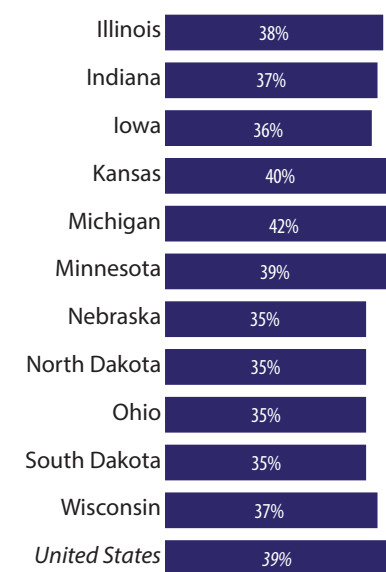
A second part of Iowa's law requires aspiring teachers, prior to receiving their license, to pass a literacy assessment that demonstrates their knowledge of the science of reading.

Last year, Minnesota legislators approved one-time spending of \$37.5 million to advance the state's new plan to improve student literacy. Most of that money is being used to train teachers on evidence-based reading instruction.

Ohio is investing \$169 million in literacy coaches, new instructional materials, professional development and teacher training as part of its new "science of reading" requirements for elementary schools (HB 33 of 2023). Universities also must have coursework for aspiring teachers that aligns with effective literacy instruction.

And as the result of a new law in Kansas (SB 438 of 2024), the state's public universities are establishing six Centers for Excellence in Literacy across the state. The centers will help train future educators; provide ongoing professional development and literacy coaching; and assist with reading evaluations, assessments and interventions.

% OF FOURTH-GRADERS READING AT 'BELOW BASIC' LEVEL — AS MEASURED ON THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (2022)



4 ONLINE, UNSAFE? STATES SEEK NEW SAFEGUARDS FOR KIDS

Protect children online. Empower parents.

Those principles are behind new laws enacted in states across the country, though enforcement sometimes has been blocked by legal action.

Still, bills to protect children from the potential harms of social media or other online use will be under consideration again.

Last year's work of an interim legislative committee in South Dakota points to some of the policy decisions



that lie ahead. Lawmakers on the committee considered a measure that would require the owners of app stores and mobile devices to verify the age of users as well as get parental consent. As of late 2024, no U.S. state had taken this approach.

Instead, state laws have placed the onus of verification and parental consent on the operators of individual apps and social media platforms.

South Dakota's interim legislative committee ultimately did not back the plan requiring verification by the owners of app stores and mobile devices. It instead supported legislation modeled after a Texas law that requires adult-oriented sites to verify that a user is 18 or older.

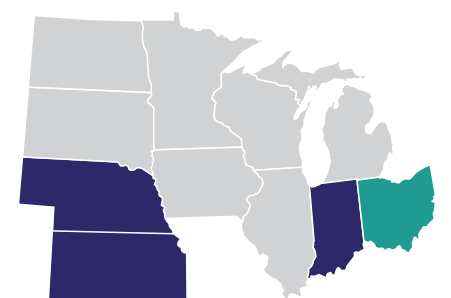
Under South Dakota's proposed measure, age verification would have to be confirmed via the potential user's driver's license or other government ID, a bank account or credit card information, or another method that "accurately and reliably" prevents minors from accessing harmful content.

In 2024, legislators in Indiana (SB 17), Kansas (SB 394) and Nebraska (LB 1092) passed measures requiring the operators of adult-oriented websites to verify the age of users.

In Ohio, enforcement of the state's Social Media Parental Notification Act was stopped by a federal court in early 2024.

That law (HB 33 of 2023) requires companies to obtain verifiable parental consent before permitting children under the age of 16 to use their platforms. If ultimately enforceable, the Ohio measure would apply to any "operator of an online web site, service, or product that targets children, or is reasonably anticipated to be accessed by children."

STATE LAWS RELATED TO ONLINE AGE VERIFICATION AND PARENTAL CONSENT (AS OF NOVEMBER 2024)



Bills passed in 2024 requiring operators of adult-oriented websites to verify age of users

Bill passed in 2023 requiring website operators and social media platforms to verify parental consent in order for content to be accessed by children under age 16; enforcement blocked by federal court

Sources: The Age Verification Providers Association

5
FUTURE IS NOW FOR STATES ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POLICY

State legislatures have just begun to tackle the myriad issues related to artificial intelligence.

In 2024, special legislative committees and/or governor-led groups were formed or met in Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin to study the implications of AI and potential policy responses, according to multistate.ai.

One of the more immediate policy moves by legislatures in 2025 could be to make their review and oversight of AI more permanent.

In Wisconsin, for instance, Sen. Julian Bradley suggests creating a permanent standing or study committee.

"[It] would offer a long-term, flexible approach to managing AI's challenges while avoiding knee-jerk reactions," says Bradley, who served as the chair of one of Wisconsin's study committees. (See his full column on the committee's findings below.)

Indiana's recent AI Task Force made a similar recommendation to create permanent legislative committees.

Among the 50 states, Colorado often is cited as having the most comprehensive law related to AI and consumer protections. SB 24-205 was

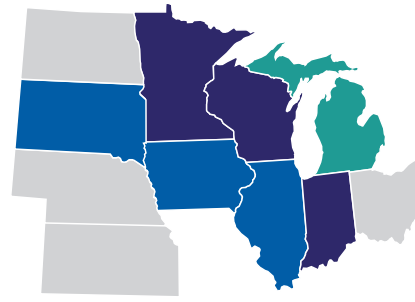
signed into law in 2024 and is set to take effect in 2026. Among many other provisions (including those designed to prevent discrimination in employment, education and banking), the Colorado law requires companies to tell consumers when they are interacting with an AI system.

AI-related laws also are now in place across the Midwest.

New language in Illinois' Human Rights Act (HB 3773 of 2024) prevents employers from using AI technology to hire or promote workers if it has the effect of discriminating based on factors such as race and gender, as well as ZIP code if used as a proxy for protected classes. Another new law in Illinois clarifies that the state's child pornography statutes apply to images and videos created by the technology (HB 4623).

Concerns about AI also have led several of the region's legislatures to regulate or ban certain types of "deepfakes": videos, photos or recordings that have been manipulated through artificial intelligence to seem real, but do not depict actual events or actions by a person.

According to the consumer watchdog group Public Citizen, as of December 2024, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota had laws to crack down on nonconsensual deepfakes that falsely show a person engaging in

REGULATION OF AI-GENERATED 'DEEPAKES' (AS OF DECEMBER 2024)


- Law passed regulating AI deepfakes in elections
- Law passed regulating AI-generated intimate deepfakes that falsely depict a real person engaged in a sexual act
- Law(s) passed regulating both AI deepfakes in elections and AI-generated intimate deepfakes

Source: Public Citizen

a sexual act. Illinois also is one of the first states in the country with a law that explicitly prohibits the use of AI to replicate the voice, image and likeness of a singer, actor or other artist without consent (HB 4875).

Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin are among the U.S. states now regulating deepfakes in elections and related communications.

Michigan's law, for instance, explicitly bars political campaigns' use of "materially deceptive media" generated by AI. This includes false depictions of candidates (things they didn't say, actions they didn't take) that intentionally harm their reputations or electoral chances.

Michigan's prohibition on deepfakes does not apply, however, if a "clearly visible" disclaimer alerts viewers that the image, audio or video "has been manipulated by technical means and depicts speech or conduct that did not occur."

States, too, are beginning to explore ways to tap into the potential good of AI, including improvements in student instruction.

A new \$500,000 grant program in Nebraska (LB 1284 of 2024) aims to advance research into and local schools' access to AI-based writing and reading assistance for students with dyslexia.

In Ohio, AI-focused skills have become the most requested credential from employers seeking state dollars through TechCred. Under the program, employers get reimbursed for the costs associated with a worker earning an industry-recognized, technology-focused credential.

In the September 2024 round of TechCred funding, 62 Ohio schools secured state dollars to help teachers gain new AI skills.

WISCONSIN SEN. JULIAN BRADLEY ON FINDING THE RIGHT APPROACH TO AI — IN 2025 AND BEYOND

From health care and education to business and law enforcement, artificial intelligence has the capacity to impact many facets of our lives.

Over the course of several months in 2024, I served as chair of a study committee in my home state of Wisconsin tasked with analyzing AI's potential and making recommendations for how it should be regulated.

This committee brought together legislators from both parties and members of the public, many of whom are professionals in the tech sector. Together, we traveled the state, heard from experts, and developed a set of recommendations that should drive the discussion on how Wisconsin will handle the opportunities and challenges that AI presents.


FOCUS ON PRIVACY AND 'HIGH-RISK AREAS'

One key recommendation is for our Legislature to focus not on the AI technology itself but on the data that powers it.

AI systems rely on vast amounts of data to function — data that often includes personal information. Mishandled data could put a person's privacy at risk. By focusing on data privacy, the Legislature can help ensure that Wisconsin residents are shielded from the potential harms of data misuse, without stifling technological innovation.

Moreover, our Legislature must learn from the experiences of other states when it comes to AI regulation. Some states have rushed to enact comprehensive AI legislation; now, many of those same states are rushing to implement changes to those bills, sometimes even before the initial legislation has taken effect. We can avoid this trap by putting the focus on high-risk areas where AI can be easily exploited or abused. Rather than blanket regulation, lawmakers should take a targeted approach that protects vulnerable individuals while allowing innovation to flourish.

It's also vital to make sure that existing laws apply to AI models in the same way that they apply to individuals or businesses. Many AI technologies already fall under the

The executive branch should be tasked with promulgating administrative rules to provide clear, consistent guiding principles for AI's use in state government. This would allow the Legislature to oversee how AI is being deployed.

scope of existing laws concerning consumer protection, discrimination and liability. Rather than creating duplicative statutes that single out AI, the Legislature should confirm that AI is governed by these established frameworks. This approach would prevent confusion while making it clear that AI, like any other technology, is subject to accountability.

'WIN THE FUTURE' WITH HELP FROM AI

Education and workforce development should also be a priority. Wisconsin has already shown a commitment to workforce training through initiatives like the Fast Forward program, which provides funding for skills development.

As AI reshapes industries, the state should expand the scope of existing programs to include AI upskilling and education. Being proactive in this regard will help ensure that our state wins the future.

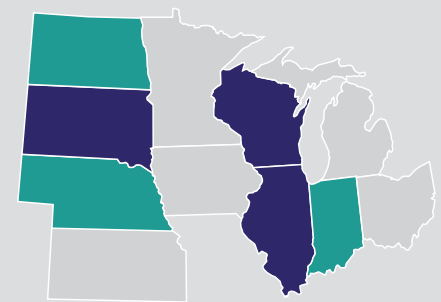
Public safety is another area where AI can offer significant benefits. The Legislature should examine how AI can be leveraged to enhance public safety while ensuring proper oversight to avoid misuse or overreach.

COMMIT TO ONGOING STUDY, OVERSIGHT

Finally, the state must ensure that AI governance is transparent and accountable.

The executive branch should be tasked with promulgating administrative rules to provide clear, consistent guiding principles for AI's use in state government. This would allow the Legislature to oversee how AI is being deployed within state agencies and ensure that it serves the public interest.

Similarly, the Legislature should consider creating a permanent study committee or a new legislative standing committee dedicated to monitoring emerging technologies, including AI. Such a committee would offer a long-term,

LEGISLATIVE-LED STUDY COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN 2024


- Legislative committee, task force or work group created to study AI
- Standing committee of legislature directed to study AI

Source: multistate.ai

flexible approach to managing AI's challenges while avoiding knee-jerk reactions. By focusing on our study group's recommendations, the Legislature can position Wisconsin to be an AI leader and help shape a future where AI serves the public good while safeguarding individual rights.

Sen. Julian Bradley served as chair of the Wisconsin Legislative Study Committee on Artificial Intelligence. He provided this column to CSG Midwest, which welcomes submissions from state policymakers. The opinions expressed in guest columns do not reflect those of The Council of State Governments or the Midwestern Legislative Conference. For information on writing a guest column, contact Tim Anderson at 630.925.1922 or tanderson@csq.org.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Require paid sick leave for workers? Nebraskans said ‘yes’ on a recent ballot measure; changes also are coming soon to a 6-year-old Michigan law

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

This past November, a total of six ballot measures were decided on by voters in Nebraska.

The one that received the most widespread support: a new requirement that workers in the state have access to paid sick leave.

Seventy-five percent of Nebraskans voted for the proposal, a higher margin compared to results reported in the two other states with similar ballot initiatives in 2024, Alaska and Missouri. (The measures passed in these two states as well.) Nebraska now joins Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota as the Midwestern states with these kinds of laws in place.

FROM STALLED LEGISLATION TO BALLOT WIN IN NEBRASKA

Beginning in October, Nebraskans working at a small business (fewer than 20 employees) will be able to accrue at least five days of paid leave in a year. Employees at larger businesses can earn at least seven.

Individuals who work less than 80 hours in a calendar year are not covered. The law also does not apply to federal railway workers and federal or state employees.

Tony Vargas, a supporter of the new law, recalls when his parents had jobs that didn't provide paid sick leave and, as a result, faced decisions on whether they could attend to a loved one's health (or their own).

When they did have benefits, he says, the decision-making process changed to “what was best for the family, not ‘What can we afford to do right now.’”

As a senator, Vargas attempted to get a bill through Nebraska's Unicameral Legislature. His 2021 measure (LB 258) called for nongovernmental employers who hire four or more people to provide workers with at least 40 hours of leave in a calendar year.

Vargas says he attempted to make concessions — including an amendment that would have exempted businesses with fewer than 50 employees and another that would have mandated unpaid sick leave combined with new worker protections — but the bill still stalled.

He acknowledges that the voter-approved policy could be reversed by the Legislature. (Vargas' eight-year run as a senator ended at the close of 2024.)

But he believes the fact that it passed so overwhelmingly signifies support from not only Nebraska workers, but business owners as well.

“How do we have a balance of what's proper protections for employees, and then also making sure employers can keep their businesses operating?”

— Michigan Sen. Thomas Albert

WORKERS' ACCESS TO PAID SICK LEAVE IS ON THE RISE

In early 2024, the IZA Institute of Labor Economics released a policy paper that summarized past research on paid sick leave while examining the impacts on employer costs and the effects of state mandates. Among the results reported in that paper:

- “Employees without access to sick pay are less likely to undergo mammographies, Pap tests and endoscopies at recommended intervals.”
- The estimated cost for employers providing paid sick leave is 41 cents per hour, according to the institute's analysis of data compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- State-level mandates result in an increase of 13 percentage points in the “coverage rate”: employees who have access to paid sick leave.

Eighteen U.S. states now have laws requiring paid sick leave for workers.

But Nicolas Ziebarth of the ZEW Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research says mandates are not the only reason for a recent increase in access to paid sick leave. The rate of U.S. workers with sick pay jumped from 64 percent in 2015 to 78 percent in 2023, Ziebarth's research shows. That's in part because more employers saw value in offering the benefit.

“They could attract better workers, retain workers, and it's not extremely costly,” Ziebarth notes.

In terms of the link between paid sick leave and workforce participation, Ziebarth points to a 2024 study. It analyzed female employment in three states with mandatory paid sick leave: California, Massachusetts and Oregon. The study concluded that the mandates increased rates of employment by around two percentage points, with the largest gains occurring among women without a postsecondary degree and women who are Black or Latina.

HOW PAID SICK LEAVE BECAME A COURT BATTLE IN MICHIGAN

Michigan was the first state in the Midwest with mandatory paid sick leave for workers.

In 2018, a citizen-initiated ballot initiative sought to guarantee paid sick leave for every worker in the state (excluding federal workers). Under that proposal, individuals who worked for small businesses (fewer than 10 employees) could accrue 40 hours of leave in a 12-month period, and those who worked in larger establishments could accrue 72 hours.

But this proposal never made it to the ballot in Michigan.

Instead, lawmakers took up the measure. Their final enacted bill (SB

1175) differed from the proposed ballot initiative in several ways.

For example, the law exempts additional categories of workers and only applies to employers with 50 or more workers. Additionally, the Legislature's version changed how many hours in paid sick leave that a worker at larger-sized businesses must be able to earn over the course of a year: It's 40 hours, instead of the 72 hours called for in the ballot proposal.

The Michigan Supreme Court ruled in 2024 that the original standards outlined in the ballot initiative must take effect in late February, even though it never appeared on ballots. The justices ruled that the Legislature had acted unconstitutionally by changing the ballot language and enacting a different version.

'TENSION' IN LABOR LAW

Following the court's ruling, Sen. Thomas Albert filed SB 992, which would allow for a continued exemption for Michigan's small-business owners. For Albert, too, another major point of concern with the pending new mandate on paid sick leave is what he refers to as a “no call, no show” clause.

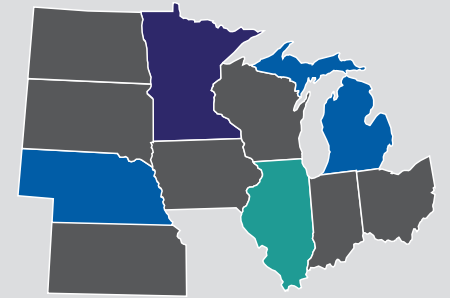
Under the original ballot measure language, individuals using paid sick leave for an unforeseeable purpose do not need to provide their employer with multi-day advance notice or documentation unless their leave lasts longer than three consecutive days. “It's really disruptive,” Albert says. “When you look at labor law, there's always this tension of, ‘How do we have a balance of what's proper protections for employees, and then also making sure employers can keep their businesses operating?’”

Albert also points to a survey conducted this summer by the Small Business Association of Michigan. Even without a state mandate, 79 percent of responding small businesses said they were offering workers paid time off.

Like other states, Michigan's mandate on paid sick leave also covers individuals needing to take off work as the result of domestic violence or sexual assault. This time off can help victims cooperate with law enforcement or access rape-related health treatment. Supporters of the new mandate in Michigan argue this ability should be guaranteed to all workers, regardless of business size.

Derek Cantù is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Education & Workforce Development Committee. During the 2023-'24 biennium Ohio Sen. Hearcel Craig and Wisconsin Rep. Joel Kitchens served as committee co-chairs. Minnesota Sen. Heather Gustafson was the vice chair.

STATE MANDATES ON PAID LEAVE OR TIME OFF FOR WORKERS



- Paid sick leave and paid family and medical leave
- Paid sick leave
- Paid time off

Sources: KFF and CSG Midwest research

ILLINOIS



- 1 hour of paid time off for every 40 hours worked
- Annual accrual of 40 hours of paid leave
- Workers do not need to give a reason for the time off

MICHIGAN



- 1 hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked
- Annual accrual of 40 hours of paid sick leave for workers at small businesses (fewer than 10 employees) and 72 hours for workers at larger establishments

MINNESOTA



- **Paid sick leave:** 1 hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked; annual accrual of 48 hours of paid sick leave
- **Paid family and medical leave:** Workers receive 12 weeks of partially paid family or medical leave or a combination of the two not exceeding 20 weeks. Benefits are financed through payroll deductions on wages. Employers must pay at least half of the premium.

NEBRASKA



- 1 hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked
- Annual accrual of 40 hours of paid sick leave for workers at small businesses (fewer than 20 employees) and 56 hours for workers at larger establishments

% OF U.S. WORKERS WITH ACCESS TO PAID LEAVE BENEFITS (AS OF MARCH 2024)*

	Paid sick leave	Paid vacation	Paid holidays
Full-time state/local government worker*	99%	65%	73%
Full-time worker in private industry	87%	92%	91%
Part-time state/local government worker*	49%	22%	34%
Part-time worker in private industry	55%	40%	49%
All civilian workers (full- and part-time)	81%	77%	79%

* Figures include teachers, who typically don't get vacation days due to school breaks during the year.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



AGRICULTURE & RURAL AFFAIRS

Not yet on grocery shelves, lab-grown meat products already are the subject of new laws that require labeling, limit purchasing and sales

by Rebecca Leis (rleis@csg.org)

In summer 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service gave the go-ahead for sales of two California startups' cell-cultured chicken.

It marked the first-ever such approval by the federal agency. Later that year, for a brief period, this lab-grown meat was part of the menu at two U.S. restaurants.

Derived from the muscle tissue cells of a live animal, cell-cultured meat is grown in laboratories. The meat cells are cultivated in large vats, says Josephine Wee, a professor of food science at Penn State University, at facilities that resemble a brewery.

The process is expensive, Wee notes, but for several reasons, investors see potential in these lab-grown food products as a viable, alternative source of protein over the long term.

First, many anticipate that cell-cultured meat could be produced more sustainably than farm-raised meat. Second, the ability to produce cell-cultured meat provides a measure of food resilience in case of a disaster (such as a pandemic that impacts livestock).

Lastly, a rise in global population and income levels could mean a greater need and demand for meat products. The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that by 2032, global consumption of meat proteins will be 13 percent higher compared to levels at the beginning of this decade.

The two California startups' production of cell-cultured chicken lasted just a few months, and their product never made it to grocery store shelves.

Nonetheless, recent developments in cell-cultured meat production have provoked action in state capitals. In the Midwest, the response mostly has been the consideration of new labeling rules, or restrictions on state or local purchasing of lab-grown meat. Outside this region, the first-ever statutory bans on cell-cultured meat sales and production were passed in 2024: SB 1084 in Florida and SB 23 in Alabama.

'DON'T CALL IT A PORK CHOP'

Iowa is the first Midwestern state to restrict sales of cell-cultured meat, as part of a 2024 law that also includes new labeling requirements for various types of "manufactured-protein food products." (Iowa's

"We don't like the idea of [the products] using the words that go with real meat or real eggs; if people aren't aware of it, they're deceived."

— Rep. Roy Klopfenstein, sponsor of introduced bill in Ohio

definition of these products also includes plant proteins that "resemble a type of tissue found in a species of agricultural food animal.")

Under Iowa's SF 2391, signed into law in May, a "meat term" (chicken, drumstick, steak, burger, etc.) cannot appear on one of these products' packaging label unless it is accompanied by a "conspicuous and prominent qualifying term" (cell-cultured, lab-grown, fabricated, plant-based, etc.).

Any "misbranded" product cannot be sold in Iowa.

SF 2391 also prohibits schools, community colleges and Iowa's university system from purchasing lab-grown meats (statutorily described as "cultivated-protein food products"), regardless of whether they have been labeled properly or not.

Lastly, legislators included a triggering provision: If the USDA approves the use of lab-grown meats in federal nutrition programs, the state must seek a waiver to exclude these products from program eligibility.

A similar measure that bans misbranded products, restricts schools and local governments from purchasing cell-cultured meats, and contains a triggering provision was considered in Ohio.

"We don't like the idea of [the products] using the words that go with real meat or real eggs; if people aren't aware of it, they're deceived," says Ohio Rep. Roy Klopfenstein a sponsor of last year's HB 661.

According to Rep. Jack Daniels, the other primary sponsor of HB 661, the agricultural sector has for many years successfully marketed meat with logos and names associated with farm-raised animals. A different type of food, Daniels and Klopfenstein say, should not be able to use those same logos and names.

"If you want to make a product that emulates a good pork chop, that's fine, but don't call it a pork chop," Klopfenstein adds.

Under HB 661, "misbranding" by food processing facilities would result in a fine of up to \$10,000 per day.

Daniels points out that HB 661 does not outright ban cell-cultured meat, a move that he says would conflict with free-market principles.

Blanket prohibitions also expose states to litigation. UPSIDE Foods, one of the California startups and a producer of cell-cultured meats, has filed a lawsuit against Florida.

PROCUREMENT POWERS

In Nebraska, citing his powers under the State Procurement Act, Gov. Jim Pillen signed an executive order in August 2024

(24-09) prohibiting state agencies from purchasing "lab-grown meat" and delineating that state contractors shall not "discriminate against natural-meat producers in favor of laboratory or cultivated-meat producers."

Pillen's rationale for the executive order was twofold: 1) protect an animal agriculture industry that is "vital to Nebraska's economy"; and 2) avoid confusion among consumers.

Pillen also is asking legislators to pass a bill banning the sale of lab-grown meat in Nebraska.

To date, no states in the Midwest have enacted outright bans like the new laws in Alabama and Florida.

Instead, in the seven years since the USDA and U.S. Food and Drug Administration began coordinating regulation of cell-cultured meat production, at least four states in the Midwest — Iowa this year, and North Dakota, South Dakota and Kansas in previous legislative sessions — updated food labeling requirements.

At the federal level, the proposed (not passed by the close of 2024) Fair and Accurate Ingredient Representation on Labels Act aimed to boost transparency in the labeling of plant-protein and cell-cultured protein products. A separate measure would have banned cell-cultured meat from being served in schools.

'ALTERNATIVE' IDEA IN ILLINOIS

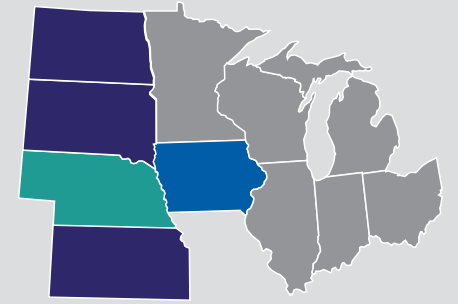
Much of the state activity reflects a wariness about cell-cultured meats. But at least one Midwestern state, Illinois, is taking a different approach. Legislators there established the Alternative Protein Innovation Task Force (HB 3710 and HB 4261).

"By promoting the expansion of alternative protein sources, we can ensure food security across our communities, ease harmful environmental effects and support our state's economy," Illinois Sen. Mattie Hunter, a sponsor of the legislation creating the task force, said after being named one of the group's co-chairs.

The Illinois law identifies for study three alternatives to farm-grown meats: "cultivated meat" (lab-grown), "fermented protein," and "plant-based protein." The task force's findings are due to the legislature in June.

Rebecca Leis is CSG Midwest staff liaison to the Midwestern Legislative Conference Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee. During the 2023-'24 biennium, Saskatchewan MLA Steven Bonk and Kansas Sen. Marci Francisco served as committee co-chairs and North Dakota Rep. Paul Thomas was the vice chair.

REGULATION OF CELL-CULTURED MEAT PRODUCTS (AS OF NOVEMBER 2024)



- Governor's executive order prohibits state agencies from purchasing products
- Law enacted to restrict certain state/local entities from purchasing products and to establish labeling requirements
- Law enacted to establish labeling requirements and/or exclude products from definition of meat
- Bills introduced; no laws enacted on labeling or purchasing

U.S. RANKINGS ON MEAT PRODUCTION IN 2023 (# OF POUNDS PRODUCED IN PARENTHESES)

State	Red meat	Chicken	Turkey
Illinois	#5 (3.2 billion)	*	*
Indiana	#10 (1.9 billion)	*	#3 (834 million)
Iowa	#1 (9.0 billion)	*	#5 (508 million)
Kansas	#3 (5.8 billion)	*	*
Michigan	#14 (1.3 billion)	*	#10 (220 million)
Minnesota	#7 (2.9 billion)	#18 (393 million)	#2 (1.1 million)
Nebraska	#2 (7.6 billion)	*	*
North Dakota	#39 (8.3 million)	*	*
Ohio	#23 (291 million)	#16 (573 million)	#8 (291 million)
South Dakota	#12 (1.4 billion)	*	#12 (142 million)
Wisconsin	#16 (1.2 billion)	#20 (238 million)	*

* Not a significant amount of production in the state

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

#S ON ANIMAL AGRICULTURE AND FUTURE GLOBAL MEAT CONSUMPTION

39.4%

11-STATE MIDWEST'S SHARE OF TOTAL U.S. CASH RECEIPTS FOR ANIMAL AND ANIMAL PRODUCT COMMODITIES

+16%

ESTIMATED INCREASE IN GLOBAL POULTRY CONSUMPTION BY 2033 (using averages from 2021 to 2023 as baseline)

+8%

ESTIMATED INCREASE IN GLOBAL PORK CONSUMPTION BY 2033 (using averages from 2021 to 2023 as baseline)

+11%

ESTIMATED INCREASE IN GLOBAL BEEF CONSUMPTION BY 2033 (using averages from 2021 to 2023 as baseline)



ONE-THIRD OF U.S. STATE LEGISLATORS ARE NOW WOMEN; RATES ARE HIGHER IN SIX MIDWEST STATES

A record number of women are serving in U.S. state legislatures in 2025, the continuation of a decades-long trend that has led to a more than doubling of female state lawmakers: 1,106 in 1985 compared to 2,450 in 2025, according to the Center for American Women and Politics. In the Midwest, the November 2024 elections led to increases in the number of female state legislators in five states: **South Dakota** (+10), **Ohio** (+7), **Wisconsin** (+5), **Minnesota** (+2) and **Illinois** (+1). Numbers fell in **Nebraska** (-4), **North Dakota** (-2), **Iowa** (-3), and **Indiana** and **Michigan** (-1), while remaining the same in **Kansas**.

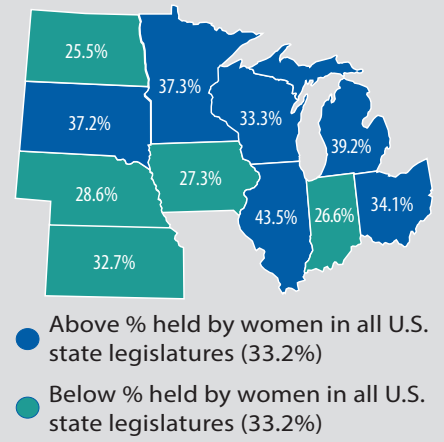
Nationwide, 33.2 percent of state legislators are women (it was 14.9 percent in 1985). Illinois has the highest percentage in the Midwest, 43.5 percent. In three states outside this region — Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico — the legislatures are majority women.

“With more than 7,000 state legislative seats nationwide, we’re looking at a very incremental increase of women state legislators,” notes Debbie Walsh, director of the center, which is part of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Over the past five years, the number of legislative seats held by women increased from 31.1 percent in 2021 to 33.2 percent in 2025.

Here are other findings from the center:

- In 2024, 92 women held legislative leadership positions in 35 state senates and in 34 state houses. That included 18 women legislative leaders in the 11-state Midwest. Across the country, about one in four leadership posts were held by women.
- The number of women U.S. governors remains the same in 2025: 12. That includes Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. As of late 2024, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem was expected to leave office to become the new secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Her replacement will be Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden.

% OF STATE LEGISLATIVE SEATS HELD BY WOMEN IN 2025



Source: Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University

CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN ON LONG-SOUGHT PROJECT TO KEEP INVASIVE CARP OUT OF THE GREAT LAKES

Construction on the Brandon Road Interbasin Project is expected to begin in early 2025, thanks to a Project Partnership Agreement reached in July 2024 between two states and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This project has been identified as a “critical pinch point” for keeping invasive carp and other aquatic nuisance species from reaching the Great Lakes.

The Corps awarded the first contract for site preparation in late 2024; a groundbreaking was expected in February. Once the project is complete, a mix of new deterrents to stop fish movement will be in place at this site along the Illinois Waterway — including a new electric barrier, underwater sound, an air bubble curtain and a flushing lock in a newly engineered channel.

The project is estimated to cost \$1.15 billion. The U.S. Congress increased the federal cost-share of the Brandon Road project to 90 percent, and the full non-federal match is coming from the states of **Illinois** and **Michigan**. They partnered to secure the non-federal cost share of \$114 million (\$64 million from Michigan, \$50 million from Illinois), unlocking \$274 million in already appropriated federal funds for the first of three construction phases. Additional congressional appropriations must be made in future fiscal years to complete the project.

According to the Army Corps, if established in the Great Lakes, invasive carp could outcompete native species and greatly harm the ecology and economy associated with the region’s \$20 billion fishing and boating industries.



NEW DIPLOMA OPTIONS IN INDIANA EMPHASIZE VALUE OF PERSONALIZED AND WORK-BASED LEARNING

What do you want your high school experience to be? What do you want to be prepared to do upon graduation?

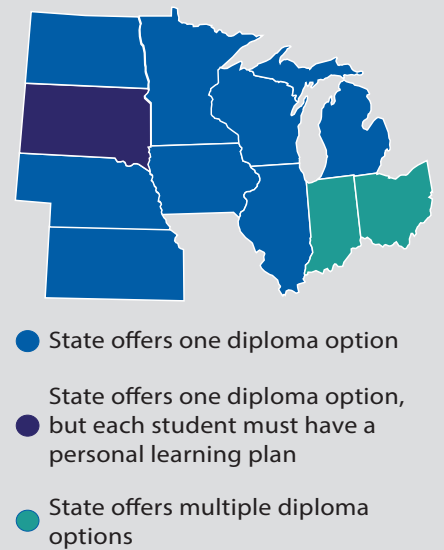
Every young person may have slightly different answers to those questions, and **Indiana** legislators and education leaders say the time has come to offer diploma options that reflect the need for a more personalized approach. The result: a revamped set of graduation requirements that will take effect with the class of 2029, with schools able to opt in as soon as 2025-’26.

The Indiana Board of Education unanimously approved the new requirements in December, after a year of discussions and feedback from stakeholders. The General Assembly initiated the change with the passage of HB 1002 in 2023. In part, students will have the opportunity to earn one of six “readiness seals” depending on the graduation pathway they choose.

- The “enrollment honors” and “enrollment honors plus” seals focus on readiness for college. The requirements were developed in coordination with the Indiana Office of Higher Education. To earn the “honors plus,” students would need to complete 75 hours of work-based learning.
- The “enlistment honors” and “enlistment honors plus” seals signal a physical, mental and emotional readiness to join the military after graduation. To earn one of these seals, students would need to attain a certain score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, complete a course in public service or a year in the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, meet school attendance goals, and take part in a mentorship experience.
- The “employment honors” or “employment honors plus” seals emphasize readiness for work. Students choosing this pathway would leave high school with a market-driven credential of value (for example, an industry-recognized certificate or even an associate degree) and will have completed at least 150 hours of work-based learning (“honors plus” requires 650 hours of work-based learning).

Along with directing state education leaders to develop a new diploma system, Indiana’s HB 1002 created new career scholarship accounts for students to take part in apprenticeships and internships or to attain industry credentials. The scholarship is up to \$5,000 per student. The new graduation requirements further the goal of providing more work-based learning opportunities in high school.

DIPLOMA OPTIONS FOR STATE’S HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS (AS OF 2023)



Source: Education Commission of the States

POST-PANDEMIC, EARLY VOTING REMAINED A POPULAR PICK AMONG VOTERS IN FALL 2024 ELECTIONS

A state-by-state review of the November 2024 elections shows that early voting accounted for more than half of the total ballots cast in at least five Midwestern states: **Michigan** (60 percent), **Illinois** (54 percent), **Indiana** (54 percent), **North Dakota** (52 percent) and **Kansas** (51 percent).

Early voting includes ballots cast by mail or in person ahead of Election Day. Nationwide, the early vote was nearly 86 million, 54 percent of that total by mail and 46 percent in person, according to the University of Florida Election Lab. Those numbers were not yet final, but point to about 55 percent of total U.S. votes being cast early — second only to the pandemic year of 2020, when early voting accounted for 69 percent of all ballots cast.

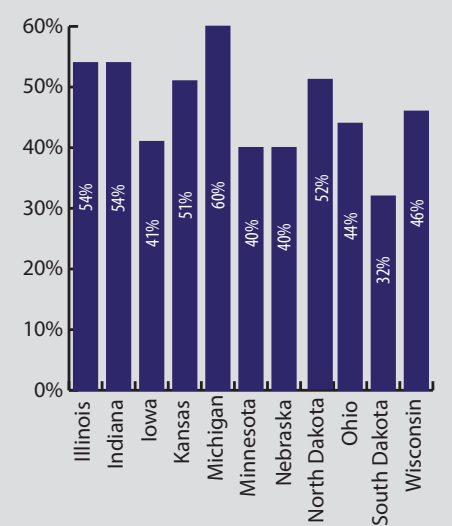
According to the MIT Election Lab, most Midwestern states now allow residents to request a “no excuse” absentee ballot. The lone exception is Indiana, where voters must check off one of 11 reasons for needing the absentee ballot in their application to vote by mail.

Under Indiana law, however, counties must make in-person absentee voting available for 28 days before the election; polling sites also must be open on the two Saturdays immediately before Election Day. In every Midwestern state, the period for in-person voting is more than a week, and it spans more than a month in Illinois, **Minnesota** and **South Dakota**.

A handful of states outside the region, mostly in the West, conduct all-mail elections, meaning every resident receives a ballot in the mail without having to request one. (Ballots can still be cast in person.) According to the Movement Advancement Project, which tracks state voting laws, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota and **Wisconsin** are among 24 U.S. states that allow some or all voters to sign up to be on a permanent list to receive ballots in the mail.

A state law in **Nebraska** permits smaller-populated rural counties to conduct elections entirely by mail, and 11 do so.

% OF BALLOTS CAST BY EARLY VOTE*



* Results also were not final or official in some states.

Source: CSG Midwest review of state results

PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE EXPANDED IN THE MIDWEST IN 2024; SIGNS POINT TO A MAJOR BUILD-OUT IN YEARS AHEAD

On the surface, it may not seem that much has changed since conceptual plans for a Midwestern passenger rail network were announced by the Federal Railroad Administration and the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission.

But go just beneath the surface, and you'll find a wealth of new developments and a sense of momentum. Since the 2021 release of the Midwest Regional Rail Plan:

- Service on the new state-supported *Borealis* began in late May 2024, providing travelers with new options along the Chicago-Milwaukee-Twin Cities corridor.
- Nearly two dozen segments of the Midwest Regional Rail Plan's proposed routes have been chosen for federal support under the FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program.
- The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) has received a planning grant of up to \$1.84 million over five years for "Invest Midwest: The Future of Midwest Passenger Rail - Phase 1." (CSG Midwest provides secretariat services to MIPRC.)

BIG START FOR THE BOREALIS

The most visible sign of development in the region is the *Borealis*. Designed to augment the long-distance *Empire Builder* — whose eastbound trip is often delayed far beyond its scheduled arrival at St. Paul's Union Depot — the *Borealis* is providing a second daily train service for riders along the Chicago-Milwaukee-Twin Cities corridor. It's the Midwest's first new state-supported passenger rail service in about 20 years, and Minnesota's first since 1975.

The first few months in service were a resounding success.

The *Borealis* had carried 88,444 passengers through September, without poaching riders from either the *Empire Builder* or the Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawatha* service (see ridership tables).

According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, total *Borealis* ridership through October was 109,342, meaning it will surpass the original first-year ridership estimate of 124,200 passengers.

In 2020, Wisconsin secured a \$12.6 million FRA grant to help cover 90 percent of the service's first-year operating costs. That FRA grant program changed in 2021, and now helps states for up to a six-year period. Wisconsin has applied for a new grant as well.

The *Borealis* is one of nine interstate

passenger rail routes in the Midwest that receive support from the states where they operate (see table). They are shorter (750 miles or less) than the longer-distance, Amtrak-funded routes.

'INVEST MIDWEST'

The Midwest Regional Rail Plan presents a long-term vision of what a passenger rail network could look like in this region by 2050.

It's a high-level view that identifies the potential in developing existing and new corridors within a region, but the plan doesn't zoom in on individual corridors to identify what work would be needed, nor does it address the sequencing of corridors to be built.

MIPRC's "Invest Midwest-Phase 1" will do just that.

Work will include developing ridership and revenue forecasts, an analysis of economic impacts, and a phasing strategy for corridors across the region.

A steering committee of member state departments of transportation will oversee "Invest Midwest." MIPRC is contributing the required 20 percent non-federal match. The ultimate goal is to complete planning work for all potential routes in the region, including those identified in the Midwest Regional Rail Plan as well as in other FRA and Amtrak studies.

PATH TO 'SHOVEL READY'

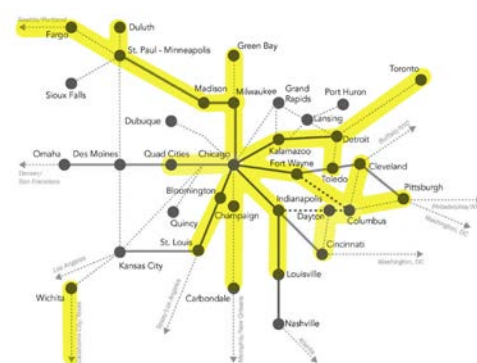
Planning also got a major boost in early December 2023 when 20 corridors in the region were selected in the inaugural round of funding under the FRA's Corridor ID program. This new program is now the primary "incubator" for expanding passenger rail outside the Northeast region.

In the Midwest, the expansion will result in a mix of brand-new intercity connections (see examples in the map above), extensions of existing corridors, and more service options for riders on existing routes.

Corridor ID uses a three-step process for projects to move from planning to "shovel ready" status.

- In the first step, \$500,000 in "seed money" (no non-federal matching funds required) pays for project sponsors to create a scope of work, schedule and budget for a service development plan.
- The second step (10 percent local match required) creates the service development plan.
- The third step (20 percent local match required) covers preliminary engineering and environmental reviews.

FULL SPEED AHEAD: PLANNING BEGINS TO EXPAND PASSENGER RAIL SERVICES



Highlighted in yellow are routes within the Midwest Regional Rail Plan selected for the inaugural "Corridor ID" program of the Federal Railroad Administration. This designation has allowed for planning to begin for the development of new passenger rail routes, as well as the expansion or enhancement of services. Planned new routes and extensions include:

- Chicago to the Quad Cities
- Chicago to Fort Wayne to Columbus to Pittsburgh
- Cleveland to Columbus to Dayton to Cincinnati
- Cleveland to Toledo to Detroit
- St. Paul to Eau Claire
- Indianapolis to Louisville
- Milwaukee to Madison to Eau Claire to Twin Cities
- Minneapolis to Duluth
- Chicago to Peoria
- Milwaukee to Green Bay
- Extension of Heartland Flyer in Texas and Oklahoma to Kansas towns of Wichita and Newton
- Extension of Wolverine service (Chicago to Detroit) to Toronto

LONG-DISTANCE REVIVAL?

Complementing regional plans is release of the FRA's congressionally mandated "Long-Distance Service Study." It examined potential new long-distance services (750 miles or more), including the reactivation of routes previously discontinued by Amtrak. A draft of the study showed three Midwestern routes, dropped in 1979, as candidates for restoration:

- The *North Coast Hiawatha*, which would start in Chicago, end in Seattle, and run through the Midwestern states of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota.
- The *National Limited*, which would run from Kansas City to St. Louis to Columbus, Ohio, to Washington, D.C., and New York City.
- The *Floridian*, which would connect Chicago to Miami.

Article written by Jon Davis, who can be reached at jdavis@csrg.org. CSG Midwest provides secretariat services to the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission, which was formed by interstate compact and whose commissioners are legislators and gubernatorial designees. Current member states are Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio and South Dakota are eligible to join.

PASSENGER RAIL RIDERSHIP ON INTERCITY, STATE-SUPPORTED ROUTES, FISCAL YEAR 2024*

Route	# of riders	Ridership change from FY 2023
<i>Blue Water</i> (Chicago-Port Huron, Mich.)	174,862	+3.6%
<i>Borealis</i> (Chicago-St. Paul, Minn.)**	88,444	N/A
<i>Hiawatha</i> (Chicago-Milwaukee)	665,279	+4.5%
<i>Illini/Saluki</i> (Chicago-Carbondale, Ill.)	296,616	+9.9%
<i>Illinois Zephyr/Carl Sandburg</i> (Chicago-Quincy, Ill.)	141,722	+23.8%
<i>Lincoln Service</i> (Chicago-St. Louis)	586,170	+12.0%
<i>Missouri River Runner</i> (St. Louis-Kansas City)	187,750	+22.6%
<i>Pere Marquette</i> (Grand Rapids, Mich.-Chicago)	94,381	+9.9%
<i>Wolverine</i> (Pontiac/Detroit-Chicago)	425,832	+1.3%

* Amtrak's fiscal year ended on Sept. 30.

** The *Borealis* began revenue service on May 21.

Sources: Amtrak and CSG Midwest calculations

PASSENGER RAIL RIDERSHIP ON MIDWEST'S LONG-DISTANCE ROUTES, FISCAL YEAR 2024*

Route	# of riders	Ridership change from FY 2023
<i>California Zephyr</i> (Chicago to Emeryville, Calif.)	351,155	+6.9%
<i>Capitol Limited</i> (Chicago-Washington, D.C.)	163,136	+29.2%
<i>Cardinal</i> ** (Chicago-Washington, D.C./New York City)	92,962	+12.4%
<i>City of New Orleans</i> (Chicago-New Orleans)	241,768	+3.4%
<i>Empire Builder</i> (Chicago-Seattle/Portland, Ore.)	387,953	+11.2%
<i>Lake Shore Limited</i> (Chicago-New York City/Boston)	398,420	+13.5%
<i>Southwest Chief</i> (Chicago-Los Angeles)	261,485	+3.0%
<i>Texas Eagle</i> (Chicago-San Antonio)	325,709	+10.6%

* Amtrak's fiscal year ended on Sept. 30.

** The *Cardinal* operates three days per week in each direction.

Sources: Amtrak and CSG Midwest calculations



PROFILE: SASKATCHEWAN MINISTER LORI CARR

The first Canadian legislator to serve as CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference chair shares views on leadership, relationship building, and the value of cross-border ties

For Lori Carr, the path to public service was more a runway. At age 12, she joined her local Air Cadet program, where teens get experience in aviation while also learning about leadership and the value of giving back.

"The motto of the program is, 'To Learn, To Serve, and To Advance,'" Carr says.

"Community service was instilled, leadership was taught, effective speaking was mandatory, and, of course, discipline — as well as always striving to be better and do better."

All good traits and lessons for a future Saskatchewan legislator and provincial minister.

For Carr, though, other public service would come first, including helping lead the Air Cadet program that had meant so much to her as a young adult.

She credits a legislative predecessor for her eventual interest in politics.

"As I watched our local MLA Doreen Eagles, she inspired me in the possibility of holding a position like she had, being an influential leader in the community," Carr says.

Carr went on to serve for 10 years on the City Council of Estevan, a town in the southern part of Saskatchewan close to the North Dakota border. Next, she won a contested nomination for the Saskatchewan Party and successfully ran in the provincial election of 2016.

She has held numerous leadership positions since that first election to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. Carr currently is Saskatchewan's minister of Rural and Remote Health, Mental Health and Addictions, and Seniors.

In December 2024, she also became the first-ever Canadian chair of The Council of State Governments' binational Midwestern Legislative Conference. Saskatchewan is a full member of the MLC, which includes all state legislators from the 11-state Midwest. Three other Canadian provinces are affiliate members of the MLC.

Carr's ascension to MLC chair will help the binational group continue to strengthen relations between the

Midwestern states and neighboring provinces.

On July 27-30, she and her colleagues in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly will host state and provincial legislators in Saskatoon for the 79th Annual Meeting of the MLC.

Q What are some of the commonalities that you see as binding the U.S. states and Canadian provinces of the Midwestern region?

A There are far more things we have in common, whether that be our energy security, our economy or our agriculture industry. The other thing we have in common is our people — our way of living and our values.

I live two kilometers from the U.S.-Canada border, so I have the chance to visit many U.S. communities in North Dakota fairly regularly. Sometimes I feel as though the border is just an arbitrary line, because when I am in the U.S., it feels like I am still at home.

Q What role can state and provincial legislators play in helping strengthen cross-border relations and policies?

A The networking that takes place at events like the MLC Annual Meeting is invaluable. When you have two countries that share a border as we do, and have all the things in common that we do, it is only beneficial for both sides to work together.

A few years ago, we were having trouble with the hours of operation at our border crossings, and because of the relationships that had been developed with our legislators, we were able to make a case as to why the changes were a bad idea.

In turn, we had folks able to talk with decision makers, and some of those changes were reversed. [Editor's note: Hours of border operations was the subject of a resolution passed by Midwestern legislators at the 2023 MLC Annual Meeting in Detroit.]



BIO-SKETCH: MINISTER LORI CARR

- ✓ first elected to Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in 2016
- ✓ serves as Minister of Rural and Remote Health, Mental Health and Addictions, and Seniors
- ✓ resides in town of Estevan, located close to the Saskatchewan-North Dakota border, with her partner Bart
- ✓ served on Estevan City Council for 10 years
- ✓ raised three children and is a very proud grandmother

Q What future opportunities do you see for binational collaboration among the Midwest's legislators?

A As MLC chair, my initiative will be "North American Energy Security: Powering the Future." We have opportunities in front of us to strengthen continental energy extraction, development and use, and I hope that the relationships in MLC will continue to foster our integrated economies.

Q Strengthening binational ties is one ongoing goal of the MLC. Another is leadership development for its members. What have you learned about effective leadership in the legislative arena?

A First and foremost is listening. We all have two ears and one mouth for a reason. Second, I am a relationship builder. I truly believe that if you develop the right relationships, it will make the job you need to do on behalf of your constituents easier.

I have had people say to me, "You need to be louder. You need to tell this person this. You need to tell this person that."

Well, I am more of a quiet leader, working behind the scenes, building relationships and getting stuff done. There is time to be very vocal, and I

have no problem doing that when it is necessary, but the majority of the time, it usually just takes reasonable conversations, of course backed up by sensible rationale.

I have also learned that you don't have to do it all yourself. You have a team that is there to work with you.

Q Are there examples of how you've used some of those leadership attributes to help your community or advance policy?

A I would point to two. First, the community I live in has been advocating for a new nursing home for several years, long before I became MLA for Estevan. We were able to successfully prove the need for it. We advocated and got approval on a new nursing home. Needless to say, this is a big win for our community, as you can imagine there are several demands for public dollars in this space.

Second, when I was minister of Social Services, I had the opportunity to sign an agreement that had been years in the making between the federal government, the Cowessess First Nation and our government. The agreement was the first of its kind in Canada. It has allowed the Cowessess First Nation to start setting up resources and its own child welfare system — to start to facilitate taking over children in care who come from their nation.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: TOP MEETING FOR MIDWEST'S LEGISLATORS IS COMING TO SASKATCHEWAN'S LARGEST CITY IN JULY

In 2025, for the fourth time in the 79-year history of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting, a Canadian province will serve as host. The meeting will be held July 27-30 in Saskatchewan's largest city, Saskatoon. Situated on the South Saskatchewan River, with 10 bridges that span the waterway and link the city's neighborhoods, Saskatoon is known as the "Paris of the Prairies."

As in past years, the family-friendly MLC meeting will give legislative attendees and their guests of all ages ample opportunity to explore the host city. Already planned:

- the MLC State Dinner at Remai Modern, a renowned museum of modern and contemporary art; and
- the MLC Opening Reception at the Glen at Crossmount, a picturesque, one-of-kind agricultural tourism destination that features a beautiful orchard, rolling hills and stunning landscaped gardens.

The meeting also will deliver a mix of policy sessions, professional development workshops, site visits and special events designed by and for the Midwest's legislators. "MLC 2025 will offer dynamic conversations, different perspectives, and, hopefully, new connections for everyone who travels to Saskatchewan," says Saskatchewan Minister Lori Carr, the first-ever Canadian legislator to be MLC chair.

Meeting registration opens in February and will be available at csgmidwest.org.



Q & A WITH 2024 GRADUATES: HOW WILL YOU USE LAST YEAR'S TRAINING FROM THE BILLD INSTITUTE TO ADVANCE YOUR LEGISLATIVE WORK IN 2025?

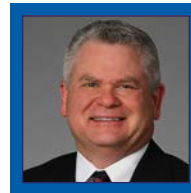
"The BILLD Fellowship was an opportunity to pause and reflect on my experience as a new legislator and learn from colleagues at the same point in our careers. It is very difficult to juggle the deadlines and competing demands of working in state government. BILLD helped me see the bigger picture and gave me valuable skills to open more doors with colleagues on both sides of the aisle."

Wisconsin Rep. Deb Andraca | BILLD Class of 2024



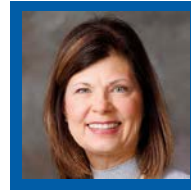
"Given that I come from a state with a supermajority, BILLD gave me the opportunity to take part in discussions and debate that I typically do not get to experience. It presented the unique challenge of communicating a message to an audience that is not as receptive to my position. The ability to network with other legislators who, although facing the same issues, have a completely different approach to resolving the issue was invaluable. It now permeates all my conversations. It has strengthened my ability to follow much better the belief I shared with the group our first evening together: be 'quick to listen, and slow to speak.'"

North Dakota Sen. Jeff Barta | BILLD Class of 2024



"The overarching message of how one's mindset affects our actions which determines results continues to resonate with me as I focus on meaningful legislation in 2025. Thank you, Bowhay Institute, for challenging us to be better lawmakers in our states."

Nebraska Sen. Theresa Ibach | BILLD Class of 2024



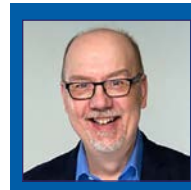
"Working alongside my peers from other states has prepared me to help lead my caucus and have an impact on good governance and policy. I look forward to the [2025] session as I use the leadership skills I have gained as a fellow of the BILLD program."

Indiana Rep. Joanna King | BILLD Class of 2024



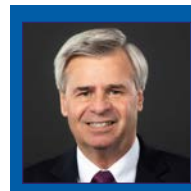
"It was incredibly helpful to see how the legislative work that we do individually in our own jurisdictions fits into the larger, much more complex cross-jurisdictional picture. It's easy to see how we're interconnected on issues like climate change, AI, innovation and new technology, energy and trade. But sometimes we forget just how much we can learn from each other about legislative processes, multi-party cooperation and forward-thinking public policy."

Manitoba MLA Mike Moroz | BILLD Class of 2024



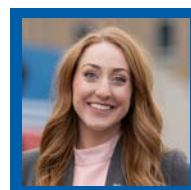
"A key takeaway is to recognize stakeholders up and down the ladder — the importance of managing a bill with stakeholders' input, whether for or against the legislation. Identifying those interests that may be affected upstream (positively) or downstream (negatively). I realized the value of a holistic approach upfront to have the best opportunity to pass good legislation. A highlight, too, was interacting with colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I appreciated the fact we kept party politics as a sidebar and focused on the legislative process and how to improve our skills to be a competent legislator."

Iowa Sen. Dave Rowley | BILLD Class of 2024



"The BILLD experience has been transformative in shaping my approach to public service. One of the most valuable aspects was learning how to navigate complex policy challenges with a collaborative mindset. The diverse perspectives of my BILLD colleagues broadened my understanding of regional issues and equipped me with new tools to build bipartisan solutions. I also gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of data-driven policymaking and its role in achieving impactful and equitable outcomes. I feel more confident in my ability to address pressing issues with a thoughtful and strategic approach."

South Dakota Rep. Kady Wittman | BILLD Class of 2024



LEARN AND LEAD: BILLD PROGRAM OFFERS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY FOR LEGISLATORS

The legislators featured on this page are seven of the 39 members of the 2024 BILLD graduating class.

Held every summer, the five-day Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development is a signature program of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference. More than 1,000 state and provincial legislators have taken part in BILLD since it began in 1995. The list of graduates includes:

- Ten legislators who served as top caucus leaders in their states in 2024.
- Fifteen alumni who are currently serving or who have served in the U.S. Congress.
- Close to 150 graduates who served as the chair, vice chair or ranking member of legislative committees within their chamber in 2024.

The five-day program includes interactive sessions led by the region's legislative leaders and top policy experts, as well as training workshops on communication, leadership style and competencies, ethics, bipartisan collaboration, negotiation and conflict resolution.

BILLD in 2025: Key Dates

- April 14: Deadline for legislators to apply
- May: BILLD Steering Committee meets in Madison, Wis., to select the Fellows
- August 23-27: BILLD program will be held in Madison, Wis.

HOW TO BECOME A FELLOW

Every year, BILLD Fellows are selected through a competitive application process overseen by a bipartisan group of state and provincial legislators — the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference BILLD Steering Committee. The program is designed for state and provincial legislators in their first four years of service.

Applications for the 2025 BILLD program are available at csgmidwest.org. They are due April 14; the institute will be held Aug. 23-27 in Madison, Wis. Thanks in part to the sponsorship of BILLD by generous foundations and corporations, there is no cost for legislators to take part in the training program. Travel stipends also are made available to participants.

Please contact CSG Midwest senior program manager Mitch Arvidson if you have questions about BILLD or the application process: marvidson@csg.org.

CSG also offers a national leadership program for legislators and other emerging leaders from all three branches of state government: the Toll Fellowship Program. It will be held Aug. 8-12 in Lexington, Ky. Information is available at csg.org.

BILLD Steering Committee Officers | Co-Chairs: Illinois Rep. Anna Moeller and Iowa Sen. Amy Sinclair | Co-Vice Chairs: Michigan Rep. Ann Bollin and Kansas Rep. Jarrod Ousley

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.

TO THE MIDWEST'S NEW LAWMAKERS: WELCOME TO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE AND THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Across the Midwest, 1,550 legislators serve their states and communities.

In turn, The Council of State Governments serves these legislators, as well as other elected and appointed officials across all three branches of state government. CSG's mission is to advance excellence in state government, and one way the nonpartisan, national organization does so is through its support of the Midwest Legislative Conference.

Every legislator from this region is a member of the MLC.

Through the MLC, you have access to resources that can inform your work as a legislator and enrich your time in public service:

- leadership training and professional development;
- interstate and cross-border learning, collaboration and relationship-building opportunities; and
- policy research and assistance.

CSG looks forward to working with you in the months and years ahead. Visit csgmidwest.org and csg.org to learn more.

CONNECT WITH CSG IN EARLY 2025

How can CSG help you meet your goals as a new or returning legislator, add value to your time in elective office, and make positive advances in state legislatures and governments? Those are among the questions that CSG seeks to answer as part of its annual visits to capitols, which will take place in the early part of 2025.



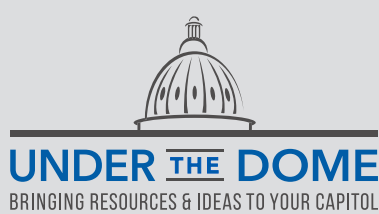
Please visit csgmidwest.org to view the dates for each state. You also can schedule a time for a visit, either in person or remotely, by reaching out to the CSG Midwest staff liaison for your state or province:

- **Illinois:** Mitch Arvidson, marvidson@csg.org
- **Indiana:** Derek Cantù, dcantu@csg.org
- **Iowa:** Derek Cantù, dcantu@csg.org
- **Kansas:** Laura Kliewer, lkiewer@csg.org
- **Michigan:** Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- **Minnesota:** Becky Leis, rleis@csg.org
- **Nebraska:** Tim Anderson, tanderson@csg.org
- **North Dakota:** Laura Tomaka, ltomaka@csg.org
- **Ohio:** Katie Kelly, kkelly@csg.org
- **Saskatchewan** (member of CSG's Midwest Legislative Conference): Mitch Arvidson, marvidson@csg.org
- **South Dakota:** Jon Davis, jdavis@csg.org
- **Wisconsin:** Jon Davis, jdavis@csg.org
- Canadian provinces of **Alberta, Ontario** and **Saskatchewan** (affiliate members of CSG's Midwest Legislative Conference): Mitch Arvidson, marvidson@csg.org

CSG CAN BRING TRAINING TO YOUR CAPITOL

As part of its work on behalf of the Midwest Legislative Conference, CSG Midwest regularly delivers customized, in-state training to legislators and legislative staff in their capitols.

Here is how the Under the Dome program works: you present an idea for programming and help get bipartisan buy-in from leadership, then CSG Midwest plans the event.



The training covers a policy area or professional development topic of your choosing. Please contact CSG Midwest director Laura Tomaka at ltomaka@csg.org or 630.925.1922 to partner on Under the Dome.

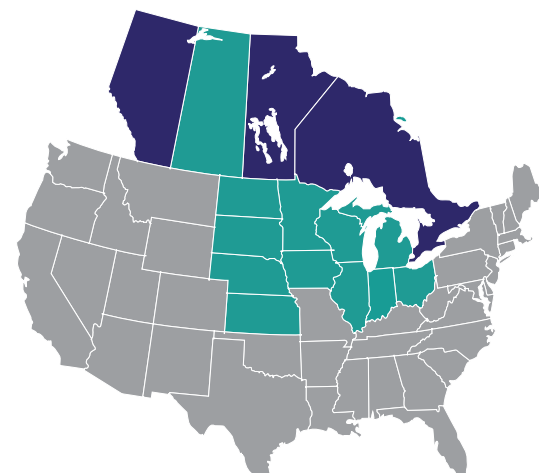
CSG'S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE HAS FOUR-OFFICER TEAM IN PLACE FOR 2025

At a December meeting of the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference Executive Committee, a new four-officer team was formally installed to lead the bipartisan, binational group in 2025.

The MLC Executive Committee is made up of state and provincial legislators from across the Midwest. It met in December at the CSG National Conference, where the annual rotation of committee officers typically takes place. The MLC is a nonpartisan association of all legislators representing 11 states and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. The provinces of Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario are MLC affiliate members.

Here is the MLC's new four-officer team.

CSG'S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE



- Member of MLC
- Affiliate member of MLC



MLC CHAIR: MINISTER LORI CARR

Saskatchewan's Lori Carr is the first legislator of a Canadian province to be chosen chair of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference. Minister Carr first joined the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in 2016. During



her time in office, Carr has served in numerous leadership positions for the Government of Saskatchewan, including her current role as minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health.

She came to public office after many years of dedicated service to various community organizations as well as for the town of Estevan, which is located about 15 miles from the Saskatchewan-North Dakota border. (See the full profile on page 8.)

MLC FIRST VICE CHAIR: SEN. MARY KUNESH

First elected to the Minnesota Legislature in 2016, Mary Kunesh served two terms in the House before moving to the Senate.

During the most recent biennium, Kunesh served as assistant Senate majority leader, as chair of the Senate Education Finance Committee, and as chair of the chamber's People of Color and Indigenous Caucus. She is a retired school library media specialist who resides in the Twin Cities suburb of New Brighton. Kunesh is a 2021 graduate of the MLC's Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, or BILLD.



MLC SECOND VICE CHAIR: SEN. R. BRAD VON GILLERN

Nebraska Sen. R. Brad von Gillern was elected to the Unicameral Legislature in 2022 and quickly

emerged as a key state leader on economic and finance policy. He served as vice chair of the Revenue Committee during his first two years in office.

A 2023 graduate of the MLC's BILLD program, von Gillern came to office as a longtime, respected business leader in Nebraska. He is the past president and CEO, majority owner and now director of business development for Omaha-based Lueder Construction.



MLC IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR: SEN. BILL REINEKE

Ohio Sen. Bill Reineke wrapped up a successful tenure as 2024 MLC chair. He led his home state's hosting of the MLC Annual Meeting in Columbus while also guiding a yearlong effort around his MLC Chair's Initiative: Workforce Innovation and Transformation. Policy resources related to this initiative are available at csgmidwest.org.

Reineke recently was elected Ohio Senate president pro tempore. In the most recent biennium, he served as chair of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee and vice chair of the Transportation Committee. Sen. Reineke also is a member of the Governor's Executive Workforce Board.

He is a 2016 graduate of the MLC's BILLD program.



ILLINOIS SEN. ELGIE SIMS: NEW CSG NATIONAL CHAIR

A longtime leader of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC) is now national CSG chair.

Illinois Sen. Elgie Sims first joined CSG's leadership team (a mix of state legislators and governors from across the country) in 2023 after nomination by his legislative peers in the Midwest.

Sims has been a member of the Illinois General Assembly since 2012; his leadership responsibilities include serving as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. He also has been a champion of criminal justice reform in Illinois and across the nation as a member of the CSG Justice Center Advisory Board.

Sims served as chair of the MLC in 2019 and has continued to be an active member of the MLC Executive Committee. He is a 2014 graduate of the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, or BILLD, and a 2015 graduate of CSG's Toll Fellowship Program.



Illinois Sen. Elgie Sims, national chair of The Council of State Governments, is pictured here (left) at this summer's CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting, along with David Adkins, president and CEO of CSG.

CRITICAL MINERALS AND THE MIDWEST: LEGISLATORS TAKE DEEP POLICY DIVE AT TWO-DAY WORKSHOP

Lawmakers from several Midwestern states and Canadian provinces traveled to Chicago in November for a two-day learning opportunity that deepened their understanding about critical minerals and related public policies.

The workshop was held as part of the work of two policy committees of The Council of State Governments' Midwestern Legislative Conference (MLC): Energy and Environment and Midwest-Canada Relations.

Attendees included legislators from seven Midwestern states (Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin) and two Canadian provinces (Manitoba and Ontario).

They were joined by leading national and international experts from the U.S. Geological Survey, the Geological Survey of Canada, the Illinois State Geological Survey, the province of Québec, the Critical Minerals Institute and the Rocky Mountain Institute.

Three officers of the two MLC committees took part in the event and helped oversee it: Indiana Rep. Ethan Manning, co-chair of the MLC Energy and Environment Committee; Ontario MPP Ernie Hardeman, co-chair of the MLC Midwest-Canada Relations Committee; and North Dakota Rep. David Monson, vice chair of the MLC Midwest-Canada Relations Committee.

A critical mineral is defined under U.S. federal law as one that is essential to the economic or national security of the country. Changes in the energy sector and overall economy are increasing the need for many of these critical minerals.



State and provincial legislators take part in a session of the November workshop on critical minerals. The event was offered to Midwestern state and provincial legislators as part of the ongoing work of the CSG Midwestern Legislative Conference and its six interstate, binational committees of legislators. Other recent MLC policy workshops have explored reforms to state child welfare systems and the future of the Midwest's energy workforce.

During the interactive policy workshop, legislators learned what critical minerals are and where they are (and might be) in the Midwestern region. Other discussions focused on the end uses of critical minerals and the importance of building regional, binational supply chains.

The Consulate General of Canada in Chicago served as a partner on this event. This partnership, along with the generous support of external sponsors, helped allow CSG Midwest to provide travel scholarships to participating legislators.

CSG's Midwestern Legislative Conference thanks the partners and sponsors, as well as the featured speakers and participating legislators, for contributing to the success of the policy workshop.

Thank you to these sponsors and partners for their support of the workshop

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Stardust Power

OTHER WORKSHOP SPONSOR

Province of Québec

RECORD TURNOUT FOR MEETING THAT MAPS OUT FUTURE OF MIDWEST PASSENGER RAIL



More than 80 commissioners, partners and allies of the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission took part in the group's 2024 Annual Meeting. The two-day event was held in St. Paul, Minn., and attracted a record number of participants. Pictured to the left are two of the commissioners (as of 2024) from Indiana: Steven Coxhead, the governor's private sector appointee, and Rep. Sharon Negele.

The commission's meeting facilitates interstate dialogue and planning among transportation and policy leaders from the Midwest. The focus is on improving the region's network of intercity passenger rail service. See page 7 of this edition of Stateline Midwest for details on those plans.

Formed by compact agreement, the commission is made up of legislators and governor designees from eight member states: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio and South Dakota are also eligible to join the compact. The commission receives secretariat services from CSG Midwest.

A THANK YOU TO THESE LONGTIME, DEPARTING LEADERS OF CSG'S MIDWESTERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Among the many legislators not returning to statehouses in 2025 are individuals who made invaluable contributions to The Council of State Governments and the Midwestern Legislative Conference.

Dedication. Leadership. Hard work. Thoughtfulness. Dependability.

They are attributes that help define effective legislating, as well as describe these departing CSG stalwarts. We thank them for their service and wish them post-legislative success.

FOND FAREWELL TO THREE PAST MLC CHAIRS

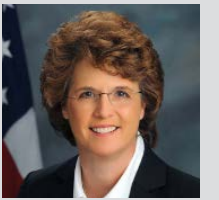
• Wisconsin Sen. Joan Ballweg was MLC chair in 2016 and later became the national chair of CSG. First elected to the Wisconsin Legislature in 2004, she led policy work in her state on a wide range of issues, from mental health and early learning, to agriculture policy and suicide prevention. During her time as MLC chair, Ballweg championed a regionwide effort to improve legislators' understanding about the importance of early childhood development.



• A member of the South Dakota Hall of Fame, Gary Cammack spent more than a decade serving his home state as a representative and senator. He was MLC chair in 2021, and helped bring attention to policies that foster land conservation and sound agricultural practices. His family's conservation efforts on the Cammack Ranch have been recognized by the Sand County Foundation and its prestigious Leopold Conservation Award program. During his time in office, Cammack held several key leadership posts, including a stint as Senate majority leader and, most recently, as House majority whip.

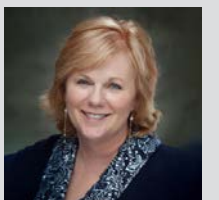


• Kansas Sen. Kansas McGinn was MLC chair in 2022, as well as a longtime leader in organizations such as the Midwestern Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (supported by CSG Midwest) and State Ag and Rural Leaders. During her two decades of legislative service in Kansas, McGinn headed up the Senate's Ways and Means and Natural Resources committees for many years. She most recently served as chair of the Senate Local Government Committee. Her MLC Chair's Initiative in 2022 focused on state policies to improve the management of water resources.

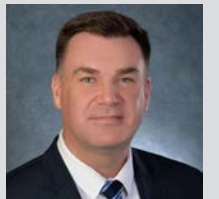


LEADERS OF MLC POLICY COMMITTEES

• Kansas Rep. Susan Concannon served as co-chair of the MLC Health and Human Services Committee, helping develop and deliver new programming for the region's legislators on issues such as child welfare reform. She began her service in the Kansas Legislature in 2013. Concannon is a 2014 graduate of the MLC's BILLD program and a 2016 graduate of CSG's Toll Fellowship Program.



• Saskatchewan MLA Steven Bonk is a 2017 BILLD graduate and served as co-chair of the MLC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. He was first elected to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly in 2016.



Bonk and Concannon also have been members of the MLC Executive Committee, the group of state and provincial legislators that governs the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Other departing members of this committee are Nebraska Sen. Justin Wayne and Saskatchewan MLA Joe Hargrave.

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.

STATELINE MIDWEST

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS | MIDWESTERN OFFICE

UPCOMING CSG EVENTS

CSG Virtual Events & Web-Based Meetings

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



Midwestern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting

July 27-30, 2025 | Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Contact: Jenny Chidlow ~ jchidlow@csg.org
630.925.1922 | csgmidwest.org



CSG Henry Toll Fellowship Program

August 8-12, 2025 | Lexington, Ky.
Applications open soon

Contact: Lorna Patches
lpatches@csg.org

859.244.8000 | csg.org



Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development

August 22-26, 2025 | Madison, Wisconsin
Application deadline: April 14, 2025

Contact: Mitch Arvidson ~ marvidson@csg.org
630.925.1922 | csgmidwest.org



Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus Annual Meeting

September 15-16, 2025 | South Bend, Indiana

Contact: Jess Lienhardt ~ jlienhardt@csg.org
630.925.1922 | gllc.csgmidwest.org



2025 CSG National Conference

December 9-13, 2025 | Chicago, Illinois

Contact: membership@csg.org
859.244.8000 | csg.org



STATELINE MIDWEST

Stateline Midwest is published by the Midwestern Office of
The Council of State Governments.

To order, call 630.925.1922

CSG Midwest Office Staff

Laura A. Tomaka, Director
Tim Anderson, Director of Policy and Research
Mitch Arvidson, Senior Program Manager
Derek Cantù, Policy Analyst
Jenny Chidlow, Director of Operations
Jon Davis, Policy Analyst and Communications Specialist
Cherylyn Gnadt, Graphic Designer and Marketing Specialist

Katie Kelly, Development Manager
Laura Kliewer, Senior Program Manager
Rebecca Leis, Policy Analyst
Jessica Lienhardt, Great Lakes Program Director
Christina Luporini, Office Manager
Cathy Malloy, Meeting Planner and Operations Specialist
Melissa Shahzadeh, Program Manager

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Volume 34 | Winter 2025

The Council of State Governments
Midwestern Office
701 E. 22nd Street, Suite 110 | Lombard, IL 60148-5095
Phone: 630.925.1922
csgm@csg.org | csgmidwest.org
Follow us on X: @CSGMidwest